

The Nagar Rebellion 1830 – 31

Administration and rule in an Indian Native State

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PREFACE

The work on this thesis has been demanding and satisfying in so many ways. First I want to express gratitude towards Pamela Price, my supervisor, for introducing me to India and for guiding me through the immense amount of sources and research on South India Native States, and for pulling me through when I almost lost hope.

My increasing fascination for India started the day I decided to write a thesis on an ‘exotic’ non-European topic. From that day it has been all India for me. Already the second semester I travelled to India to see for myself the places I wrote about. On this trip I saw much more than history and decided to learn more about this enthralling sub-continent. One year after to my first trip to India I had the opportunity to return when I signed up with a Norwegian company sponsored by ‘Fredskorpset’, to work in Bangalore with business development. This was perhaps the best year of my life. My thesis has become more ‘alive’ to me, and hopefully to the reader, because of this.

I also want to express thanks to my family. They encouraged me to finish my studies even before I started. Everyone who is acquainted with my mother knows exactly what I am talking about. Enough said about that. Thanks.

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Finally, I will thank the University of Oslo because they did not introduce the ‘quality reform’ before I started on my thesis. That allowed me to set my own pace and take one year off to work in India – something that probably taught me even more about the country than my studies did. Efficiency and tempo is sometimes not always the best way to learn.

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Glossary

- Amani Talav*: Artificial ponds not belonging to any specific village
- Amildar*: Native officer in charge of a talook, head of the police and revenue collection
- Brahmin*: Person of the priestly caste
- Buckshee*: Administrative advisor, head of a department or an office
- Candachar Peons*: Soldiers and police recruited from specific castes
- Cutcherry*: Office, court or department
- Dana*: A tool used by kings to bind support by distribution of wealth to the high castes
- Dewan*: The king's closest advisor, Chief Minister or minister
- Durbar*: The king's court
- Foujdar*: The head of a foudari, a district
- Foudari*: A district
- Gauda*: Head man of the village, occasionally head of the local police
- Hoozoor*: The king's administration, a ministerial office
- Jagir*: Low rent or rent free land granted for services rendered to government
- Jangama*: Lingayat priest, spiritual advisor
- Karnam*: Village accountant
- Katte*: Tax, customs, duties, a station where duties were levied
- Kandayam*: Fixed money rent on land rented from generation to generation
- Kayamgutta*: Fixed rent for some period, usually lower than the average rent
- Kuttam*: Gathering of a mass of people, usually demonstrating a will or opinion
- Maidan*: Lowland Mysore plains on the Deccan plateau
- Malnad*: (Meaning: hill country) highland part of Karnatak, on the Deccan plateau
- Musnad*: The crowning ceremony, the throne, the rule
- Native states*: Semi-independent states controlled by the British
- Pagodas*: Monetary unit.
- Panchayat*: (Meaning: five people meeting) Administrative unit, often a council or jury of five, usually elderly, village council
- Peon*: A farmer or servant, usually low-caste, i.e. Candachar peons
- Poligar*: Petty Chief, little king, warlord, military leader
- Potail*: Village headman
- Ryot*: Farmer, cultivator
- Sunnud*: Official document, diploma of privileges
- Sarkar/Sircar*: (Meaning: head of affairs) The Government or supreme authority
- Sayar*: Tax, duties
- Shanbog*: Village accountant
- Shraya*: Reduced Kandayam for a certain period of years
- Sheristardar*: Head of an office or department, a secretary, subordinate of the amildar
- Shist*: (Meaning: discipline and order) Local land revenue in Nagar
- Shurtee*: (Meaning: supposing a talook is contracted for). System of contract hiring
- Sowcar*: Wealthy man, moneylender
- Talook*: Subdivision of a district, under the management of an Amildar.
- Thugee/thug*: A bandit, a criminal, from the word thug meaning a member of a gang of stranglers
- Waram*: Arrangement with hired labourers from the villages nearby cultivating the land for a return share of the produce.
- Zamindar*: Person responsible for revenue collection in his domain
- Zamindari*: Revenue estate, supervised by a zamindar.

1. Introduction

This thesis deals with the Nagar rebellion, in colonial South India. In late August and early September in the year 1830 disturbances broke out in the province of Nagar, a district located in the northwest corner of Mysore kingdom, a Native state under indirect British imperial rule. This small uprising soon spread to most of the districts, also called *Foujdaris*, in Mysore, and became a Kingdom wide insurrection. Most of the mass gatherings of peasants, referred to as *kuttams*, consisted of farmers and village servants, and were easily dispersed. However the fighting lasted for almost a year in the province of Nagar. Here the *poligars*, who were former chiefs and local rulers, a pretender named Buda Basveppa and adventurers joined the peasant uprising, armed with muskets and employing mercenaries recruited from Southern Maratha country. Internal conflicts and shifting alliances between leading Maratha Brahmins, the royal family and others in the administrative departments and at the king's court worsened the situation. Brahmins are the priestly caste, regarded to be the highest ranking in the caste hierarchy.

The British East-India Company, which from now on will now be referred to as the *Company*, intervened, first with advisors and non-interventional military presence, then later with active regiments of native infantry and cavalry, supported with artillery. In June 1831 most of the insurrection was quelled and on the 19th of October the same year Krishnaraja Woodeyar III – the Rajah – surrendered his rule peacefully to the Company. A British Commission of prominent Company officers took over, and Mysore was directly governed by the British for the next 50 years. In 1881 governance of Mysore was given back to limited Native State rule, controlled and supervised by the Crown.

The problem at hand

My main question in this thesis is: what causes lay behind the Nagar rebellion and how can these be explained? The fact that this question has only been partially answered by historians justifies its asking. A few scholars have loosely discussed the causes of the outbreak of rebellion in August 1830, and here I aim to present the different theories and discuss them – though I find few of them satisfying in answering my main question. The specific questions I

pose are many and complex. I will make precise some essential questions and then present possible answers that can serve as a basis for answering the main question.

Following a major event many historians will look for causes to explain what happened, so that one can fully understand the incident. After a rebellion one can believe that the purpose of the uprising was to attack something or someone, or in other words; that the rebellion was a protest or a way of showing disapproval, possibly against the authority of the state. What or who was the Nagar rebellion aimed against? What was the political, economical and social situation where the insurrection took place? These are the first questions that seem relevant to answer. I will propose in this thesis, that the rebellions were invested with an ideology, which means that the uprisings were not only directed against something, or someone, but also that the people that rebelled were in favour of an idea or in favour of a change of situation. The rebellion presented an alternative to the administration in Mysore and Nagar. Revolutions can aim to tear down existing structures and at the same time introduce a substitution. What did the rebels, or the rebel leaders, in Nagar desire and what did they want to put in the place of their opponents? I will seek to answer these questions by investigating the ideas and structures behind the insurrection.

The primary sources and the secondary literature suggest that the influence from the polity of the Keladi State, that ruled Nagar up until 1763, had impact on the rebel mentality. Ranajit Guha believes that most common uprisings in India in the period from 1783 to 1900 were partially motivated by an idea of a historical golden era.¹ This theory is supported to an extent by Burton Stein.² However, Burton Stein claims that the Nagar rebellion differed from Guha's models because the use of ideology based on a romanticising of history was more apparent in Nagar than in other areas, and that this ideology was well founded before the uprising. At the same time Burton Stein emphasizes contemporary economical and administrative factors as causes of the insurrection in Nagar. What part did ideology play in the Nagar rebellion, both as a trigger to the uprising and also in the popular mobilisation that followed? Lowland Mysore, called *Maidan*, and highland Mysore, called *Malnad*, in where Nagar was situated, had traditionally been two separated regions, differing in economy, culture, ethnic and religion. From 1763, the rulers of the Mysore state attempted to assimilate, into a politically

¹ Ranajit Guha, *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999)

² Burton Stein, 'Notes on 'peasant insurgency' in colonial Mysore: Event and process', *A SOAS South Asia reader*, D. Arnold & P. Robb (eds.), (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1993)

larger unit, an area circumscribing almost to what is known as Karnataka of today. From the difference in traditions between Nagar District and the rest of the Mysore state, it seems natural to ask the following question: did the people of Nagar experience a communal belonging to the Mysore state and were they loyal to the king?

Mysore was an independent kingdom, bound to the Company through a subsidiary alliance – signed at Srirangapatnam in 1799. Krishnaraja Woodeyar III, the Rajah, was the head of the state. One might ask if the rebellion was directed against him and his officers in the administration. A Committee of Company officers was put down subsequent to the insurrection to investigate “‘The Origin, Progress, and Suppression of the Recent Disturbances in Mysore” and “the consequences by which they have been attended, as affecting the lives and property of the people and the general prosperity of the Country””.³ In ‘The Committee’s Report’, it pointed out that Rajah had to be blamed for the uprising, because of his economic mismanagement and lack of control with local officers, a situation these officers took advantage of, thus creating an intolerable situation for the peasants, which again led to rebellion. As I will look into later, the Committee also assumed that these administrators protected each other. Perhaps the Rajah was not aware of the conditions of his kingdom? Or was he unable to do something about it? The first assertion put forward here is interesting; that waste of public funds led to a strain on the state treasury that demanded increase in revenue, and therefore risk of uprising. Assertion number two, regarding lack of control of the administration, brings many aspects into the discussion, most importantly; was the administration itself a direct or indirect cause to the rebellion? If the Rajah lacked control of the local officers in Nagar, it might be imprecise to emphasize the Rajah’s economic policy, since he then did not have control of local factors that lead to dissatisfactions in Nagar. Can we then claim a causal connection between Rajah’s policies, especially his economical policies, and the Nagar rebellion? A different angle to this question will be to claim, that if the Rajah lacked control over his civil servants, he was not aware of the population suffering an increased burden of taxation. Therefore, he did not know how to act differently. However, politics is not just economics, nor was the Rajah’s economic policy only concerned with personal spending. We might therefore ask if a king’s responsibility, or *dharma*, the attendance to duty and devotion, is to rule efficiently and attentively and perhaps claim that his vacant rule indirectly caused the insurrection.

³ ‘Report on the Insurrection in Mysore’, December 1833

To answer these questions I will investigate the relation between the administration on one side and the population, mainly the peasants, on the other side. How did this relation influence the outbreak of kuttams and how did it carry the insurrection further? Areas of focus will be the structure of the Indian administration and the revenue collection, mainly in Nagar District.

Historiography and research status

Native States in the early 19th century South India, under British imperial rule, have been the object of historical research. On a broad scale, Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), explores British imperial ideology and British justification of rule. Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro, The origins of the colonial state and his vision of Empire*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), gives us an understanding of the Company's approach towards the Native States in South India in the first decades of the 19th century. David Ludden, *Peasant history in south India*, (Delhi: Oxford university press, 1989), outlines generally the local structures of production and administration in South India in a broad historical perspective.

Of special importance to my thesis, concerning local administration in 19th century South India, in his a case-study on Guntur district, Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District 1788 – 1846, A history of local influence and central authority in South India*, (Oxford: Oxford university press, 1965), explores and discuss history of local influence in its meeting with colonial administration – including the elite groups and shifting power-bases of elites and castes. Neelambar Hatti and James Heiman, 'The rule of Law and Dharma in Early 19th century South Indian Villages', *Lund Papers in Economic History*, 5/96, focus on administration on the village level. Pamela Price article, 'Cosmologies and Corruption in (South) India – thinking aloud', *Forum for development studies*, (Norway: no 2, 1999), examines corruption in South India in an historical context. The role of native rulers, local kings and petty chiefs in 19th century South India is explored by several authors: Pamela Price, *Kingship and political practice in colonial India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 'Ideology and Ethnicity under British Imperial Rule: 'Brahmans', Lawyers and Kin-Caste Rules in Madras Presidency' *Modern Asian Studies* 23, (Great Britain: 1989) and 'Varieties among polities in early modern South India' (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1984), are some. The paper, 'Dana as an instrument of state policy in pre-colonial and colonial South

India – perspectives from the native state of Mysore’, (India: Unknown year and place of publishing), gives an analysis of kings’ tools for binding of loyalty – with a special focus on Krishnaraja Woodeyar III. Suzanne Hanchett, ‘Hindu Potlatches: Ceremonial reciprocity and prestige in Karnataka’ in Helen E. Ullrich (ed.), *Competition and Modernization in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1975), describes potlatches as a method to gain personal prestige advancement in various ways inside and outside caste, kinship and patronage institutions.

Local history of the Nagar area, with attached importance to Keladi, is increasingly produced in Karnataka. The revival of local historical interest is seen in Shimoga district today, but the published books are rarely distributed outside the borders of Karnataka. K. N. Chitnis, ‘Keladi Polity’, *Research publications series 17*, (Dharwar: Karnatak University, 1974), G. S. Dikshit *Studies in Keladi history* (Bangalore: Mythic Society, 1981) and Mrs. Patel, ‘State, peasants and land revenue – A scientific approach of a native state in pre-colonial South India’ (Bhadravti: Not dated), are idiomatic studies on Keladi history – works almost impossible to find outside Karnataka.

Common elements in rebel consciousness in Indian peasant insurgencies are worked on by Ranajit Guha, *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India* (Durham and London Duke: University Press, 1999), and ‘The prose of counter-insurgency’ in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies II*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983). The Nagar rebellion is just briefly described in general presentations of Mysore history. Nigel H. M. Chancellor, Mysore: The Making and Unmaking of a Model State, *South Asian Studies*, no 13 (1997), discuss the 19th century Mysore with some attention to the significance of rebellion. However, when it comes to the Nagar rebellion, there are written two articles on the subject: Burton Stein ‘Notes on peasant insurgency in colonial Mysore: Event and process’, *South Asia reader*, (Curzon Press, 1993), and one article written by the Mysorean historian Sebastian Joseph: ‘A service elite against the peasants – Encounter and Collision (Mysore 1799-1831)’ *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Bombay Sessions*, (1980).

However, no major full-scale study on the Nagar rebellion has been carried out. Indications are that few historians in or Karnataka, South India, want to approach the subject. It seems that certain members of the royal family or other groups of prominent people, perhaps still holding influence and respect, could be embarrassed by what the sources might disclose. My

study reveals the ‘voices’ of persons that participated in the incidents in Mysore, especially in Nagar District, in 1830 – 31. My contributions to the studies of 19th century South India Native States are to increase our knowledge on several areas: Firstly, we observe the details of the rebellion, given in the sources. Secondly, we identify the causes to the rebellion, and attempt to recapture them. Thirdly, we learn about the persistent resistance of former little kings, in a 19th century South Indian Native State, and similarities to contemporary processes of resistance in neighbouring areas in South India. Fourthly, we explore what the insurrection tells us about the nature of governance in Mysore. Lastly, we learn about the administration of Nagar District and recapture the conditions that made it special in a relation to the governance of Mysore.

The sources and their problems

A Committee was put down a few months subsequent to the insurrection, consisting of prominent figures, namely Major-General Thomas Hawker, William Morison, J. M. Macleod and Mark Cubbon. This Committee was given the mandate to investigate the insurrection in Mysore and submit a report concerning the events and the consequences it carried upon the State of Mysore. I have chosen to write a thesis based upon research on selected primary sources. My primary sources are the Committee’s notes and minutes, including interviews and letters, the Committee’s final ‘Report’ and letters from the involved parties and persons.

The Committee carried out an examination of all the available documents and also collected statements from witnesses. It sat together for more than a year. In December 1833 a report was given to the Governor-General in Council, Lord William Cavendish Bentinck (1828 – 35). This document and the 1717 pages of notes and minutes constituting their complete work are my most important sources in the following thesis.

There are methodological problems concerned with ‘The Report’ of 1833. ‘The Committee’s Report’ can be seen as a tool for Company justification of the British inclusion of Mysore into the British Empire after 1831. The Company administrated, or ruled, the Mysore state when the investigation for ‘The Report’ was carried out, and required political justification for the occupancy of Mysore. It seems that when constantly remarking on the faults of Krishnaraja Woodeyar III and pointing out the mistake of not interfering earlier, the Committee was legitimising the Company take over of Mysore.

‘The Committee’s Report’ was written based upon oral statements from witnesses involved with the incidents in Mysore and Nagar. Circumstantial evidence shows that some of the witnesses did not tell the truth or slightly altered the truth to suit themselves or their agenda. One person was proven to lie in front of the members of the Committee. Ram Rao, a person of high rank in the Rajah’s administration, deliberately attempted to falsify his statements when he tried to conceal a name in a document he was called in to comment.

The commission consider it incumbent on them to remark on a flagrant act of misconduct and breach of duty on the part of Ram Rao, . . . , who when called before the Committee this day for the purpose of reading a public record, connected with the Examination of Buckshee [a title] Syed Salar, falsified it, by wilfully omitting in two successive readings, the name of an individual, which it was subsequently ascertained was borne on the record.⁴

Some witnesses do not remember what happened even though the incidents should have made an impression upon them and took place less than two years before they were called in to the Committee. It seems that much relevant information was not revealed. Some of the witnesses were peasants or village-leaders, known as *potails*, who participated in the rebellion. Other witnesses were officers, both British and native, who played a part in military operations, and others were local and central representatives of the regime. The narratives of these categories of witnesses whom often figured among the protagonists were probably biased and these witnesses’ role in the events must be regarded as partial. Perhaps, no witness was truly unbiased. Some of the witnesses faced their new employers, a situation which most likely moderated their statements. However, the interviewed persons came from all layers of society, thus balancing each other out. Several witnesses supported each other’s statements, possibly increasing their reliability. The sources are reliable in the sense that I can use them to outline, answer, elaborate and conclude concerning the questions in the following chapters.

Outline

I have presented and discussed the questions, historiography, the primary sources and the Committee that investigated the rebellion. The next chapters will be on Mysore kingdom and Nagar Foujdari, giving the historical background and relevant facts about royal governance,

⁴ Statement from the Committee, in the ‘Committee papers’, p. 282

administration and the Kingdom's economy. Then I present a narrative of the events of the insurrection and an analysis of the causes. My last chapter will be a discussion of the administration of Nagar including the alleged corruption, criminality, intrigues, and the local officers' relations with Rajah and his court.

2. Inclusion of Mysore in the British Empire

When using the general term British, I will usually refer to a British citizen at official duty in India – generally a representative of the British East-India Company. This chapter deals with the Company approach towards Mysore and the inclusion of Mysore in the British Empire.

The Company was established as a trade monopoly in 1600 A.D. with the sole purpose of joining the European race for Indian resources. At the expense of the slowly disintegrating Moghul Empire, the Company gained an expanding foothold in India throughout the 18th century, using the tools of trade, force, bribes, diplomacy and technological superiority. Bengal and Orissa came under direct Company administration at an early stage of the colonial era. Following the battle against the ruler of Bengal at Plassey in 1757, and the defeat of French forces at Wandiwash in 1760 Great Britain became the dominating actor among the European colonial powers. The Company was now not only a trader, but also a ruler – from the end of the 18th century until independence in 1947.

During the 18th and the 19th centuries, large parts of South India were composed into a conglomerate of small and medium states. Ideally, the Company was committed to practising a policy of non-intervention, though this did not occur in reality. With the coming of Richard Wellesley, Lord Mornington, who served as Governor-general in 1798 to 1805, the British moved away from this policy. Wellesley desired to establish the Company as a supreme force in India and coerce native rulers into acknowledging this. Treaties, designed by Wellesley himself, usually called subsidiary alliances, were signed with most of the small kingdoms. These states were described as Native States or Princely States by the British administration.⁵ These treaties required that native Indian rulers had to accept Company supremacy, could no longer freely choose their own foreign policy, were not allowed to wage war without Company sanction, and could only employ British citizens or persons approved of by the Company. The purpose of the treaties was mainly to prevent foreign influence in the region. The local ruler also promised to keep a self-financed military force in state of readiness, at British disposal. A Company representative, the Resident, was to be stationed at any time with the local ruler's court, to supervise implementation of the treaties and influence the

⁵ K. L. Khurana, *History of India, 1526 A.D. to 1967 A.D.*, (Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, Agra, 1995), pp. 84 - 88

administration of the state. In return the Company was bound not to interfere in internal affairs and to protect the state from aggressive external forces.⁶

The Company became involved in the affairs of Mysore when it entered into conflict two Muslim sultans ruling the country from 1761 to 1799 – Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan. The diplomatic play and shifting alliances turned toward British advantage, the war slowly impoverished the Kingdom and in the long run the Company's soldiers were far superior to the sultan's. Tipu Sultan suffered defeat and died defending his capital at Srirangapatnam in 1799. A Committee composed of Company officers, namely General Lieutenant Harris, Colonel Arthur Wellesley, Henry Wellesley, Colonel Lieutenant Barry Close, Colonel Lieutenant William Kirkpatrick and the *Nizam* (king) of Hyderabad concurring, appointed by the Governor-General outlined the British policy for Mysore in the partition treaty between the Company and the state of Hyderabad. Large areas were ceded to the Madras Presidency and to the state of Hyderabad. The articles 4 and 14 of the treaty provided the Company an opening to assume control of Mysore in case of neglect, especially concerning revenue deficit.⁷ The treaty also stipulated the re-installment of a former Hindu dynasty – the Woodeyars – with the minor Rajah as formal regent and his *Dewan* Purnaiya as de-facto head of state. A Dewan was the king's closest advisor in state matters – comparable to a Chief Minister. According to the treaty the British Resident was placed in Mysore representing the Company. 'The drafting of the 'model' subsidiary treaty for a new Mysore in 1799 identified British needs precisely; cash, supplies and special forces.'⁸ In addition to a monthly cash payment the treaty also committed Mysore state to supply a permanent force of 4000 irregular cavalry, a subsidiary force, also called the Mysore Horse or Sillidar Horse, available for allied operations.⁹ The partition treaty was in Purnaiya's time reckoned by the Company to have become a success far surpassing all expectations and was used as the foundation for the British take-over of Mysore in 1831.

The British influence

⁶ K. L. Khurana, *History of India*, , p. 86

⁷ M. H. Gopal, *British Sources of the economic, Political and Social History of the Mysore State, Volume I 1799 – 1812 Purnaiya's Administration*, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan pvt ltd., 1993), p. 43

⁸ Nigel H. M. Chancellor, 'Mysore: The Making and Unmaking of a Model State', *South Asian Studies*, no 13, 1997, p 112

⁹ Nigel H. M. Chancellor, 'Mysore' p. 112

The general premises for the Resident's situation were specified in the early years of Purnaiya's reign. He was an extension of the Company and meant to be just an advisor to the Rajah: 'superintend the management of their internal affairs for the good Government of their countries and the improvement of their revenues.'¹⁰ His position was regularly evaluated and changed, but always carefully intended to be non-interfering – and carry no further tools of sanction than information to Madras and warnings to Rajah about consequences of poor administration. The interaction between the Resident and the Rajah was the central meeting point between the Governments in Mysore and Madras – in periods the only one. Company influence almost ceased after Rajah reached full age and legal capacity, with only the Resident's counsel and advice left as instruments of influence.

The peasants occasionally attempted to bring forward complaints and grievances to the Resident. Many of the witnesses from all classes told the Committee that Mr Cole (1808 – 1825) listened to the ryots and visited the countryside where he communicated directly with them. He was known to have an open house, granting everybody audience. However, according to Runga Rao, amil of Honelly, the succeeding Resident Mr. Casamaijor (1825 – 1834) only replied: 'You must go and see Rajah'.¹¹ He refused to receive complaints and rarely met ryots in person – thus representing a thorough non-interventionist policy aimed to function according to his mandate. 'The advice and counsel of the British Government should only be apparent to the public eye when coming directly in aid and support of the Native authorities.'¹²

On the other side, Cole's previous open house policy was not without complications. A witness described that persons who complained were menaced by being told that they would be imprisoned if they dared to bring their complaints to the Resident.¹³ The stigma visiting the Resident could bring harassment and prosecution. In the years of Mr. Casamaijor's term as Resident, from 5 years prior to the insurrection, ryots seeking audience at the Resident's department were often not allowed to meet anyone; they were just escorted back to their respective villages by guards. The Company carefully avoided the unfortunate situation of being caught between interests. The shift in policy with the change of Resident from Mr. Cole

¹⁰ Court of directors Political despatch to the Governor-General in Council, Fort William, 28 February 1812, M. H. Gopal, *British Sources of the economic*, p. 225

¹¹ Runga Rao, amil of Honelly, to the Committee, the 'Committee papers', p. 982

¹² 'Report on', p. 70

¹³ 'Report on', p. 71

to Mr Casamaijor was noticeable and sent signals of British passivity to the elites surrounding the Rajah.

A *cutcherree* was a department or Government offices. The Resident's Cutcherree depended upon the service of native servants. Company officials were mostly trained in Persian and Hindi, and sometimes Marathi and Tamil. But rarely did they speak the language of Kannada, spoken in Mysore.

As a consequence, the essential need for accurate intelligence about the Raja's Government was compromised at the outset. ...from 1811 to 1825 the Resident's senior staff and translators were invariably relations and connections of Rama Rao, the dominant Maratha service Brahmin.¹⁴

Mr Casamaijor's closest advisor, the *Sheristardar* Chowdiah, was regarded as one of the most influential persons in Mysore.¹⁵ A Sheristardar was often a secretary of the person leading a department. In the districts the Sheristardar was the Amildar's subordinate in charge of the revenue collection. Chowdiah's position as the Resident's representative was utilized by him and his collaborators to alarm the Rajah. Several witnesses claimed that Chowdiah fabricated instructions from the Resident in order to get things done the way he and his associates desired. The Resident was invisible and kept in ignorance, and Rajah kept in awe.

The British approach towards Mysore

During the period from 1820 to 1828 Thomas Munro held the office of Governor of Madras. He was one of the most influential participants in the debate about British colonial policy. Thomas Munro was both visionary and pragmatic on behalf of the empire, motivated by the contemporary debate in England

He imagined an India governed by powerful statesmen whose minds and careers had been shaped in India, but whose authority was to derive from ministers of the British Crown. ... Crown rule, then, was a first condition for achieving the future that they saw. Delegation of royal authority to vice regal officials in India – like themselves [Munro and Malcolm] – was a second condition. Together, these constituted the first principle of a British imperium. A second principle was that direct rule over all of India should be eschewed, even if it were possible to attain. India must constitute a

¹⁴ Nigel H. M. Chancellor, 'Mysore' p. 116

¹⁵ Runga Rao, 'the Committee papers', p. 981

whole and separate political sphere made up of a system of states under the hegemony of British India.¹⁶

Inspired by Edmund Burke, Munro claimed that several strong competing states, rather than only one dominating force, including the British, would contain a more efficient and stable political order. In such a system all independent states would learn from each others mistake and develop together. ‘...he seemed to think that the Indian subcontinent could become a sphere of interacting states.’¹⁷ Munro sought a decentralised political control with the Princely States rather than one single supreme power located in Calcutta. On these grounds Munro developed an inclusive policy towards the native rulers, a policy reflected in his tolerant view upon traditional local institutions.

This tolerance towards native rulers included the affairs of the Mysore state, wherein he became strongly involved in the 1820’s. However, the Government of Madras had watched the situation in Mysore since the Rajah had assumed power. In a letter from the Government of Madras to the Rajah, dated the 30th of August 1814, we can see signs of growing British discontent. The Rajah was warned about the consequences of an emergency, even though British involvement into state affairs of Mysore was not mentioned directly.¹⁸ In the beginning of the 1820’s the Resident called attention to the decreasing revenue income. He pointed out that approximately 7.3 million surplus *pagodas* (Mysore state currency), gathered by Purnaiya, were spent and that the state’s income was lower than its expenses. All the departments were in deficit.¹⁹ The Mysore economy worsened during the 1820’s and Thomas Munro involved himself in the affairs.

The principal cause for the increased expenditures of Krishnaraja was royal largesse, the granting of money and land to those deemed worthy of royal patronage and prestation. As a proportion of gross revenue collections in Mysore between 1799 and 1823, royal grants nearly doubled from 7 per cent in the last year of Purnaiyas administration to 13.5 per cent in 1823. At this point Munros attention was seized.²⁰

In 1825 Munro wrote a famous minute in which ‘A major question was raised by the growing administrative and fiscal chaos in Mysore.’²¹ Munro expressed that he wanted to persuade the

¹⁶ Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro, The origins of the colonial state and his vision of empire*, (Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 348

¹⁷ Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro*, p. 349

¹⁸ ‘Report on’, p. 10

¹⁹ ‘Report on’, p. 12

²⁰ Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro*, p. 269

²¹ Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro*, p. 267

Rajah to assume control of the situation. In another letter, the same year, he again expressed his concern and repeated his desire to sway the Rajah in the right direction. In September 1825 he visited Mysore to stress that the option of sanctions given in Treaty of 1799 would in the worst case, allow the Company to take full control of Mysore: 'There he had delivered a stern lecture to the Mysore ruler on retrenching his extravagances lest the discontent among his subjects, and especially his soldiers, boil into outright rebellion. ...The prospects for the state were very unfavourable'.²² Thomas Munro's advice to the Rajah for more sober spending and increased control of state affairs apparently brought about some changes and the Company was for a period convinced that the development headed the right direction. Optimism was expressed in letters from the Resident. However, only two years later expectations dropped again. The Committee wrote in 'The Report': 'Such a state of things could not be suffered to continue without its leading in a very short time to the measure which it is so desirable to avert, of assuming the direct management of the Rajahs country ...'.²³ Inspired by his open and tolerant policy, Munro avoided a confrontation with the regime of Mysore Kingdom. As Burton Stein noted, 'For this indulgence of a client state Munro was to be criticized by his successor Stephen R. Lushington [1827 – 32] in 1831'.²⁴ The insurrection broke out in September 1830 and after a few months of chaos Company troops intervened to quell the disturbances. Krishnaraja Woodeyar III peacefully surrendered his rule to the Company 19th October 1831, but continued to reside in his palace in Mysore.²⁵ Company take-over of the Mysore state administration lasted for the next fifty years.

The British plan was to restore princely rule rather than to innovate or reform.²⁶ However, as in most cases of British colonial occupancy, they chose to stay. With the coming of James A. Broun-Ramsay, the Earl of Dalhousie (1848 – 56), as Governor-General of the Company in 1848, the principle of upholding and protecting Princely States was thrown away. He determined to take advantage of every just opportunity presented to consolidate British territory and absorb Princely States.²⁷ The argument was that the 'backwards and despotic' princely Governments were inferior to 'enlightened' British rule.

²² Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro*, p. 269

²³ 'Report on', p. 13

²⁴ Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro*, p. 269

²⁵ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore, A gazetteer, Compiled for the Government*, revised edition, Vol I, (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1897), p. 429

²⁶ Judith M. Brown, *Modern India, The origins of an Asian democracy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 68

²⁷ Judith M. Brown, *Modern India*, p. 68

The Rendition

Mysore was governed by British Commissioners from 1838 to 1881. This period brought peace and stability to the country and the economy improved gradually. In 1843 the Company abolished the post of Resident. In the period from 1834 to 1847 all decisions concerning the future of the dethroned Rajah were postponed by the Company Government. No one took responsibility, even if most contemporary political actors spoke favourably of the Rajahs claim to the throne. Krishnaraja Woodeyar III grew old and sought once in a while to regain the rule of Mysore. But he was childless and the British initially refused to accept his plans of adopting a son, even though appeals on his behalf were put forward by British politicians. Some political thinkers accused the Crown, who had gained complete rule over the Indian colonies subsequent to the Mutiny in 1857, for being unwilling to return power once obtained. In the end the British finally accorded Krishnaraja Woodeyar III the right to adopt an heir. After his death, and when his son Chamrajendra Woodeyar X came of age, on the 25th of March 1881, Mysore was handed over to native administration, not native rule. This was called the Rendition. The new Maharaja received rights of heritage and was invested with limited power over all Mysore territories.

3. Native Government

In this chapter I will describe the native Government of the Mysore state from 1799 to 1831, Purnaiya's and the Rajah's rule. The state's administration and revenue system will be elaborated.

Purnaiya and Krishnaraja Woodeyar III

The experienced Purnaiya still held the position of Dewan, acting practically as sovereign, and executing royal power in from 1799 to 1811. Purnaiya was a Maratha Brahmin, as were most of the other advisors in the administration around the Rajah.²⁸ The Company chose him for the task because of his experience as Dewan serving Haider and Tipu and also because he was obliging toward the Company. He was considered to be a professional administrator devoid of political views. Sebastian Joseph has observed: 'Purnaiya was a typical example of an elite adept in the art of accommodation and survival by changing loyalties in a most astonishing and successful manner.'²⁹ However, the Dewan was not without political interests. His agenda was to make his post inheritable and hence pass the position on to his son. The Resident informed the Governor of Madras in 1808 that Purnaiya occasionally expressed this desire. In 1810, as a reward for his services, the old Dewan was only granted a *jagir* corresponding to 10000 Canteroy pagodas, whereupon he chose the area of Yelandoor.³⁰ A jagir is a low rent or rent-free land granted for services rendered to Government. The British praised Purnaiya for his statesmanship, sober economical policy and for saving money:

Purnaiyas system of Government was no doubt absolute; ... the accumulation of surplus revenue presented itself to him as a prime end to be attained. It may be questioned, therefore, whether he did not to some extent enrich the treasury at the expense of the State, by narrowing the resources for the people; for by 1811 he had amassed in the public coffers upwards of two crores [A crore is 10 million] of rupees.³¹

²⁸ Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro*, p. 268

²⁹ Sebastian Joseph, 'A service elite against the peasants – encounter and collision (Mysore 1799-1831)', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Bombay Sessions, 1980, p. 671

³⁰ M. H. Gopal, *British Sources of the economic*, p. 108

³¹ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 420

At the end of his regency, Purnaiya was less cooperative and acted in a hostile manner towards the Rajah, when the latter petitioned for more influence. According to the Resident, Rajah felt ashamed of being locked up in his own palace, instead of being the active ruler of his own country.³² He was worried that Purnaiya would to keep him as a marionette. Shortly following a conflict on the question of the employment of a specific officer, the situation turned into a crisis. In 1811, when Krishnaraja Woodeyar III reached the age of 16, Purnaiya was forced to resign. The Rajah demanded full responsibility of rule, and claimed, in agreement with the Resident and the Company, that he was mature enough for the job. This signalled an instant and major shift in the running of state affairs, and later a change in the British approach towards Mysore. Purnaiya died in March 1812, shortly after his resignation. The Committee remarked:

The interference of the Company's Government in the internal affairs of Mysore during the administration of Poorniah [Purnaiya] did not extend beyond the aid which was afforded by the Resident in the form of advice; and it seems probable that even this kind of interposition was less frequently employed in the latter than in the earlier part of the period [of regency].³³

The Company continued the same policy towards the Rajah, in whom – at first – they held full confidence. They praised his handling of the conflict with the much older and experienced Dewan, and they described him as a wise adult. Madras had high hopes for the Rajah.³⁴

Krishnaraja Woodeyar III was installed in a crowning ceremony, a *Musnad*, on the 30th June 1799, at the age of four. The 2nd of July the same year the Kingdom of Mysore was proclaimed.³⁵ In his childhood the Rajah lived a protected life surrounded by advisors handling decision-making concerning state affairs. Yet, in other ways he was thrown into an adult world early. Krishnaraja Woodeyar III married already as a little boy, but his first wife died in April 1802, when he was 7 years old. In 1806 he married again. He was brought up to become a king, but at the same time sheltered from learning the reality of ruling, a development much controlled by Purnaiya. After the insurrection in 1830, questions were raised about Purnaiya's upbringing of the Rajah.³⁶ As the authors of 'The Report' speculated:

³² Resident to General-governor, Sir G. Barlow in M. H. Gopal, *British Sources of the economic*, p. 147

³³ 'Report on', p. 5

³⁴ M. H. Gopal, *British Sources of the economic*, p. 161

³⁵ M. H. Gopal, *British Sources of the economic*, p. 48

³⁶ 'Report on' p. 6

The struggle made by Poornaiah to retain his supremacy over the Rajah, and the irritation which attended it may reasonably be supposed to have operated with considerable influence in the formation of His Highness character and to have confirmed that jealous fear of supercession in power, ... which he is stated to have ever afterwards evinced, by withholding from his ministers, ..., the degree of authority necessary to make them useful instruments of Government, and by resisting and resenting the counsel of the Resident ...³⁷

Krishnaraja Woodeyar III commenced his rule under favourable conditions, with a filled state treasury, the Company's best wishes and hopes for his country and without external enemies. As a youth he was regarded by the British to be talented and strong, but shortly after Purnaiya's resignation their opinion altered. The Committee suggested that the Rajah was not fit to rule a country and that he was never able to control state affairs, in particular the finances. The Committee referred to 'defects of his character'.³⁸ The Committee asked whether it would have been possible to reverse this trend in a positive direction, but concludes that it could not have been done: '... he never could be converted into an upright, ingenious, or steady man'.³⁹ The Committee claimed that it would have been too late to improve, in particular, his skills of economic management. Severe critique was passed on Krishnaraja Woodeyar III after British takeover.

The noticeable and obvious reason for growing British concern was his extravaganza, waste of public funds on personal luxury goods, his acquaintance with what the British described as 'foul characters', his neglect of public services, including the military, the decreasing revenue income and the accumulation of public debt. Already in 1813 and 1814, in letters from the Resident, the Rajahs bad habits were described: '[The Rajah] had fallen into habits of extravagance and sensuality, wasting his treasures upon the wretches who pandered to his pleasures even by prostitution of their wives and daughters.'⁴⁰ The Resident expressed concern for the young ruler and fear of misadministration. In a letter dated the 19th of February 1814 the Resident wrote that the Rajah had fallen under influence of Brahmins and that he constantly falsified documents and accounts, and that it was difficult for the Resident to procure facts about the Rajah's management of state affairs. The Committee wrote that the

³⁷ 'Report on', p. 7

³⁸ 'Report on'

³⁹ 'Report on', p 8

⁴⁰ 'Report on', p 7

young Rajah did not pay attention to the Resident's advice from as early as 1814 and after.⁴¹ Not long after the Rajah assumed responsibility, the surplus of the state treasury was spent. Much wealth vanished abroad. The Rajah used large sums and great parts of the income on presents and jewellery for himself and his court. Burton Stein emphasise this.

... [T]he accumulated surpluses of the kingdom were 'dissipated' in acts of royal largesse – gifts to Brahmans and court favourites, temples and *mathas* [Hindu monasteries] – in an ... effort to establish his personal credentials as the ruler of the kingdom after his tutelage and eclipse by Purnaiya.⁴²

The Company only observed gifts as "extravaganza" and immediately classified gifting as unnecessary spending. However, Rajah exercised the affairs according to his duties and devotion – his *dharma* – or moreover what he perceived as his duties and devotion. Kings of South India wished to reproduce royal honour and status, which they felt were smouldering away after introduction of British supremacy.

In the nineteenth century, in the context of a new type of overlord, these elements of fragmenting tension would prove destructive, contributing to the fragmentation of precolonial monarchical cosmology. The desire to reproduce royal honour and status was a dynamical element in continuing evolution of monarchical ideology in the course of the nineteenth century.⁴³

Redistribution of wealth might be the King's way to tighten alliances and support from important classes and castes. Pamela Price describes it as a king's negotiation for support.⁴⁴ To maintain stability, implement jurisdiction and to exercise state authority the rulers built alliances and cooperation with Brahmans, represented in ministers and bureaucrats, and as priests and scholars.⁴⁵ The Brahmans had spiritual power and received respect. They exercised administrative skills and had access to divine powers in close ties with Kings. On the part of the ruler, it was important to keep the Brahmans satisfied, by distributing parts of the state resources to them as well as to the temples or temple towns. This could ensure continuous loyalty from the people.

⁴¹ 'Report on'

⁴² Burton Stein, 'Notes on 'peasant insurgency'', p. 189

⁴³ Pamela Price, *Kingship and political practice in colonial India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 37

⁴⁴ Pamela Price, *Kingship*

⁴⁵ Unknown author, 'Dana as an instrument of state policy in pre-colonial and colonial South India – perspectives from the native state of Mysore' Unknown year and place of publishing, India

The Rajah manoeuvred in a minefield throughout his whole period as ruler, and he stepped on some of the mines from time to time. He spent a lot of money, often more than the annual income, and he did not succeed in securing support from the people or in preventing economic crisis. As I will point out later: only relatively small number of associates and their dependants enriched themselves on Rajah's distribution of wealth. Vencata Kistniah, Foujdar of Manjarbad, answered the Committee: '[Question] Because of Rajahs expenditures would not the country have been rich? [Answer] What have the ryots got by the Rajahs expenditures?'⁴⁶

The state of Mysore faced a recession in the 1820's – circumstances which will be dealt with thorough in chapter six. A state spending less money than it collects might propel itself into recession since less money in circulation will reduce the demand on goods and labour. Thus the surplus state treasury could have been a factor influencing Mysore economy in the time of the Rajah's reign. 'That hoarded fortune, amounting to about five times the annual revenue of the country, was rapidly spent by the raja after ridding himself of Purnaiya in 1810.'⁴⁷ But Mysore's economy went into a decline. The writers of 'The Report' accused the Rajah of letting corrupt elements run loose and the Rajah allowed corruption to increase at an alarming rate, putting more pressure on the peasants for revenues.⁴⁸ All the interviewed people claimed that Rajah was a kind and good man, but nobody defended his administrative skills.

Mysore administration

I will first generally describe the administrative system of Mysore, with a special focus on the revenue collection. Land was the major source of wealth and collection of revenue was the single most important aspect of Government concern – the rulers dominating imperative: 'Stability in collection of revenue is the main goal and the administrative apparatus an instrument in achieving this goal.'⁴⁹ The interaction between the Rajah and his ministers all the way down to the local administrators in the Foujdaris sub-divisions, called *talooks*, went through a relatively static system that can be described as a 'hierarchical branching network

⁴⁶ Vencata Kistniah, Foujdar of Manjarbad, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 451

⁴⁷ Burton Stein, 'Notes on 'peasant insurgency'', p. 189

⁴⁸ Burton Stein, 'Notes on 'Peasant insurgency''

⁴⁹ Neelambar Hatti & James Heiman, 'The rule of Law and Dharma in Early 19th Century South Indian Villages', *Lund Papers in Economic History*, 5/96, p. 20

of nodes'.⁵⁰ We may call the system static because, according to Hatti & Heiman, this administrative revenue model rarely changed its character, though different rulers came and went. 'These nodes of revenue collection, at whatever level, were ready for anyone with power and influence to tap into.'⁵¹ However, when the revenue collection was assured, the local power holders were given freedom to handle other matters on their own. Most aspects of administrative affairs are described in this chapter as a supplement to better understanding of the dynamics of the Mysore state organisation, both, in Nagar District, and centrally.

Villages and panchayats

The village was the central unit of production in South India in medieval times, remaining so up until today. Some scholars have described the village as never changing: 'the isolated "village republics", which had subsisted and reproduced themselves "from time immemorial" as though sealed in a time capsule'⁵², whilst others have claimed it was evolving slowly and constantly.

The village servants, numbering up to 12 different persons in various positions, performed practical work, like guarding, washing and sweeping. Their salary was usually food or land. The headman who often was the renter of the village, called *gauda* or *potail*, and the village accountant, the *shanbog* or *karnam*, were the most prominent persons, and their offices were generally hereditary. The latter did the village accountancy regarding cultivation, and interacted with revenue officers. Throughout the late 18th century and the early 19th century Brahmins had taken many of these positions in Mysore, especially in Malnad. The headmen were usually closely tied to the Amildar and in a way representing him.

Villages and castes in early 19th century South India had a *panchayat*, an advisory or decision-making council, usually consisting of elder men. A village panchayat was made up of men from the dominant caste. They took decisions concerning local administration, social organisation, economical strategy and questions related to cultivation on a daily basis. The panchayat were also in contact with state officers and district officers, for instance the Amildars. The panchayat had a larger role also, often functioning as a court that could be

⁵⁰ Neelambar Hatti & James Heiman, 'The rule of Law and Dharma', p 20

⁵¹ Neelambar Hatti & James Heiman, 'The rule of Law and Dharma', p. 20

⁵² David Ludden, Peasant history in South India, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 6

appointed in special cases, either by a superior officer, or by the disputing parties themselves.⁵³ Panchayats were used on nearly all levels in the state organisation. During the rebellion they were assembled to judge special cases concerning rebel activity, as which happened after the battle of Honelly, where 99 persons were hanged.

The administrative hierarchy

The districts, called Foujdaris, were divided into talooks. A talook is a limited geographical area containing villages. The Amildar governed a talook. He was the head of police, had a limited jurisdiction, and most important. he was the local revenue collector. The Amildar was the peasant's link to the state though he did not always interact with the village headmen directly. Sometimes he sent Sheristadars or other servants from the Amildar's cutcherree to deal with business at village level. The Foujdar was the head of a Foujdari and superior to the Amildars, supervising them in administrative matters. All Foujdars were supposed to be appointed by the Rajah, in counsel with his advisors. The Foujdar was also head of the military in his district, and most important: he overlooked the revenue collection executed by the Amildars. He had to realize the collection at the stated periods of payment. If any criminal activities or disturbances were reported it was his business to investigate, deploy troops and make necessary arrangements. He should also attend to the complaints of the ryots.⁵⁴ Hoozoor was the Rajahs central administration, consistent of appointed members. It served as the daily counsel of affairs, executing royal orders. The term Hoozoor was also used to describe a ruler of the highest rank and the offices and appointments close to him. In the Hoozoor in Mysore, the heads of departments sat, and the royal will and the authority over the districts met and formed a single institution. The Durbar was the Rajahs court – an assembly, or a council meeting, comparative to a parliament, where the Rajah held audience. The Rajah led assemblies in the Durbar hall, where he resembled a divine authority.

The law courts

The civil judicial department was altered when the Rajah assumed power, inspired by the model of Madras Presidency. Three different courts handled civil cases on different levels,

⁵³ Mark Cubbon, 'Report on Civil and Criminal Judicature in Mysore', Mysore Commissioner's Office, Mysore, April 1838, p. 5

⁵⁴ Servottum Rao, ex-Foujdar of Nagar, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 146

and one court, the *Adawlut*, dealt with the magisterial department. All of the courts were headed by a chief judge and had separate organizations. The proceedings were: Statements were taken from the plaintiff and the defendant, and sentences passed by judges. Fees were levied upon suits.⁵⁵ Traditionally, criminal justice such as theft, robbery, highway robbery and murder, were much left to the local headmen and the panchayats. Severe crimes were inquired into by the Amildars and sentence passed by the Hoozoor. Under the Rajah the Adawlut was supposed to handle all cases of serious crime, but in practice the local Cutcherees, the Amildar's departments, continued to handle such cases. This gave the Amildars and Foujdars extensive control of local affairs.

Corporal punishment was much used in the criminal cases; for instance scarring, mutilation by cutting of ears and noses, whipping and hanging. Indications are that the use of severe corporal punishment increased in the last years of Purnaiya's reign and increased even more in the Rajah's time.⁵⁶

The Rajah lost control of local affairs and physical security diminished. Centrally the courts became infiltrated by members of different factions protecting their dependants and relatives, and influence was exercised upon the judges when the Rajah allowed the factions at the Durbar to influence decisions. In his 'Report on Civil and Criminal Judicature in Mysore', Mark Cubbon observed: '...the orders of the Court issued upon its ordinary business to the various Cutcheries, began to be neglected by the public officers of the State; the minions of the Durbar increased their interference, ...'⁵⁷ The courts came in bad repute and, follow Cubbon: 'It is currently believed, that every person about the Durbar at that time, however low, used to intermeddle in the suits, and to attempt to influence the decisions of the Adawlut.'⁵⁸ The Rajah was inconsistent and allowed himself to be moved in different directions from day to day. Sometimes the Rajah interfered in specific cases, thus creating confusion:

It has likewise happened that, in the same suit, as many as four or five contradictory decrees, in addition to the original decree of the Court, were successively passed by the Rajah himself, just as the influence of the one party or the other, predominated at the Durbar; ... nothing remained which was fit to be called the administration of

⁵⁵ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 629

⁵⁶ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, pp. 631 – 37

⁵⁷ Mark Cubbon, 'Report on', p. 6

⁵⁸ Mark Cubbon, 'Report on', p. 7

justice.... Questions of property were also decided by the Rajah in person, without any record of the investigation, or any decree.⁵⁹

The Rajah had authority to change this development; however he did not use this option. The courts of justice had limited power to pass sentence in serious cases of crime, only authority to judge the question of guilt. However, the Rajah, who retained the right to pass sentence, was unaware of the situation. 'The jails remained for years crowded with prisoners who, if guilty at all, were only guilty of light offences.'⁶⁰

Land tenancy and revenue

A Potal, or a Gauda, who rented a village, collected the revenue from the cultivators and delivered it to the *Sircar*.⁶¹ Sircar was the term for the Government and/or supreme authority. The Potal was responsible for the revenue income and for fulfilling his contract. The most common revenue system was the *Kandayam*, fixed money rent on land rented from generation to generation. The *Waram* arrangement was organised with hired labourers cultivating specified land for a return share of the produce. The ryots were occasionally forced to cultivate waram lands. Tanks, artificial ponds, called *Amani Talav* did not belong to any specific village. The lands connected to these tanks were cultivated by ryots from surrounding villages, and superintended by public servants. Other systems were rents that favoured certain individuals, for services, grants, pensions etc. The holders of *Shraya* paid reduced *Kandayam* for some years before entering a common contract while *Kayamgutta* was fixed reduced rent for a certain period. *Jagirs*, landed estates, were almost free land, or very low taxed land, and commonly used as rewards or grants for services.⁶²

In January or February, the Amildars or the Sheristadars made an estimation of the crop outcome, in consultation with the renters, usually for both the November and the May yield, and at the same time fixed the Government rent, the *Kandayam*. The rent averaged to 1/3 of the gross produce. In Chittledroog the rent was 18 % above that level. In Nagar the *Kandayam* was 3% less than average, however, since the agricultural charges were higher than elsewhere

⁵⁹ Mark Cubbon , 'Report on', p. 8

⁶⁰ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 425

⁶¹ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 619

⁶² B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, pp. 617-18

in Mysore, the surplus to the peasants came out 9 % below average.⁶³ The distinguished system in Nagar, called *shist*, I will describe later.

Shurtee and its consequences

The shurtee system was introduced in Mysore in the early 19th century with the goals to increase cultivation and increase the revenue. This is how Colonel Welsh described it in 1830:

Sharti was a contract made by the Amildar that he would realize for the Government a certain amount of revenue; that if his collections should fall short of that amount he would make good the deficiency and that if they exceeded it the surplus should be paid to the Government. The amount which the Amildar thus engaged to realize was generally an increase on what had been obtained the year preceding.⁶⁴

The Amildar offices were sold to the highest bidder and the Amildars were bound by contracts to make good any unforeseen deficiency and also pay the surplus revenue collected to the Government. The Amildar was bound not to oppress the ryots, not to impose new taxes and not to force the farmers to buy the Government's share of grain. The binding shurtee contract applied to the Amildar's talook and he was personally responsible for its fulfilment. The candidates opting for a shurtee contract could, and did, overbid each other in an open competition for situations. The evaluation of the candidates was done by the Rajah and his advisors. The person with the best offer was supposed to win the contract. Theoretically the candidates had to be qualified for the job also, however, often bribes and favours between the involved parties decided the outcome in cases where highest bid or qualifications did not. The writers of 'The Report' thought it natural that a Government in economical and moral decline would resort to use such a system:

Nothing seems more natural than that a weak, vicious, and ignorant Government, finding its revenue annually decrease, should ascribe the decline entirely (whether with justice or not) to the mismanagement and corruption of its officers, and conscious of its own inaptitude for vigorous efforts to correct those sources of the evil, should seek to check it by resorting to an expedient like this.⁶⁵

The shurtee system functioned as a no-win situation for all involved parties – the state, the officers and the peasants. The Government were pressured from excess spending and drop of

⁶³ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 616

⁶⁴ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 425

⁶⁵ 'Report on', p. 65

income. The Amildars were pressured to fulfil their contracts, which goals often were not feasible, and yet they obliged themselves by the agreements not to impose increased revenue and extraordinary taxes on the cultivators. In this complicated situation, trapped inside the spiral of continuously increasing revenue, irregularities occurred. The distance from the capital to the Foujdaris, especially Nagar, is a crucial point. When out of reach from Hoozoor and protected by kin, it was easier to make up for disadvantaging contracts. The Amildars usually promised too much, but under these protected circumstances, they still expected to increase the kandyam each year.

This precaution however did not prevent the system, according to the evidence of all the witnesses who have been examined regarding it, from operating to the decided disadvantage of all the parties concerned, of the Government, even with respect to the amount of revenue; of the people, and generally of the Amildars themselves.⁶⁶

Most of the witnesses interviewed for 'The Report', regardless of status in the administrative and social hierarchy, confirmed that the Amildars levied unlawful taxes and pressed the ryots continuously for increased revenue. The practice of offering positions to the highest bidder and the expectancy of increased revenue in successive years impoverished both farmers and Government.

The shurtee system proved in this way exceedingly injurious of the interests both of the Government and the people; and its pernicious operation was farther aggravated by ... that of removing Amildars as often as other persons came forward with offers to realize a larger revenue. This is stated to have been carried to such a length, that if any person made a higher offer even within a year in which the Amildar in possession had entered into his engagement and obtained his appointment the latter was removed and the office given to the former.⁶⁷

Even high ranked state officers who gained advantages and enriched themselves, realised how dysfunctional and unprofitable the system became. Vencata Kistniah, Foujdar of Manjarbad, told the Committee that the shurtee system was the reason for the downfall of the Mysore economy, when he stated: '...it is from this plan of setting the land to the highest bidder that the country has been injured and became the occasion of loss.'⁶⁸

⁶⁶ 'Report on', p. 66

⁶⁷ 'Report on', p. 67

⁶⁸ Vencata Kistniah, 'the Committee papers' p. 435

The system led to further decrease in state income, and as a consequence the Government blamed what they regarded as corrupt officers. The Rajah attempted to investigate and correct district officers, however, the main obstacle for investigation was that officers supported each other and prevented investigation of family members and dependants. The Amildars occasionally lost money and positions when they did not fulfil their contracts, and without the right connections higher up in the administration, they certainly risked their jobs, with the humiliation that followed. The Amildars were frequently removed to make room for others.⁶⁹ However, the Amildars had full control of their talooks in their period in office, even on short time assignments, and they had tools to press the cultivators. The Maratha Brahmins that filled nearly all the positions as Amildars in the 1820's ended up as mere revenue collectors instead of administrators. But even if the Amildars were under pressure and frequently replaced, the peasants suffered the greatest distress. The Amildars kept the surplus collected, because it seems that the shurtee was a system, not intended to, but designed for collection of as much revenue as possible.

Some of these officers indeed, finding that their predecessors had embezzled a considerable part of the revenue they had collected, or that through remissness they had omitted to procure payment of sums due to the state, were able to collect more than they had engaged for, and appropriating the surplus to themselves, notwithstanding the reserved right of the state to it, made a considerable profit by their undertaking, either without making undue exactions from the people, or besides the gain of such exactions.⁷⁰

Sayar and forced labour

To be able to obtain the promised revenue, the Amildars had additional means to increase their income, such as overrating of crop production and forced sale of grain to excess prices. There were several different taxes, tolls and duties levied on goods, also called sayar. B. Lewis Rice described the system: 'It is said to have been no uncommon thing to reward a favourite by the imposition of a new tax, or the institution of a new *katte* [literally meaning: a station where duties were levied].'⁷¹ The number of stations, spread all over Mysore, which

⁶⁹ Burton Stein, 'Notes on 'peasant insurgency'', p. 189

⁷⁰ 'Report on', p. 66

⁷¹ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 627

levied duty on goods in transit on high roads, in and out of towns and on consumption was 761. There were hardly any goods, whether luxury or necessities of life that were not taxed.⁷²

In fact stranger merchants were practically debarred from entering the country, and the whole of the trade, such as it was, became monopolized by the Sayar contractors or their servants, and a few practiced traders who were in close alliance with them or knew how to command powerful interests at the Darbar.⁷³

The holders of rights to levy sayar were usually added to shurtee contracts; however, the system differed from district to district. Contracts were auctioned, sometimes forcing the renter to borrow money from the *sowcars*, the moneylenders, and then to work harder to pay his debt and thus be put under pressure to press for profit. Many people were involved in this chain; the Government of Mysore, the renters, sometimes sub-renters, the *sowcars* and the *ryots*. All of them, except the *ryots*, sought to make profit on sayars.

In addition, according to *ryots* interviewed, the Amildars imposed extra taxes and extra work on the *ryots*, for instance collecting of firewood and tobacco.⁷⁴ Kurree Buswiah, a peasant from Honelly talook, told the Committee that the *ryots* had been forced to pay rents for waste land, a practice unknown in the days of Purnaiya, and 'Being unable to pay the increased taxes we assembled in Cootum. [Kuttam]'⁷⁵

⁷² B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 623

⁷³ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 624

⁷⁴ Mullaganee, *ryot* of Hurrunguttay, of the talook of Shimoga, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 353

⁷⁵ Kurree Buswiah, *ryot* of Guddakuttay, of the Honelly talook, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 370

4. Nagar District

This chapter gives the historical background of Nagar District, Keladi Kingdom and the poligars, in addition to a brief description of its population and religion. Nagar District was a separate Foudari in 1830, but is today a part of Shimoga district. Nagar is situated in Malnad country, in the hilly area in and bordering the Western Ghats. In 1830, Nagar was both a city and the name of the surrounding talook. The city of Nagar – today barely a sleepy provincial town – was in the 18th century the commercial centre of the district and of military importance, with a fort and a garrison.

Population and religion

The population of Nagar Foudari in 1830 was slightly less than 300 000. Nagar was less inhabited than the surrounding districts due to the area's diminished importance. Brahmins constituted 7 per cent of the Nagar population, a number which was significantly higher than in other districts.

The branch of Hinduism called Virasaivism was the state religion in the Kingdom of Keladi, and continued to be the influential religious force dominating the area of Malnad, as well as other parts of South India. The followers were called Lingayats. They comprised at the most about 30 per cent of the Nagar population. The district had a distinct identity. However, Maratha Brahmins controlled almost all high offices in the administration. The impact of religious difference created a strong local solidarity in Nagar District, among the elites and headmen in the villages, and also among the population in general. Burton Stein claims that: 'Virasaiva solidarity was a major element in the coherence of the uprising in the Malnad and involved co-sectarians from across the border in southern Bombay.'⁷⁶

A distinct history: Keladi Kingdom

The province of Keladi was formed as a buffer zone on the fringe of the famous Vijayanagar-kingdom – supposed to function as a fortified bulwark between this empire and external

⁷⁶ Burton Stein, 'Notes on 'peasant insurgency'', pp. 193 - 94

enemies. Chaudagauda (1499-1513), a Vijayanagra officer, was ceded a small area in the Malnad from which the state of Keladi rose in a period when the central powers of the Vijayanagar state gradually lost control of the autonomous warlord provinces at the rim of the empire.⁷⁷ During the slow decline of Vijayanagar these warlords assumed high titles and dignities and established their local power bases as little kings. The Keladi state became fully independent in 1639, ruled by the descendants of Chaudagauda Nayak, and supported by local chiefs, the traditional local nodes of power in the Malnad from then up to late 18. century. The royal family adopted the title Nayak, a word which became synonym with the title king, after the fall of Vijayanagar in 1565.

The area of the Keladi kingdom corresponded to the districts of Shimoga, Mangalore and Goa of today and thus included the Foujdari of Nagar where the rebellion took place. Nagar town was a prosperous centre in the kingdom and also the capital for a period, though the capital shifted between Keladi, Ikkeri, Bhuvanagiri and Nagar, the latter being capital when Haider conquered the last Keladi king in 1763. At that time Nagar had around 100 000 inhabitants. The Keladi kingdom was ruled by a line of 16 successive Nayaks from 1499 to 1763, including the legendary Queen Chennamma (1671-1696), and the infamous Shivappa Nayak (1645-60), who is still remembered in the area as a great reformer and a local hero. The Muslim sultan Haider Ali incorporated the Keladi Kingdom into the state of Mysore. After the fall of Tipu Sultan in 1799, Nagar remained a part of Mysore, in accordance with the Treaty of 1799.

The Muslim rulers of Mysore attempted to integrate the total area of Malnad into greater Mysore, because of its resources and strategic position as a buffer towards the warring Marathas to the north. But the elites and local lords, the poligars, of Malnad resisted cultural and political integration under the domination of Maidaan as long as it was possible.

Nagar, the last capital of Keladi Kingdom, had traditionally been the richest centre in Malnad.⁷⁸ The products produced and exported were gold coins, precious stones, betel and spices. In 1830, both the town of Nagar and the Foujdari were slumbering places, with not much left of former prosperity. The court of the Nayaks had been forced to dissolve and the

⁷⁷ K. V. Ramesh, 'Notes on territorial history of the Keladi Kingdom', in G. S. Dikshit, (ed.): *Studies in Keladi history*, Mythic Society, 1981, Bangalore

⁷⁸ Nigel H. M. Chancellor, 'Mysore' p. 114

elites had moved away from the city. The Resident Barry Close wrote to the Governor-General Lord Mornington, on the 2nd of November 1799, stating that 'From appearances the town of Nuggur [Nagar] at no very remote period must have been immensely populous but ... has fallen into decay.'⁷⁹

The shist

The most celebrated of the Keladi Nayaks' is the legendary Shivappa Nayak. The distinctive land revenue system Shivappa Nayak introduced was called shist. This was a permanent assessment. The property of soil was vested in the landholder, while in other parts of Mysore the system was generally based upon hereditary right to cultivation.⁸⁰ K. N. Chitnis has written about shist: 'The institution of private property in land was recognized in Keladi. [...] the people owned their own lands in Keladi. On many occasions, the king purchased lands from the people. Sometimes the people purchased them from the king.'⁸¹

The Amildar proceeded to the villages in the beginning of the year to determine the general state of cultivation and concluded the rent with the potails. If all the land of any ryot was kept uncultivated, the revenue of that land was remitted. If a part of the land of one individual was cultivated, no remission was allowed. The Waram arrangement was not used much.⁸² The cultivators paid the revenue to the Government via the head man or the village accountant.⁸³ The assessment was fixed and rarely altered. The Government share was 1/3 of the produce, plus a fixed money rent, taken on a rough estimate of the seeds sown or the ploughs used. The Government had no further interference with the cultivators. This assessment was kept unchanged by Shivappa Nayaks successors, except when minor extra taxes were levied. The land was divided into five different categories, dependant upon the fertility and quality of the soil. This assessment was simple and popular. This practice of shist continued until Haider Ali reformed it in 1764. On the establishment of the new Government of Mysore in 1799, the landholders of Nagar attempted to restore the shist, an arrangement they were granted in a moderated form: 'Shivappa Nayak's Sistu assessment was so popular in Malnad and Coastal

⁷⁹ M. H. Gopal, *British Sources of the economic*, p. 54

⁸⁰ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore, A gazetteer, Compiled for the Government*, revised edition, Vol. II, (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1897), p. 602

⁸¹ K. N. Chitnis, 'Keladi Administration', in G. S. Dikshit (ed.), *Studies in Keladi history*, (Bangalore: Mythic Society, 1981), p. 77

⁸² B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 620

⁸³ K. N. Chitnis, 'Keladi Administration', p. 78

areas of Karnataka that it remained as standard until the beginning of the colonial rule in the region.’⁸⁴ Shivappa Nayak is romanticised in history writing in Shimoga district.

He used to encourage cultivators ... by advancing loans and by constructing irrigation works like, tanks and canals. ... He also abolished all illegal rural taxes ... the policy of land revenue adopted by the Keladi State was modern in character and scientific in approach. ... It was in no way less liberal and less efficient than the subsequent Thomas Munro's system of land revenue administration in the region. ... It was not oppressive in character.⁸⁵

This strong historical memory and identification with the past in Nagar District, was alive in Purnaiya's and Rajah's time. Chancellor's article confirms the impression that the history of Keladi made remarkable imprint on the people of this region and 'a strong impression of the lasting identification with the old kingdom of Keladi amongst inhabitants of this extraordinarily beautiful and dramatic area.'⁸⁶

Under the Rajah's regime shurtee was introduced to Nagar by the newly immigrated Maratha Brahmin administrators. They established a hybrid revenue-model new to the area, with much of the same consequences to revenue collection that applied to the rest of Mysore. Shurtee also permitted the rights to collect Sayar in Nagar District to be divided between different persons and rented by the highest bidders, who sometimes again let sub-renters handle the business, thus creating a system with many profiteers involved.

An ideological platform: The poligars and the pretender

Local Keladi identity surfaced in the late 18th century and was reshaped by the insurgent Nagar poligars. Burton Stein points toward that the strong recollection of earlier times and tradition mostly had its function as an ideological platform, and that it was a major factor in the rebellion.

The persistent independence of the raja of Nagar and the various palegararu of the large upland between the Western Ghats, where Nagar nestled, and the eastern upland portions of Karnataka adjoining the Ceded Districts of Madras, had hardened during the late eighteenth century. ... In 1830 it was the reawakening of the earlier political

⁸⁴ Mrs. Patel, 'State, peasants and land revenue – A scientific approach of a native state in pre-colonial South India', A paper, (Bhadravti: Not dated), p. 5

⁸⁵ Mrs. Patel, 'State, peasants and land revenue', pp. 6 - 7

⁸⁶ Nigel H. M. Chancellor, 'Mysore' p. 114

opposition to Malnad people to the domination of the Mysore Durbar that appears to have been crystallised.⁸⁷

Traditional poligar authority had been gradually broken by Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan before 1800. However, the descendants of the Keladi kings, the poligars, lived and acted with some degree of authority on the edges of the Mysorean administrative system. In 1830 two persons from different families claimed to be heirs of the old line of local Keladi rulers. One of them was an elder man called Rungappah Naik, a descendant of the last Keladi ruler. He lived for many years together with his son Hanoomuppah Naik and nephew Surjappah Naik, collecting a state pension. These men were known as the Terikkery poligars. Rungappah Naik carried no formal power, but exerted strong influence. The peasants presented him donations and gifts in the conventional manner of honouring superior authority.

Another person that came to be titled poligar was an adventurer. Based upon a falsified hereditary right, Buda Basveppa, also called Rajah of Nagar, claimed his right to the throne of Nagar. He was the most active adventurer participating in the insurrection.

I heard that a person calling himself the Nuggur Poligar had rebelled against the Mysore Government and that he was not a descendant of the Nuggur ... He was a Cultivating Ryot in the Village of Jumagutty of the Coomsee Talook of the name of Hyagamullah but having obtained the seal of the ancient Nuggur family the Ryots styled him "master or Rajah".⁸⁸

His real name was probably Sadara Mulla.⁸⁹ Born as a son of a ryot from Kumsi talook, a few kilometres from Shimoga, Buda was a notorious small scale criminal before he turned twenty. He had participated in robbery and looting, and previously spent two years in prison. After he served this sentence he came connected to an old *Jangama*, who had, through his profession as a priest and spiritual advisor for the late Keladi ruler, got hold of the Nayak's signet rings.⁹⁰ Following the *Jangama*'s death, Buda Basveppa obtained these rings and used them to create a manufactured background for himself. During the next years he expanded the story until it included status as the rightful heir to the throne of Nagar. At the occasion of his own wedding, in April 1830, he claimed the title 'Nagar Khawind', meaning 'Rajah of Nagar'. The exact date of this ceremony is given in the sources. 'Basveppa', his surname, was also false. He

⁸⁷ Burton Stein, 'Notes on 'peasant insurgency'', p. 191

⁸⁸ Annapah, military commander and Foudjar of Nagar from January 1831, to the Committee, the Committee papers, p. 315

⁸⁹ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 426

⁹⁰ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 426

took this name from the city where the Terikkery Poligars originated thus adding to his own name a glow of royalty.⁹¹

Buda received acceptance for his background by showing a false *sunnud* [royal document] bearing his new name: 'Buda Basveppa Nagar Khawind'. This document, '...a sunnud of the Company's Government, recognizing and sanctioning his hereditary pretensions to the sovereignty of Nuggur'⁹², was actively used to gain recognition. Buda claimed the throne just prior to the first kuttams. He took advantage of the displeasure that increased amongst the ryots in mid-1830 and he therefore gained supporters and became the figure head of the rebellion. Buda promised the ryots reduced rents and compensation for losses. The writers of 'The Report' claimed that Buda played the most prominent role in the following insurrection. The next chapter includes a narrative of the insurrection, including a summary of the explanations, as to its causes.

⁹¹ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, Vol. II, p. 447

⁹² 'Report on', p. 24

5. The insurrection

The course of events from August 1830 to July 1831 is unclear and difficult to determine exactly, since our knowledge is based upon statements from witnesses with differing views on the affairs.

The Rajah's perhaps closest advisor and experienced servant since 1811 was Ram Rao. His journey to Nagar in 1827 is central to the understanding of the tight bonds between the Amildars in Nagar and their patrons in Mysore. The story shows us also how a party of Maratha Brahmins connected to Ram Rao played an important role in the insurrection and also how the peasants came to be distressed.

Ram Rao travelled to Nagar Foudari in 1827 accompanied by Vencata Kistniah, a civil servant who later became the Foudar of Manjarbad. In Nagar they investigated the decrease of revenue from that district. Ram Rao's son-in-law Kishen Rao was the Foudar of Nagar at this time. The peasants complained that rents were demanded on waste lands, that the Amildars distressed them greatly, and that they used torture to exact payment.⁹³ Ram Rao enquired into the circumstances and admitted rent remissions amounting to almost 750 000 rupees. At the same time he consolidated the Amildars allegiances, which afterwards gave them an opportunity to press harder for the rents.

The Rajah received information that the remissions made by Ram Rao were unnecessary and uncalled for. Rumours among the officers not connected to Ram Rao's party were that the remissions only served the purpose of 'integrating his own people in the talooks with the Ryots'⁹⁴ and strengthen his dependants' positions in Nagar District. It was also rumoured that Ram Rao himself benefited from the remissions, most likely through bribes and gifts.⁹⁵ Corruption was suspected and this episode provoked a number of reactions in the central administration. One of the Rajahs relative's, Veera Raj Arus, was appointed as the new Foudar of Nagar. He held the office for two years until Ram Rao's party managed to regain the position. Veera Raj Arus instigated inquiries concerning '... the alleged frauds of the

⁹³ Vencata Kistniah, 'the Committee papers', p. 423

⁹⁴ Seebiah, Sheristardar of the Dewan Cutcherree, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 1337

⁹⁵ Sunnoo Row, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 1385

Buckshee [the title of Ram Rao], and the abuses of the preceding Foujdars, as well as of the Amildars of that party, when he was suddenly recalled to the Durbar.’⁹⁶

When Veera Raj Arus started his investigations, he assumed that he had received a mandate from the Rajah to collect the outstanding debt that was earlier remitted by Ram Rao. This provoked strong dissatisfaction amongst the potails and peasants, causing disturbances to break out. Veera Raj Arus had tried to probe into a web of crime and corruption, when he came close to sensitive information harmful to the party of Ram Rao and his dependants. Ram Rao, who is believed to have been one of the Rajah’s most important advisors for a period of more than 20 years, had the power to alter the outcome of investigations in the state of Mysore and to alter the management of Nagar District as it suited him. Veera Raj Arus was recalled to Durbar and Kishen Rao was again put in the position as Foujdar of Nagar. This replacement took place while the rebellion was at its height; therefore we might assume that there were additional explanations for the removal of Veera Raj Arus. He could not quell the rebellion and the Government wanted a strong military leader in this state of crisis. Kishen Rao, who had been fired due to corruption in 1828, was reinstated in November 1830. However, he was removed again two months after, which we will see later in this chapter.

A blanket of unrest had covered the Malnad area since the spring of 1830. The peasant’s disapproval of new taxes, forced labour, increased rent, injustice and incompetent Amildars and rumours of the coming a new Rajah of Nagar, indicate a general dissatisfaction and instability. Further, these factors seemed to be significant in contributing to the kuttams that sprung up in August 1830.

Buda Basveppa did not just wait to observe what happened. In the beginning of August, one of Buda Basveppas commandants, Monnapah, led an attack on the fort at Anuntapoor, in Nagar District. His army was only 200 men strong – a mix of local ryots and mercenaries. This was the first outright hostile act towards the Government. Though this attack failed, it was the first of many violent clashes between the rebels and the Government.

The peasant uprising broke out in Nagar Foujdari. Buda Basveppa had excited the ryots and encouraged them to protest against the Government since the time of his wedding in April. In

⁹⁶ ‘Report on’, p. 22

August a letter from the ryots of Nagar was distributed to the neighbouring talooks. This letter, besides encouraging people to gather in kuttams, called on everyone to: Refuse to pay rent on land, stop cultivating the land, end all trading, and arrest and contain public officers and bring them to the kuttams. In the following months the insurrection spread rapidly. In August and September 1830 the ryots assembled in kuttams several places to express their displeasure with taxes and rents and to protest against the oppression from the Amildars.

The discontent was fomented by a pretender to the Bednur throne, named Budi Basveppa, who formed insurgent bands; and these again were shortly joined by Rangappa Nayak, the head of the Tarikere family, and by numbers of thugs, professional stranglers.⁹⁷

Buda Basveppa and Rungappah Naik campaigned for support from the peasants. The peasants again spread the word of rebellion and the insurgency spread to most districts all over Mysore. In December 1830, Bangalore, Chittledroog and Manjarbad, even places hundreds of kilometres away, were affected by uprisings. In some talooks small battles between disgruntled peasants and Mysore troops were fought. The insurrection spread, though it did not reach the same level of intensity as it did in Nagar. A majority of the Amildars interviewed confirmed that the ryots had gathered in kuttams in their talooks. Timmapah Raj Arus, Foujdar of Bangalore during the disturbances, told the writers of 'The Report' that the insurrection broke out in his district just after it had broken out in Nagar.⁹⁸ The Rajah received a letter from Timmapah Raj where he complained that he had lost control and that the insurgents destroyed the crops, refused to cultivate, did not pay their taxes and plundered along the main roads. However, in contrast to what took place in Nagar and Chittledroog, the kuttams were dissolved with a small number of soldiers and the use of diplomacy, and, on a few occasions, with the help of Company soldiers stationed nearby. In Manjarbad Foujdari the situation was similar. Vera Raj Arus, the former Dewan of Mysore, claimed that the peasants in Chenroyapatam, a talook in Manjarbad, did not voluntarily join the kuttams, but that ringleaders and authoritarian persons had pressed them to do so, and that threatening letters from rebel leaders in Nagar and Chittledroog had encouraged them to such an extent that they felt compelled to rise up.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, Vol. II, p. 438

⁹⁸ Timmapah Raj Arus, Ex-Foujdar of Nagar, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 327

⁹⁹ Vera Raj Arus, Ex-Dewan of Mysore, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 667

Letters were rapidly circulated and symbols of rebellion were sent from village to village: for example, leaves from the Murgosa tree, an ancient symbol of uprising. One such letter was written by Gopal Rao, a member of the Anegerry-family – a Maratha Brahmin family connected to Ram Rao since the 18th century. Gopal Rao was a dependant of Ram Rao, tied to him through inter-marriage. Gopal Rao cautioned the people not to return to their villages even if they were ordered to do so by the Rajah. He exited the ryots of Chinnagerry talook, in Nagar District, to rise in kuttam, which they did accordingly, on the 3rd of September.¹⁰⁰ No violence happened here, and the kuttam soon ended. However, the headmen of the kuttam moved on to gather more support in the neighbouring talooks. In this way the uprising spread to Buswencottah, Shimoga, Holy-Hoonor, Anuntapoor, Terikkery, Sorub and Anawutty. In all these places peasants came together in huge crowds and resisted for several days the attempts to disperse them.

The poligars and their tactics

The insurrection was not a unified movement in which the participants had identical goals. It spread throughout the different layers of people and districts, and assumed different shapes in each location, although, there were clearly two main movements running parallel in the events. The Poligars had a distinct agenda, and more or less declared open war against the Government in Mysore. The ryots on the other hand had a different programme. They sought tax remissions, reduction of rent and justice, and they used the kuttams to deliver their message. These two independent movements converged on certain matters, influenced each other, and together strengthened their opposition against what became their mutual enemy; the Mysore Government. When Buda Basveppa realised that the peasants were in a disturbed state he was quick to fraternize with them, using his tactical skills to persuade them. He spread rumours that he was the acclaimed sovereign of Nuggur, showed his sunnud, styled himself 'Rajah' and told the ryots that the British supported him. Buda also intimidated the peasants by the use of force, pressurising them to join him. Eyewitnesses told the Committee that the poligars, as well as the other leaders of the rebellion, also threatened the ryots with expulsion from caste.¹⁰¹ Ramiah, an officer of Shimoga, who negotiated with the insurgents who had fled to Company territory in fear of punishment from Foujdar Kishen Raos troops, revealed to the writers of 'The Report' how he understood Buda's tactics:

¹⁰⁰ 'Report on', p. 25

¹⁰¹ Nursipur Narnapah, Amildar of Niddigul Talook, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 639

Prior to this conversation which I had with the ryots ... the Nuggur Poliygar had been with them, giving them bad advice and telling them that the whole of the country was his and that they must become his allies. ... The Poligar was aware of my stipulations into which I had entered with the ryots and he went to them subsequently and persuaded them not to listen ... I learned that the Poligar came to the ryots in the night time, had conversation with them, and went off again.¹⁰²

A great number of insurgents fled to areas controlled by stationed Company troops after losing battles with the Mysore Government troops. A large part of the Nagar rebels believed that the British were on their side, or at that they would stay neutral in the conflict, and that the Company would not under any circumstance intervene on the Rajah's side. This is an example on how the poligars successfully influenced the ryots by spreading rumours:

He [Buda Basveppa] issued a proclamation that he had received authority from the Company's Government to take possession of his own country, which the Ryots so firmly trusted, that when Lieutenant Rochfort came, the people would not believe that the Company Government would assist the Rajah but that the latter had disguised a person of fair complexion in the dress of an European Officer and sent him there.¹⁰³

Rungappah Naik, together with his family, extended his cooperation with Buda Basveppa in December 1830. Rungappah Naik played a more active role in the Nagar rebellion as it evolved. The Committee pointed out several important aspects concerning Rungappah Naik.

Runganappah Naik availed himself of the disaffection of the ryots towards the Government to improve this influence, and call it into exercise, by pressing on them the claims of his family, their ancient sovereigns, and reminding them of former days when the assessment on the land were lighter, and by promising to restore that happy state of affairs, if they would now publicly recognize and support his pretensions. The ryots generally declared in his favour and reciprocally solicited his aid to enable them to throw off the Mysore yoke.¹⁰⁴

The old poligar drew upon the history of Nagar from the times before Haider Ali, back to Keladi Kingdom and the Nayaks. The Poligar exploited Malnad traditional resistance of political assimilation into greater Mysore. The Terikkery family's participation in the rebellion was a full-fledged plan, which included an ideological basis with distinct goals of regaining power.

¹⁰² Ramiah, local officer at Shimoga, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', pp. 390-391

¹⁰³ Annapah, 'the Committee papers', p. 320

¹⁰⁴ 'Report on', p. 30

The local officers handling the rebellion

From August to November 1830 the local officers had to contend with the growing insurrection despite limited available local recourses. It proved more difficult for the Foujdar and the Amildars in Nagar to put down the uprisings than for the officers in other parts of Mysore.

Dispersing the gatherings of even large gatherings ... in the 1830 proved within the capabilities of many Amildars in the central and southern parts of the kingdom by deployment of their armed revenue 'peons' ... if this was not sufficient, the troops of the Mysore Durbar were used. ... However, in the upland zone of the Mysore state, anti-Government military formations were more powerful, and resistance was backed ideologically and politically such as to pose more grave problems for the Mysore Durbar.¹⁰⁵

In these months the rebels in Nagar were left almost free to roam the countryside, hunt down Government representatives and occupy forts and towns. In this chaos the Amildars and the Foujdar resorted to the use of extremely harsh methods to make up for lack of guns and proper military equipment. Commander Syed Salar told the Committee: 'Having no guns nor grain nor any means of forming a battery, we returned to Terrykerrah and wrote to the Hoozoor for which we were accordingly furnished.'¹⁰⁶

It is also interesting to note that the Commander of Mysore troop, Buckshee Syed Salar, was not able to state, before the Committee, who in fact commanded the troops. It seems as if no person was in charge of the operation.¹⁰⁷ The armed forces were clearly unorganised. In November 1830, the administration in Mysore realised that they had to disperse more soldiers and change their strategy towards the rebelling ryots and the Poligars. The Rajah gave orders to use rough methods. Later, when witnessing before the Committee, several of the officers said, they had strongly opposed to these orders. Foujdar of Chittledroog, Ashraff Allee Khan claimed that he had received instructions 'that if any should again be guilty of any act of rebellion, they should be seriously punished' and that he was told to execute rebelling ryots instead of mutilating them.¹⁰⁸ At the end of December, the Amildars and the Foujdars all over Mysore, had spread kuttams and killed a great number of people in several violent skirmishes,

¹⁰⁵ Burton Stein, 'Notes on 'peasant insurgency'', p. 193

¹⁰⁶ Buckshee Syed Salar, Commander of Mysore troops, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 212

¹⁰⁷ Buckshee Syed Salar, p. 213

¹⁰⁸ Ashraff Allee Khan, Foujdar of Chittledroog, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 205

and this occurred more in Nagar than in any other district. At this time more than 50 people had been killed and more than 200 wounded in Nagar District.

The Amildars faced problems of desertions as well. Around 1500 out of the 15 000 Candachar Peons deserted during the disturbances, something that did not surprise the Committee. The Candachar Peons were soldiers, or more exactly armed police, and stationed locally by the Hoozoor with the purpose of supporting the Amildars. One possible reason for their desertions was that their loyalty to Rajah was not deeply rooted in places far away from the state capital of Mysore. Another explanation for their desertion was arrears in payment. Salaries were not paid regularly in the 1820s and were often delayed up to 18 months. During the insurrection few of them had received the latest payment owed them.

The Candachar Peons were the cultivators of land, and, at the same time, were employed in the Government service. When the insurrection broke out, the Pottails and Ryots asked these Peons whether they were the adherents of Government or theirs, and the Peons being the co-habitants of the Villages of Pottails and Ryots united with them in the revolt according to the wishes. Besides this, the wages of these Peons were due from the Government for the period of 10 or 18 months ... which made them discontented, and induced them to join the rebellion.¹⁰⁹

Only one tenth of the total number of Candachar Peons deserted and the desertions did not take place solely in Nagar. The arrears of payment were the same all over Mysore state and it can therefore be argued that the desertions were mainly caused by this. On the other hand, more factors must be regarded. Since Buda Basveppa and the Terikkery poligars were persuasive, and since the peasants to some extent acknowledged their claims to power, and also because the poligars for a long time looked like a winning team, it became convenient for the peons to switch sides in the districts where the Mysore Government was weak, for instance in Nagar. The witnesses confirmed that more Candachar Peons deserted in Nagar than compared to the rest of Mysore, the reason being, in the Committee's own words, that 'there was nothing in their situation to preserve them from popular influences, and to hinder the contagion of sedition from spreading among them'¹¹⁰

Company soldiers were not actively used during the first months of the insurrection. Colonel Woulfe was stationed at Hurryhur as commander of the 24th Regiment. He witnessed the

¹⁰⁹ Runga Rao, 'the Committee papers', p. 1001

¹¹⁰ 'Report on', p. 53

insurrection spread and observed the difficulties the local officers faced. Not until the 28th of February 1831 was his regiment put in action. In a letter to the Committee he criticised the Indian officer's way of handling the situation.

...it never came to my knowledge that any attempts had been made to put a stop to it, by any other means, than those of Coercion, even in the early stages of it. As force was, therefore, resorted to, to crush the insurrection, it did not appear to me, that the measures adopted were such, as were likely to effect the intended object. No body of sufficient troops of sufficient strength was, as far as I was informed, assembled, until a considerable period after the insurrection had assembled a formidable appearance and some of the Poligar chiefs had possessed themselves of several strongholds.¹¹¹

He, like many others, pointed out that there was no communication between the military units, that the enemy was underestimated, that the units lacked proper supply lines and insufficient supplies of ammunition and food.

Taking into consideration therefore, the extent of the country in which the insurrection prevailed, and the jungly nature of it, the number of Troops employed was totally inadequate, and the disposition of the different arms of which the two Detachments were composed, was objectionable.¹¹²

But when the Rajah's attention was drawn to the situation, more resources were allocated. The Foudar of Nagar, Veera Raj Arus, failing to end the insurrection by the forces at his disposal, was met with indignation from the administration in Mysore and even among his relatives. The displeased officers at the Hoozoor argued to remove him, so the Rajah complied. Kishen Rao, the nephew of Buckshee Ram Rao, was then reinstated as Foudar of Nagar and troops were given to his disposal.

Kishen Rao marched straight to Nagar and encountered a kuttam at Holy-Honor on the 16th November 1830, containing 2000 – 3000 ryots, many of them armed. The insurgent peasants who gathered here wanted the Amildar of Chinnagerry, a relative of Annagherry Gopal Rao, to be delivered to them. When they also unsuccessfully tried, without success, to capture the local fort, Kishen Rao found it necessary to disperse the crowd on the 7th of December 1830. Ten local ryots were killed and more than one hundred were injured.¹¹³ However, the crowds

¹¹¹ Letter from Colonel Woulfe, Commander of the 24. regiment, 'the Committee papers' p. 1017

¹¹² Letter from Colonel Woulfe, 'the Committee papers' p. 1019

¹¹³ 'Report on', p. 28

were dispersed only for a short while. A few days later the ryots gathered in a larger kuttam at Honelly, less than 25 kilometres further north.

... for soon it rallied, and having been joined by ryots from almost every district in Nuggur, who now openly confederated with the Poligar (Rungappah Naik) against the Government, they formed a body, computed variously by different witnesses at from six or seven thousand to twenty thousand, in the vicinity of Honelly.¹¹⁴

Kishen Rao with a regiment from the Mysore Horse immediately attacked this huge crowd, injured several insurgents and captured 25.¹¹⁵ The prisoners were released after having their ears and noses cut off. These two incidents described were of such a dramatic and violent character that they shocked the peasants in the whole district. The rumour that Kishen Rao was about to slaughter all insubordinate persons spread fast all over Nagar. Thousands of peasants fled to nearby neighbouring territories controlled by the Company because of these rumours.

The Resident alarmed – the Company involved

The Resident got involved in November 1830. On the 22nd of November, a short time before the incidents in Honelly and Holy-Hoonor, the Resident sent a strong warning to Rajah concerning the insurrection.

He pointed out the alarming progress of the disturbances, and the violence which the district officers had suffered from the ryots, adding his opinion that the ryots of Mysore would not have committed such excesses without cause. He observed that no inquiries had been made into the conduct of the public servants, who had oppressed the people, nor had their mal-practices received any check from the Government, and he concluded with urging His Highness to take some prompt steps with a view to remedy the growing evil.¹¹⁶

The Resident initially hoped that the Rajah would be spared from travelling in person to the insubordinate areas, but realized soon that it might become unavoidable. On the 6th of November the Resident reported to the Government in Madras that he hoped the Dewan proved capable of solving the problems, preferably by visiting the rebellious areas himself – supported by military forces.

¹¹⁴ 'Report on', p. 29

¹¹⁵ 'Report on', p. 29

¹¹⁶ 'Report on', p. 28

On the 6th of this month [November], the Resident, addressing the chief Secretary to Government, stated, that a spirit of insubordination had been lately manifested among the ryots of the Northern Talooks of Mysore, in consequence of the undecided and dilatory manner in which the Rajah had met their complaints, and of his continuing in their offices Foujdars who had rendered themselves obnoxious to the people by abuses and acts of oppression.¹¹⁷

The Resident also made it clear that British forces should be kept out of the situation as long as possible. However, the Rajah sought British interference, preferably in the shape of a small symbolic force. Consequently, the Resident expressed, in the same letter, that it was not at all possible to involve Company forces actively before the rebels openly showed armed aggression; however, in case the Dewan was unsuccessful, he agreed to support him with the presence of a small force for the sake of example. The Resident suggested that the Rajah should travel in person to the rebel districts, and that the Company would hold one regiment of foot soldiers and two squadrons of cavalry in readiness in Bangalore – to be used in a case of emergency only. The Resident wanted the Company to keep a low profile.

These two letters manifested a shift in the Company policy towards the situation. The British patience had been tested and a likely British intervention was approaching. There was nothing new about the Resident criticising the Rajah, but he was now for the first time engaged personally in the rebellion. And he was clear spoken when he criticised the Rajah for not giving the matter more attention. However, the Rajah had taken measures to calm the rebellion. In letters dated the 10th of November and the 21st of November, he ordered the Foujdars of Bangalore, Chittledroog and Nagar, to find and hang rebels that withheld rent or rebelled against the Amildars. He had also removed Vera Raj Arus from his position and reinstated Kishen Rao as Foujdar of Nagar. These measures proved not to be sufficient and in December the Rajah sent reinforcements to both Nagar and Bangalore district, and decided to travel himself to the disturbed areas.

The Resident and the Rajah to Manjarbad

The disturbances in Manjarbad Foujdari started just a few weeks after the first uprisings in Nagar. Large kuttams gathered in Chenroyapatam and in most of the nearby talooks in the

¹¹⁷ 'Report on', p. 31

district. The Rajah decided to quell the rebellion here first, mainly due to the fact that it was much closer to Mysore than Nagar. The Resident left Mysore before the Rajah and travelled ahead to the nearest troubled areas in the Manjarbad Foujdari. Upon arriving he recommended that the peasants be patient and wait for the king to come to hear their complaints. He ensured them that all their claims would be enquired into by the Government and that all allegations against the Amildars would be investigated properly. Subsequently he attempted to discourage the peasants from having too high hopes of receiving reductions in the rent or any other financial remittances.

On the 16th of December Dewan Venkataj Raj Arus sent a letter to the distressed ryots in Yeggetty talook and informed them that the Rajah was coming to Chenroyapatam in person. He encouraged them to come forward to present their complaints. At the same time he promised that measures would be taken to prevent further suffering and oppression.¹¹⁸ On the way to Chenroyapatam the Rajah made some stopovers in troubled districts. In these districts, the Rajah punished and fired a few district officers, and immediately installed new officers. He then distributed presents to the principal potails and betel nuts to the peasants, and dismissed them to their villages. The Rajah refused to make immediate changes in the revenue system, arguing that it was long established.¹¹⁹ The Rajah, accompanied by family, reached Chenroyapatam on the 18th of December 1830, and encountered a kuttam containing several thousand people, mainly ryots and potails. The dissidents were asked to break up the gathering and return to their respective villages. They refused to go home and ‘an increased insubordination and disrespect to the Rajah was manifested by these ryots on the following day.’¹²⁰ Instead of delivering their complaints or disperse the crowd, the ryots stuck together, played on their flutes and drums and showed ‘... acts indicative of gross disrespect to their sovereign, if not of open defiance of his authority.’¹²¹

The Rajah ordered the drums and flutes confiscated and the leaders to be arrested. The instruments were considered to be traditional symbols of rebellion. Then he sent officers who were escorted by troops to enquire into the complaints of the ryots and to punish whoever they thought deserved it. Little loyalty was shown towards the Rajah, and the insurgents clearly did not trust the officers, which was the main reasons for the ryots not coming

¹¹⁸ ‘Report on’, p. 31

¹¹⁹ ‘Report on’, p. 33

¹²⁰ ‘Report on’, p. 34

¹²¹ ‘Report on’, p. 34

forward. The presence of a large body of troops in the Rajah's camp also could have frightened the peasants and prevented them from coming forward with their complaints. Another possible reason for this reluctance could be that they had been so frequently disappointed that they did not trust the administration's capacity to improve their situation.¹²² Possibly the rumours of the violence that had met the ryots at Holy-Hoonor had reached them and they feared the same treatment. The kuttam at Chenroyapatam was finally dispersed with the use of violence. Five of the dissident ryots were executed on the spot, presumably picked out by Chowdiah, the Residents Sheristardar, and many more flogged. There are no available records on the exact number of punishments. The Rajah returned to Mysore when the disturbances in Manjarbad had ended.

The still distressed peasants in Nagar had hoped that the Rajah would come to the district to investigate the situation, subsequent to his visit in Manjarbad, but he did not. When the Rajah returned to Mysore from Chenroyapatam so soon after settling the matters there, the people generally believed it was the Foujdar Kishen Rao and his unpopular allies who had influenced him to go home. A local officer at Shimoga stated to the Committee that most of the people alleged that it was the Rajah's advisors, closely related to Kishen Rao, who had discouraged the Rajah from coming to Nagar because they were afraid their crimes and corrupt ways could be exposed if he went there.¹²³

Dewan Venkataj Raj Arus, Annapah and Lieutenant Rochfort

In December 1830 Rungappah Naik, the poligar of Terikkery, and his nephew openly attacked the forts at Culdroog and Camundroog, in the eastern part of Nagar. Both forts were seized by the insurgents. Dewan Venkataj Arus was ordered to take back these forts with a strong force and on the 5th of January 1831 he went to Chittledroog and Nagar Foujdaris in command of a strong military force, including cavalry and infantry, with the purpose of trying to end the insurrection permanently.

About the same time, early in January, Kishen Rao was removed as Foujdar, and Annapah, an officer in the Mysore Horse, replaced him. The official reason for the replacement was Kishen Raos inability to end the insurrection in Nagar. Annapah obtained an extended mandate to

¹²² 'Report on', p. 34

¹²³ Ramiah, 'the Committee papers', p. 507

deploy his forces more actively and to be stern. In the last weeks of 1830 and the first months of 1831 the insurgents in had Nagar become well organised and more people had openly joined them. Buda Basveppa recruited armed mercenaries from southern Maharatta country who strongly resisted both the Dewan and Annapah, during what at this point in time could be called a civil war in Nagar.

The fighting between Annapah and the rebels lasted nearly two months. He was driven to retreat into the fort at Anuntapoor. There he was besieged for six weeks until he and his men were forced to retreat one more time and seek friendly territory. The explanation for Annapah's military failure to hold the fort lies in the dividing of his forces prior to the battle. Annapah had given away personnel to Dewan Vencata Raj Arus, who were on his way to recapture the forts in Culdroog and Camundroog.¹²⁴ When the rebels realised their advantageous situation they were inspired to fight fiercely. The rebels outnumbered the soldiers to such an extent that they were able to block all the roads leading to Anuntapoor, effectively cutting of supplies and killing all officials trying to get through. However, Annapah and his men managed to break out to seek safe refuge. They made their way to Masoor district in Company territory, 24 kilometres away. A large number of soldiers were killed in the escape.¹²⁵ Afterwards Annapah was ordered to join the Dewan and the newly arrived Company officer, Lieutenant Rochfort.

Camundroog and Culdroog forts were both retaken after much difficulty. The rebels at Culdroog were conquered at first attempt, but the siege of Camundroog fort failed at first attempt in February 1831. At this point the Company started actively to assist the native soldiers. Lieutenant Rochfort, the military commander in the Residents escort, acted as advisor for the Mysore troops when they finally to re-conquered Camundroog fort on the 3rd of March 1831. Fifty rebels and 23 soldiers were killed in the battle.

Honelly

The most controversial incident during the insurrection was the execution of 99 persons, subsequent to the second battle of Honelly. All the prominent characters involved – Foujdar

¹²⁴ 'Report on', p. 46

¹²⁵ Annapah, p. 256

Annapah, Commander Syed Salar, Lieutenant Rochfort and the Dewan Vencata Raj Arus – were present.

After the battle of Camundroog, Lieutenant Rochfort and the Dewan marched to Shimoga and joined forces with Annapah and Syed Salar. They all proceeded to Honelly, where intelligence reports had revealed large kuttams. In Honelly they found the fort and the temple occupied by rebels. After short and unsuccessful negotiations Lieutenant Rochfort and Vencata Raj Arus decided to storm the fortifications on the 12th of March 1831. They took 180 of the rebels. Out of these, 99 persons were later hanged in Honelly and on the road towards Shirkarpoor. The commander of Infantry Syed Salar wrote a report to the Dewan concerning these hangings, in which he blamed Lieutenant Rochfort for ordering the executions. However, in Annapah's report, presumably sent to the Rajah, there is no mention of Rochfort's participation in these decisions. Instead he claimed that the Dewan himself ordered the prisoners hanged. In this case, all the persons involved told different stories to the Committee when interviewed. The Dewan denied later that he had given any orders for the executions. He tried to put the blame solely upon Annapah and referred to a letter he had sent to the Rajah where he described the incident. The Committee asked to see this letter but neither the original nor the copy could be found. The Rajah claimed never to have received such letter. He said that he had requested more information about the hangings himself. He had written to Annapah and asked to be consulted before decisions were made about the captured rebels. The Committee doubted that any such letters had been written. Syed Salar later said, in interviews, that he had forgotten to mention Rochfort's name concerning the hangings. Lieutenant Rochfort himself emphasised that he only acted according to the will of the Resident and that the prisoners were handed over to native authority, thus he could not know what happened to them, and did not inquire. Rochfort also emphasised that he did not have any authority to judge or punish anyone. The Committee wrote in 'The report' that it was evident that the Dewan gave the orders. They criticised the Rajah for the hangings and would not excuse him even when he denied any connection to the incidents. Everybody blamed each other: and it seems clear that when there was a British officer present, the native Mysore officers felt he was in charge, even without a given mandate to be in command, and they could use him as an excuse for their own actions.

Company operations

Lieutenant Rochfort reached the town of Nagar on the 26th of March 1831, and captured it without fighting. The rebels had left the night before, leaving the dead bodies of more than 20 persons, mostly local Brahmins and civil servants. Chendergooty fort, located in the northernmost part of Nagar was taken on the 6th of April 1831, also without much resistance. Then Lieutenant Rochfort placed his soldiers at strategic locations to secure against further uprising. The Resident optimistically reported on the 4th of April 1831 that the people now would cooperate if they received proper protection. In response to this the Company sent the 24th regiment from Bangalore to Shimoga, to be stationed there for a while. The commander of the regiment, Colonel Woulfe, patrolled the countryside to calm the ryots and to demonstrate British presence. In mid-April the 24th regiment received intelligence about a large foreign cavalry force moving into Mysore from southern Maharatta to aid Buda Basveppa. Annapah together with Colonel Woulfe moved out and arrested a few men and sent the rest of them home. Woulfe praised Rochfort's military efforts and stated that Company soldiers were superior to the insurgent troops in all ways. Woulfe estimated Rochfort's forces to be in total 700 soldiers of horse and foot: 'With this small Force he had to march through a hostile country, attacked the Fort at Bednur [Nagar], leaved [sic] a garrison there after taking it, and then returned to the north, to attack the high Hill Fort of Chenderghobtydroog [Chendergooty]'¹²⁶

The Rajah, at the same time, became desperate to show the Company his good will and to demonstrate that he was ready to improve his governance. Dewan Vencata Arus was fired in April 1831 and replaced with Balojee Rao, another relative of the Buckshee Ram Rao. The Resident wrote in a letter on the 19th of April 1831, that Dewan Venkataj Arus had been called to the Hoozoor in shame and replaced by a better qualified officer, and that the Rajah was aware of the dangers facing him. The Rajah stated that '... if it should come to my knowledge that he [Balojee Rao] shows partiality, the necessary steps shall be taken'.¹²⁷

During March and April, the insurgents had become more hostile towards the Company soldiers and openly fired guns, not only against the Mysore state troops, but also at regular Company troops. Tranquillity had been restored elsewhere in Mysore, including Chittledroog, but in Nagar Foujdari the insurgents continued to increase their strength. Colonel C. B Evans who at this point in time operated in Nagar together with the 15th regiment was forced to

¹²⁶ Letter from Colonel Woulfe, 'the Committee papers', p. 1020

¹²⁷ 'Report on', p. 51

retreat from Futtehpur where he had tried to capture a fortified barrier in the jungle. During their retreat, the insurgents had attacked, killed and wounded several men and carried off Company equipment.

Therefore the Company still considered the situation to be tense with high danger of prolonged rebellion. The Resident wished to end the rebellion completely before the monsoon set in, regardless of cost. J. A. Casamaijor, the Resident, wrote to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, dated the 29th of April 1831: ‘... I am now impressed with the necessity as well as policy of calling for the immediate and full aid of the Subsidiary force of Mysore [Mysore] to quell this Rebellion premises to the prevalence of the South-west monsoon ...’¹²⁸ The Company therefore reinforced their troops with infantry, cavalry and canons, concentrating the forces in Shimoga.¹²⁹ The Resident and the new Dewan left for Nagar around the middle of May. On the 30th of May, the Resident wrote to Madras authorities that peace and stability had been reinforced in Nagar District and that the forces stationed in Shimoga and around the Nagar countryside probably could return before the Monsoon. The south west monsoon in South India begins in late May, and continues until August. However, already the next day the Resident and the Dewan had to move out to recapture the town of Nagar which had fallen into the hands of the insurgents for the third time. The rebels had also constructed roadblocks between Anuntapoor and Futtehpur, along the main road from Shimoga to Nagar. However, most of the resistance was sporadic and the barricades were usually evacuated when the Resident arrived at them. He constantly sent messages to the peasants and invited them to meet him and discuss their views upon the matters in dispute. The insurrection slowly ebbed out and neither the British nor the Mysore troops were met with much armed or organised resistance in the beginning of June. In one incident two of the Resident’s messengers were killed and the two presumed perpetrators were later hanged in Nagar by the order of the Dewan.

Ending of the rebellion

A letter from the Resident, on the 12th of June 1831 marked the final conquering of Nagar, and the acceptance of terms of peace by the majority of the insurgents. The Resident also emphasized that some of the peasants still expressed disobedience and anger towards the

¹²⁸ M. H. Gopal, *British Sources of the economic*, Vol. II, p. 454

¹²⁹ ‘Report on’, p. 54

Government. However, from now on only sporadic skirmishes and small kuttams faced the soldiers in Nagar. The leaders of the rebellion, the poligars, were still active and led a small opposition, and Buda Basveppa tried to get rally for more support, but these leaders no longer represented a serious threat to the state of Mysore. Rumours in 1832, told that Buda Basveppa had fled to the state of Hyderabad and that Rungappah Naik was killed.

The Resident continued his work of investigation and together with the Dewan he spent almost a month enquiring into the alleged abuse and oppression related to revenue collection. He wrote to Madras, on the 6th of July 1831, that injustice had been discovered and rooted out, and that this had '... been gratefully received by the *maganies* [village officers] ... of Nuggur and Anuntapoor, and the ryots have in my presence expressed their cheerful acquiescence in the changes that have been made in their favour.'¹³⁰ The Committee also concluded when they wrote 'The Report' in June 1833, that '... the insurrection, understanding by that term the revolt which had taken place, of a large part of the population of the Mysore country, was at an end.'¹³¹

Loss of life and property

The exact numbers of loss of life on both sides are not documented. According to the Dewan, 164 persons from the rebel side were executed during the insurrection in the whole of Mysore.¹³² The Committee's own figure, based on testimonials and other written sources, is close to 240.¹³³ The number of rebels killed in action differs also between the sources. Regimentardar Sreenevas Rao claimed that between 500 and 600 persons died in action¹³⁴. However, Annapah alone claimed he had killed more than 700 insurgents.¹³⁵ We can only know that many more insurgents than Company and Mysore soldiers were killed, even if we do not have the exact numbers. Quite a large number of civilians were killed by the rebels; there are a lot of examples that suggest this – for instance the 20 Brahmins and civil servants killed in Nagar.

¹³⁰ 'Report on', p. 59

¹³¹ 'Report on', p. 62

¹³² 'Report on', p. 72

¹³³ 'Report on', p. 72

¹³⁴ Cudappah Sreenevas Rao, Regimentdar, to the Committee, the Committee papers, p. 1323

¹³⁵ Annapah, 'the Committees papers', p. 326

It is impossible to give an accurate account of material losses: The Company requested from the Rajah a report concerning lost property and wreckage, but the report never came. However the Committee pointed out in 'The report' the negative impact on trade and cultivation of land, and that it would take time to restore the prosperity of Mysore. 'We find ourselves unable to speak, except in very general terms, of the extent to which the insurrection, besides causing the immediate losses of lives and property which have been adverted to, has affected the prosperity of the country.'¹³⁶

Violence during the rebellion

Mullagane, a ryot of Hurrungutty in Shimoga talook told the Committee of cases of mutilation inflicted on the rebels during the disturbances.¹³⁷ He stated that the ryots had '... assembled together for the purpose of representing our joys and griefs to our superiors.' However, they were surrounded, beaten and mutilated while trying to negotiate with Kishen Rao outside of Shimoga. Other peasants had similar stories and described before the Committee how the Amildars and the Foujdar had beaten, flogged and mutilated them and their friends. The peasants had also heard stories of friends that had been beaten and killed in Holy-Honor. Some witnesses stated that the rebels acted aggressively and openly harassed and maltreated the officers. Sowcar Soorlee Sobiah claimed that the rebels plundered his house during the rebellion.¹³⁸ Other witnesses stated that several officers were kidnapped and forced to join the kuttams.

As mentioned before the officers were ordered to use rough methods and punishment. Ram Naik, Goreekar of the Bangalore cutcherree, is one amongst many who claimed to have received orders to use harsher methods against the rebels.¹³⁹ Kishen Rao marked the ryots by scarring them, a widespread strategy used to separate friend from foe. Corporal punishment was a traditional method of punishment in India in the early colonial era and the military in particular made use of these methods to mark their opponents and presumably stigmatise them. The Committee tried in 'The Report' to defend the use of corporal punishment and

¹³⁶ 'Report on', p. 74

¹³⁷ Mullagane, 'the Committee papers', p. 345

¹³⁸ Sowcar Soorlee Sobiah to the Committee, 'the Committee papers' p. 1022

¹³⁹ Ram Naik, Goreekar (servant) of the Bangalore Cutcherree, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 1031

called it something that ‘... by no means amounted to what could with correctness and language be called mutilation’¹⁴⁰

When the Resident received information that during course of the rebellion the local officers condoned mutilation by scarring he reacted negatively and demanded that the Rajah abolished this form of penalty in the districts and reminded the Rajah that the Company did not condone this form of corporal punishment. The Resident got the impression that the Rajah actually ordered the district officers to end the use of mutilation: however, as mentioned before, the Rajah ordered at the same time the local officers to be harsher against the rebels and to execute leaders of the uprisings, or ‘whom they might apprehend and consider deserving of death. ... Those who are deserving of death should be hanged immediately’.¹⁴¹ According to the Resident, in a letter written to the Committee on the 17th of April 1833, these orders were given to the military officers without the Resident’s knowing. This may be a method for the Resident to excuse and defend himself against the allegations from the Indian officers. However, the Resident was never asked about these matters again.

Much violence occurred on both sides of the conflict during the rebellion. The tension had been built up for a long time before the insurrection broke out and the conflict – close to a civil war – lasted as long as almost a year. The violence took place on all levels and was performed by all the participants.

Conclusion of the insurrection

When the insurrection had ended, the focus came on the causes of the rebellion. The Company registered that the peasants had put forward numerous complaints against the Amildars and the Resident requested that these were investigated, and if possible, that the Rajah should settle the disagreements and remove the causes of displeasure and unrest permanently. The Rajah promised to act according to the will of the Company. He had at this stage realised that the British were serious when they threatened to take control of the state of Mysore, possibilities which were ratified in the treaty of 1799.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Report on’, p. 44

¹⁴¹ ‘Report on’, p. 44

The rebellion seems to have been a popular uprising. The military capacity of the local administrators was weak at first, and then the Rajah's attention was drawn to the crisis, more resources allocated and the Company assisted the Mysore troops in the final operations of quelling the rebellion. There were also elements of corruption and violence performed by the officers, especially in Nagar. In addition, there are other players in this story as well, located and acting in Nagar. The Terikkery Poligars, and Buda Basveppa, the 'great impostor', were skilled in propaganda and played on the feelings of a Malnad people starved of recognition and rice. History became politicised and romanticised, and old symbols of Keladi were brought back as tools in a short, but violent, clash against the central powers of Mysore. These are the important aspects of the Nagar rebellion. The mobilisation of so many have people could not have been possible without all of these factors. To discuss the causes of the Nagar rebellion, and why we can label the insurrection with that name, I will identify the insurrection as a local affair that spread by the word, through both letters and by mouth, and symbols from Nagar District by the people and the to other parts of Mysore.

A local affair

Before we can talk of a Nagar-rebellion, we must identify the incidents that originated in Nagar, geographically and in time, and investigate how the insurrection then spread to the rest of Mysore. My hypothesis is that the disturbances in Mysore originally were a local affair that started in Nagar and subsequently spread to the whole country. Circumstantial evidence points towards this.

First of all the fighting was tougher, and the resistance harder in Nagar than in the rest of Mysore. The town of Nagar itself was conquered by the rebels three times. And the area between the towns of Shimoga and Nagar was constantly barricaded. In the jungle areas between Nagar and Shimoga, near Futtehpeta, the rebels reorganised and gathered strength repeatedly for almost a year. Their base of power lied in these tracts. We also have to regard the fact that the largest battles between the insurgents and the Mysore soldiers supported by British advisors, took place in Nagar Foudari, especially near Shimoga.

There are other circumstances that point to the rebellion springing out of Nagar. Officers from other districts, including a few of the peasants and headmen, when interviewed by the Committee, stated to the Committee that the disturbances in their Foudaris were only inspired

by the insurgents in Nagar and Chittledroog. Timmapah Raj Arus, Foujdar of Bangalore in 1830, told the Committee that disturbances started in his district just subsequent to the circulating of letters from Nagar and Chittledroog among the ryots in the villages in his Foujdari. These letters carried messages and symbols encouraging everybody to join the uprisings. The leaf of the Murgosa tree was the emblem of insurrection, a conventional way of sending the signal of mobilisation among the peasants in India: 'The ryots had assembled in cootum in the Nuggur territory and the Nuggur Poligar having joined them. Circular letters ... came sometimes two, three and four one day, and bones tied round with leaves of the Murgosa tree ... were sent to all the talooks.'¹⁴²

The Foujdar of Bangalore, Timmapah Raj Arus, claimed that the insurrection had aims of change exclusively in the districts of Nagar and Chittledroog. He never registered any cases of oppression in his own district, or at least he did not hear of any complaints.¹⁴³ In the interviews with the Committee he faced representatives of his new employers, representatives of the Company in the Committee, and he would not likely have stated otherwise. However, an interesting point he made was that the ryots in his talooks rose in kuttams after the ryots of Nagar and Chittledroog had done so. Vencata Kistniah, Foujdar of Manjarbad, added to this impression. He stated to the Committee that the disturbances in Manjarbad was instigated by the poligars in Nagar, and that the ryots that rebelled in the talook of Krishnarajakutty did this only because they were induced to do so from the example set by those of the other districts. He even called it a 'conspiracy'.¹⁴⁴ The rebellion sprung out of one place and spread all over the country.

The insurrection in Mysore was in many ways a typical Indian incident. According to Guha, revolts were common in India in the colonial period, with 110 known uprisings registered in the period 1783 – 1900.¹⁴⁵ The early 19th century was an unstable period in Mysore. The state of Mysore had been the scene of uprisings prior to the Nagar rebellion.¹⁴⁶ Uprisings occurred frequently and therefore the uniqueness of the 1830 insurrection might be questioned. However, the events still may seem exceptional in the way they spread rapidly almost all over Mysore. On the other side, the communicable effects of uprisings were just as common.

¹⁴² Timmapah Raj Arus, 'the Committee papers', p. 338

¹⁴³ Timmapah Raj Arus, 'the Committee papers', p. 327

¹⁴⁴ Vencata Kistniah, 'the Committee papers', p. 430

¹⁴⁵ Ranajit Guha, *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India*, p. 1

¹⁴⁶ M. H. Gopal, *British Sources of the economic*, pp. 60 - 62

Usually the first signs of insurrection began in a village, or in a panchayat, and spread rapidly to other districts. There existed common symbols of rebellion which also points to the fact that the population knew the codex and how to react to it.¹⁴⁷ To me this leads, together with the statements from the witnesses, to the conclusion that the insurrection in Mysore was instigated in Nagar District and that it spread to other districts only due to pressure from Nagar – both from the peasants and the poligars. It was mainly a local affair, and the main causes of the insurrection will therefore lie in Nagar, in a combination with other causes, common for the whole of Mysore state. Misfortune, ambitious adventurers, oppression, Maratha influence, economic crises, tradition and misadministration – all combined together these factors caused an extraordinary situation. In the next chapter I will describe what seem to be the different causes of the Nagar rebellion.

¹⁴⁷ Ranajit Guha, *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India*

6. The causes to the Nagar rebellion

The Committee felt, in retrospective, that the insurrection was bound to happen because of the misconduct that took place in the administration: 'When public affairs were conducted in this manner, it is not to be wondered at that great discontent with the Government should have arisen among the people.'¹⁴⁸

This chapter starts by excluding the Company as a cause of the rebellion. Then I describe the general circumstances in the Mysore state, concerning economy and the revenue system, and how this environment contributed to the peasant's general feeling of living under bad conditions and of being submitted to an oppressive revenue policy and unjust administration. Finally I will focus on the administration in Nagar and how the administrators are related to the rebellion.

The Kingdom of Mysore was an independent state in 1830, partly controlled by the partition treaty of 1799 and instructed to keep an army for British disposal. It was annually taxed and the ruler was obliged to seek advice from the Resident. The Company did not attempt to control local affairs in Mysore. The long arm of the Company did not reach through the layers of the Nagar administration. The British presence at the Hoozoor and the Durbar was vague and did not influence upon the situation in Nagar District or upon the economy and administration at any level in Mysore. Evidence does not exist to suggest that insurrection was aimed directly against the British.

The British intervened in Mysore, subsequently to insurrection broke out and more than half a year after the Buda Basveppa's wedding – where he proclaimed himself as 'Rajah of Nagar'. The Company had reduced the number of troops stationed in Mysore since the first years of occupation subsequent to the defeat of Tipu Sultan. In Nagar District the Company was only one of the parties in the situation before they intervened; they were notable by their absence of action. It appears that the people in Nagar did not expect the Company to aid the Rajah in a crisis. The awareness of their absence and supposed neutrality gave the rebels a feeling of safety that accelerated the extensiveness and intensity of the rebellion: '[A]nd there can be no

¹⁴⁸ 'Report on', p. 67

doubt that it has afforded a facility to the instigators of the disturbances in leading the people to believe that the Company's Government would not support the authority of the Rajah.'¹⁴⁹

The general causes of peasant dissatisfaction

During the 20 years that passed from the Rajah's assumption of power in 1811 to the outbreak of the rebellion, the economy of Mysore declined to such an extent that a general feeling of despair prevailed in Mysore. Vencata Kistniah, Foudjar of Manjarbad, was one of many persons interviewed that pointed out to the Committee the many factors contributing to both diminution of revenue and decline of general standards of living: the falling prices of corn, failure of crops, absence of rain and lack of able Amildars. A decline in the economy in the whole of South India in the 1820's struck hard in many areas.¹⁵⁰

... [A] general phenomenon of depression in prices and economic activity in most part's of northern, western and southern India from the middle of the 1820s down to the beginning of the 1850s. Almost certainly this led, in many cases, to a contraction of the sphere of circulation of money.¹⁵¹

The revenue income of Mysore dropped from 27 *lakhs* pagoda in the last year of Purnaiya's reign to 24 lakhs in 1828/29 and finally to 23 lakhs¹⁵² in 1830. David Ludden points to the agrarian crises in this period, with decreased demand on the farmers' products leading to falling prices, together with crop shortfalls.¹⁵³ In parts of South India famines occurred: 'Bad seasons hit them very hard ... Famine and epidemics destroyed crops and families during two wretched years, 1831 and 1833, especially in the southern mixed zones.'¹⁵⁴

Maintenance of dams and tanks, which was the Amildars responsibility, was neglected. When asked specifically, all the witnesses stated to the Committee that the waterways and water storage facilities – necessary to uphold production levels from irrigated agriculture – were not sufficiently maintained during the 1820's. The impact this had on the production was

¹⁴⁹ 'Report on', p. 63

¹⁵⁰ Nigel H. M. Chancellor, 'Mysore'

¹⁵¹ Amiya Kumar Bagchi, *Markets, market failures, and the transformation of authority, property and bondage in colonial India*, in Burton Stein & Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed), *Institutions and economic change in South Asia*, Oxford University Press/Oxford India Paperbacks, 1996, New Delhi, p. 54

¹⁵² In the Indian counting system a lakh is 100 000.

¹⁵³ David Ludden, *Peasant history*, pp. 112-14

¹⁵⁴ David Ludden, *Peasant history*, (1989),

devastating. David Ludden among others emphasise the importance of maintaining control of water for stable agricultural production.¹⁵⁵

The state of Mysore was an important area for metal production in India, and in the period before 1830 the country experienced falling prices on metal export. Burton Stein claims that the downward economical trend in the Mysore state was caused by a restructuring of Indian exports in general and Indian gold trade in special, which led to increased tax pressure and lowered income for the farmers.¹⁵⁶ This again resulted in reduced demand on other products and thus the economical depression was accelerated.

Another factor contributing to the economical recession was the reduced demand on goods from military forces. In a war-faring nation or in a state with a large standing army the demand will be artificially kept at a high level and farmers and craftsmen will be able to earn well. The state of Mysore prior to 1799 made good profits on war and plundering, which in turn spread positive synergy effects, boosting local business and increasing cultivation of land. As 'The Committee's Report' states:

...[B]efore the conquest, Mysore was the seat of a completely independent Government, which, not to speak of the vast quantities of plunder its troops brought in, gave by its expenditure profitable employment to vast numbers of the people, ... in meeting its demands for stores of every kind, and all the materials of war, and which in this and other ways afforded considerable encouragements to manufacturers.¹⁵⁷

After the fall of the Muslim Sultans, the British forces stationed in Mysore upheld the same effect for some years. However, the gradual reduction in the number of British forces placed in Mysore, the lack of payment to the soldiers and general reduction of Mysore troops reduced the demand on food and other goods. In times of peace less money circulated in Mysore and the country went into an economic recession. In 1824, when the standing British army in Madras was sent to Burma, demand for food, oxen for transport and civil use decreased, which further increased the economic depression. This combined with epidemics and less monsoon rain spelled bad times for the Mysore economy.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ David Ludden, *Peasant history*, pp. 112-14

¹⁵⁶ Burton Stein, 'Notes on 'peasant insurgency'', p. 190

¹⁵⁷ 'Report on', p. 64

¹⁵⁸ Nigel H. M. Chancellor, 'Mysore' p. 116

Some of the interviewed officers mentioned cholera to the Committee. They claimed that the disease reduced the population dramatically, laid land waste, reduced cultivation and reduced demand on goods, thus having a negative impact upon the economy. However, there are reasons to be sceptical to whether cholera had any effect on the overall situation at all. Only the Mysore state officers told the Committee about the epidemic and only when they were asked what the causes for the rebellion were. It may have been used as an excuse to shift the focus away from improper administration. None of the peasants interviewed mentioned the cholera. They should have been aware of the impact of the cholera since they would be exposed to this deadly disease. Moreover, no other sources mention cholera. Census figures are not accurate since no exact numbers exist before 1841, when the first official census was taken, but one estimate shows that the population increased from 1.9 million in 1801 to 3.5 million in 1832.¹⁵⁹ The writers of 'The Report' doubted that there had been a decrease in population in Mysore. Nostalgia and ignorance were the explanations to why people thought that things were better in the old days, they claim:

Besides particular biases which may probably have influenced their evidence, it was liable to be swayed by that general prejudice, natural to all mankind, which tends to make men believe that the world degenerates and decays as themselves grow old, and which requires for its counteraction a greater enlightenment of mind than those persons could be expected to possess.¹⁶⁰

I have in the earlier chapters described the revenue system in Mysore, and the impact the shurtee-system had on the society. The system was observed by contemporary actors as unjust and the Amildars were described as oppressive and greedy. The general impression among the ryots and some of the officers interviewed was that the depressive conditions caused by the system drove the peasants and potails to rebel. The people of Mysore had a tougher time in the 1820's. Especially in Nagar the peasants were dissatisfied because the shurtee combined with the distinct shist was felt as unreasonable compared to the earlier traditional tax systems of the area. Ramiah, a local officer at Shimoga, serving during the disturbances, met the rebelling ryots and listened to their complaints. Statements like this summoned up the general feeling amongst them:

We are become insolvent. Moreover, for four or five years they have assessed us for our waste lands. They also exact more than is due for impost duties. The Amildars and others force from us unpaid labour. Though we have made these and similar

¹⁵⁹ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p. 218

¹⁶⁰ 'Report on', p. 68

complaints at the Foujdar's Cutcherree, and at the Dewan's Cutcherree yet they are not inquired into. Though we addressed to Government on these subjects our letter are never received. ...seeing ourselves this situated, and having no other resources left to us, we were driven to rebellion.¹⁶¹

The writers of 'The Report' were given the mandate to investigate the causes and consequences of the disturbances. They interviewed a large number of the participants and read all relevant documents – hence the conclusion of 'The Report' cannot be overlooked. The Committee argued that the fact that the ryots gathered in kuttams to protest against oppression did not prove that the Amildars acted unreasonably or oppressive. The Committee was aware of the claims that the people of Mysore were less fortunate in 1830 due to unfavourable circumstances and alleged oppression; although it doubted that this alone was the general cause of the rebellion. The Committee compared the situation in Mysore with an example from the district of Canara, where an uprising took place just prior to the Mysore insurrection.¹⁶² In Canara the peasants stated grave complaints and accused the authorities of being far more oppressive than the ryots in Mysore and Nagar in 1830 claimed that the Mysore authorities were. The Committee also point to the fact that there were grim examples of exploitation and misadministration in many provinces in the Madras Presidency where the people did not rebel. The tax-levels were not higher in Mysore compared to other Native States in South India and the ryots did not complain more often in the 1820's than they did before.

It is worthy of remark that in some of the complaints of the people, of the grievances they have been subjected to under the Rajah's Government, the period of Poorniah's administration is included in the general census, without distinction from that of the Rajah's personal rule.¹⁶³

The Committee concluded that the tax pressure and the increased rents in Mysore were not the causes of uprising. The insurrection was more caused by the Rajah and his way of ruling, the Committee claimed. 'The fault of his character and his Government were of a different kind.'¹⁶⁴ The Committee felt that the system itself was the cause of increased corruption and that it laid the road open for faulty characters to exploit people, especially in the province of Nagar, and not particularly through increased taxes.

¹⁶¹ Ramiah, p. 388

¹⁶² 'Report on', p. 68

¹⁶³ 'Report on', p. 65

¹⁶⁴ 'Report on', p. 69

The great faults of the Rajah's Government ... was throughout venal and corrupt; that no efficient control was exercised over the district officers; that the people were vexed and fretted by the unjust and arbitrary acts of those officers and could obtain no redress; that there was no security for property, and nothing that was fit to be called the administration of justice. These evils seem to have been felt more than any where else in the province of Nuggur...¹⁶⁵

As mentioned in the introduction we should take a nuanced approach when we interpret the Committee's conclusions to the causes to the Nagar Rebellion. Their view can be seen as a tool for the Company to justify their inclusion of Mysore into the British Empire. The members of the Committee, that were put were put down a few months subsequent to the end of the insurrection, were appointed by the Governor-General in Council, Sir William Bentinck. At that time, the Company administered, or ruled Mysore state directly, and was in need for political justification for occupancy. It seems that when constantly referring to the faults of the Rajah the Committee legitimise the Company take over of Mysore. The Company maybe also wanted to make due for its reserved approach towards Mysore in the 1820's. Stephen R. Lushington, Munro's successor as Governor of Madras (1827 – 32) also added to this impression when he criticised Munro for what he called an indulgence of a client state.

However, 'The Report' emphasised other factors outside Rajah's control: reduced income, economic recession and reduced prices on crops, and the Committee admitted; 'We have no doubt that the people of Mysore are generally in far less easy circumstances than they were thirty years ago.'¹⁶⁶ This was attributed to the general recession which the Committee thought struck Mysore worse than other parts of South India. Burton Stein thinks that this combination, including bad crop seasons and increased tax pressure, was one of the main causes of the Nagar rebellion and the insurrection in other districts: 'A principal cause of the Nagar uprising and its rapid spread to other parts of the Mysore state quite distant from Nagar was the pressure for increased revenue at a time of bad crop season and falling prices.'¹⁶⁷ This, combined with the Rajahs lack of control, made the rebellion an irreversible process

¹⁶⁵ 'Report on', p. 62

¹⁶⁶ 'Report on', p. 68

¹⁶⁷ Burton Stein, 'Notes on 'peasant insurgency'', p. 188

steered by uncontrollable factors like the Terikkery family, Buda Basveppa and militant outsiders.¹⁶⁸

Nagar poligars: Ideology and history

I have shown that the insurrection started in Nagar, that the special qualities of the Malnad were contributing factors, and that forces outside the Rajahs control instigated the uprisings in a limited geographical area – Nagar District. There were more factors connected to Nagar, that made segments of the population in that district susceptible for opposition. The answer lies with the District poligars.

The Nagar poligars were the major instigating force and main drive behind the rebellion. The peasants rose in kuttams at an early stage of the rebellion. As the rebellion commenced Buda Basveppa and Rungappah Naik threatened and encouraged peasants to continue the uprising and used them as pile drivers for their ambitions. However, witnesses also stated to the Committee that the poligars were supported by the ryots, and that they were not forced through threats to rise in kuttam. Chender Rao, regimentardar in the Mysore Sillidar Horse, claimed that the poligars had much support: 'The cause of this was that they were unable to bear the oppressions of the Amildars and sheristadars, and being able to obtain no redress from the Government. For these reasons they abetted the Poligars.'¹⁶⁹

Chender Rao and other witnesses claimed that the poligars instigated the rebellion, and that the peasants soon followed their example. The Committee definitely held the poligars to be one of the most important factors responsible for the turn the rebellion took. However, Ranajit Guha's theories of peasant insurgencies suggest that the peasants in general were not passive and weak-willed puppets of someone else's higher ambition. He maintains that all Indian rebellions at the period were planned – furthermore that none were spontaneous: 'Insurgency, in other words, was a motivated and conscious undertaking on the part of the rural masses.'¹⁷⁰ The nature of the rebellions was not comparable to natural disasters – not unexpectedly breaking out. This supports the conclusion that both these processes – the peasant's

¹⁶⁸ 'Report on', p. 69

¹⁶⁹ Chender Rao, regimentardar, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 897

¹⁷⁰ Ranajit Guha, *The prose of counter-insurgency*, Subaltern studies II, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1983, p. 2

movement and the poligars planned rebellion – grew parallel to each other and found mutual support in each other.

In the Nagar rebellion an ideology based upon history became crystallised and used by the leaders. The poligars made use of the old symbols supported by their propaganda. Buda used the language of power, styled himself Rajah, called upon tradition, envisaged the golden past, evoked history and created legitimacy for himself and his claimed inheritance. The mass movement of the fall of 1830 and in the beginning of 1831 could not have not have happened without this ideology. According to the Committee, the enthusiasm of the masses would have ebbed out much earlier.¹⁷¹ Burton Stein writes: ‘This history was called into support of the activities of the Mysore upland in 1830, and provided an ideological centring of the uprising there.’¹⁷²

We can assume that Buda Basveppa’s and Rungappah Nayak’s efforts to sever the Malnad from the state of Mysore were one of the main causes of the Nagar rebellion. Without their leadership most of the kuttams would most likely not have gathered and the kuttams that did gather would probably have dispersed sooner than was the case.

The combination of all the above elements worked together to cause the rebellion in Nagar. That there was no single reason is suggested by the statement of the Foujdar of Chittledroog, when asked by the Committee about his opinion as to what might be the causes of the uprisings: ‘The reason was not ascertained by my enquiry. There were a hundred reasons on the subject among the people.’¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ ‘Report on’, p. 68

¹⁷² Burton Stein, ‘Notes on ‘peasant insurgency’’, p. 198

¹⁷³ Ashraff Allee Khan, ‘the Committee papers, p. 200

7. Governance of Nagar

In addition to the influence held by the poligars and adventurers, the influence of the administrative elite governing Nagar constituted another special condition in the area. The state administration of the district was definitely a contributing factor to the events that took place in 1830 and 'The Report' of the Committee gives valuable information on that topic. The rest of the thesis will, therefore focus on the governance of Nagar as it is mainly revealed, through 'The Report' and interviews done by the Committee. This material gives a unique glimpse in to an early 19th century administration in a Native State under the British Empire in India. I will outline the Nagar administration's policy concerning the governance of Nagar, then show the relations to Durbar and Hoozoor at Mysore as well as the administrator's possible participation in the Nagar rebellion.

This chapter is mainly based on the rumours and statements given in the interviews before the Committee and on 'The Committees Report'. The chapter deals with the brahmanical elite that governed Nagar Foujdari, this elite's relation to the Rajah and its connection to the rebellion.

Maratha Brahmins in positions

In the late 18th century and the early 19th century people from southern Maratha country spread all over South India. These were Brahmins seeking service, refugees escaping hunger and young men joining the army or whoever else paid for their military services. Many of the Maratha Brahmins became administrators of their skills of literacy. Some came from families with traditions of administrative service. In many kingdoms and districts in South India, including Mysore, elites rose within the administration, whose members cooperated on revenue, tax and judicial affairs: 'Although many Maratha Brahmins were employed in the service of Hyder and Tippu, a greater penetration of them into the service was witnessed during the Dewanship of Purnaiah and the succeeding years.'¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Sebastian Joseph, 'A service elite', side 671

The Maratha Brahmins were ambitious and self-conscious concerning their position in the social and administrative hierarchy. J. B. W. Dykes, an Indian Collector in Salem in the Madras Presidency in 1858 wrote: 'A Brahmin never considers himself of any nation; he is "twice-born" and by virtue of this...is bound by no such ties... he fully believes that all financial affairs will be administrated as hitherto...[in the south] through those 'twice-born' that speak the Maratha language.'¹⁷⁵ The nepotistic system based on selection of positions strictly among caste-members became characteristic of the Brahmins when they had established themselves in a realm, whether it was a kingdom or a district in Madras Presidency. 'It would have been important for a Brahman group to gain the king's ear; for by winning his confidence, the administrative hierarchy could gradually be filled with family and caste members.'¹⁷⁶ To be the dominant caste, or elite, in one area the members had to control the resources, have access to land, connection with the ruling authority, be of high ritual standing and have sufficient physical numbers to retain power.¹⁷⁷

...[S]uch a group might silently gain an inner control finding nourishment within the body of political organization without disturbing the crust or causing the umbrella of authority to collapse. It may be supposed that such a group could effectively slacken or tighten the reins of power, silently supporting or undermining the strength of the ruling prince. Only occasionally, if the umbrella of authority were too decrepit or if a caste elite were too strong, ambitious, or foolish, might there be a danger of disintegration. Presumably, such a political system could have had a moderating influence upon an autocratic and often despotic rule; for by its very nature it would tend to limit the excesses both of central and of local power.¹⁷⁸

In the large district of Guntur, situated along the coast in northern Madras Presidency, Maratha Brahmins held most of the positions in the middle management in the first half of the 19th century.¹⁷⁹ Robert Eric Frykenberg did a case-study of Guntur District in which he describes how a Maratha Brahmin named Shashagiri Rao completely took over the administration of the district and filled all the posts with his relatives.

...[b]y 1845 Walter Elliot obtained a list which showed that 'seventy four servants of all grades where [Shashagiri Rao's] own relatives or connected with him by family

¹⁷⁵ Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District 1788 – 1846, A history of local influence and central authority in South India*, Oxford university press, Oxford, 1965, (Oxford: Oxford university press, 1965), p. 234

¹⁷⁶ Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District*, p. 16

¹⁷⁷ Judith M. Brown, *Modern India*, p. 22

¹⁷⁸ Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District*, pp. 16-17

¹⁷⁹ Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District*, p. 8

ties, independent of a still larger number attached to him by friendship or the bonds of gratitude and common interests'.¹⁸⁰

Maratha Brahmins in Guntur were go-betweens who were loyal neither to the local society nor to the central authority. They followed their own agenda, which mainly focused on how to enrich themselves and their kin.¹⁸¹ The central, authorities, including the British in Guntur and, as was suggested earlier, the Rajah in Mysore, became dependant upon their services. Henry Ricketts in a report published 1858 for the Commissioner for the Revision of Civil Salaries and Establishment, asked: 'Is there anything about Madras Collectorates that makes them so difficult that only a Maratha Brahmin can fathom it?'¹⁸² In Mysore and especially in Nagar a similar development took place.

The elite governing Nagar and relations to the Rajah's court

Under Purnaiya it appears that the ambitions of Maratha Brahmins in royal service had been kept in check. However, after his death, in a short time-span the administrative elite of Maratha Brahmins changed their agenda, towards self-ambition and personal benefits. The young Rajah of Mysore became gradually dependant upon skilled Maratha Brahmins: 'Hence it was but natural that the Maharaja had to depend on the powerful class of men who had excelled in manoeuvre and manipulation.'¹⁸³ The best way to make a good career in the state administration was through friends, relatives and caste and 'Marathas jealously guarded the approaches to the highest offices in the Huzur [Hoozoor] Cutcherry.'¹⁸⁴

A class of new wealth had made their way up in the hierarchy both in Mysore and in the districts. According to Ramiah, an officer located in Shimoga during the disturbances, they had obtained their wealth through 'receiving bribes, presents, jagirs, cajoling speeches and parasitical exploitation'.¹⁸⁵ They had also used their influence to control the appointments of Amildars. Ramiah explained to the Committee how this new class of rich people had arranged that a Dewan of their recommending was appointed and how they entered into agreements with him that stipulated that positions of importance should be filled by persons of their party. They had obtained bribes and presents through these persons and recommended them for the

¹⁸⁰ Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District*, p. 164

¹⁸¹ Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District*, p. 234

¹⁸² Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District*, p. 77

¹⁸³ Sebastian Joseph, 'A service elite', p. 674

¹⁸⁴ Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District*, p. 84

¹⁸⁵ Ramiah, 'the Committee papers', p. 507

head of departments in the different cutcherees. The same people had been able to receive valuable presents of money, land and jewellery from the Rajah, often through the pretence of service as intermediaries between the Rajah and the Resident.¹⁸⁶ Ram Rao and his related dependants, Beenee Venketsoobiah and Chowdiah were amongst the persons belonging to this class of parvenus. Because of their advantageous position, royal kin, the Arus, also made their fortunes by utilizing their close relations to the Rajah.

Already in 1806, it was noticed by the Company that Maratha Brahmins had infiltrated the administration on several levels in Mysore. In addition the Company noticed that the Rajah's soldiers were mostly Marathas, and that the system of armed local police, Candachar Peons, was hard to introduce in Nagar.¹⁸⁷ Nagar District was mainly controlled by one party of Maratha Brahmins, who resisted central governance and directives.

From 1811, when the Rajah took over rule of Mysore, his closest advisor during his reign was Ram Rao. Ram Rao's two close friends, Bheem Rao of the Anegerry family and his son-in-law Kishen Rao of the Haneegul family, both Maharatta Brahmins like himself, followed him into service in the state of Mysore and in the district of Nagar. Their friends and relatives filled several positions in the administration at the capital and even more positions in Nagar.

One Rama Rao was appointed Foujdar of Nagar in 1799 by Purnaya. Sowar Bakshi Rama Rao, Bargir Bakshi Balaji Rao, Babu Rao and Bhim Rao of Annigere were some of the notable figures among this class. Rama Rao, by his sheer influence filled all the higher posts in the Foujdary of Nagar with his relatives and the members of the Annigere and Hanagal families.¹⁸⁸

Ram Rao was Foujdar of Nagar from 1799 to 1805. In these years and those following, most of the important positions in Nagar, especially the Amildaris were filled up with family members and friends, including the above mentioned persons. Through marriage links and exchange of gifts and bribes, other prominent persons became dependant upon Ram Rao and his faction, including the prominent members of the families of Anegerry and Haneegul. From 1805 to 1825, with the exception of just six months, all persons who succeeded Ram Rao in the position of Foujdar in Nagar were attached to him either by blood or marriage. Servottum Rao was twice Foujdar of Nagar – his son was married to Ram Rao's niece Pompiah. Ram

¹⁸⁶ Ramiah, 'the Committee papers' p. 554

¹⁸⁷ M. H. Gopal, *British Sources of the economic*, p. 104

¹⁸⁸ Sebastian Joseph, 'A service elite', 1980

Rao's grandnephew Balakishen Rao was Foudar of Nagar for a period. The same was Ram Rao's son-in-law, the infamous Kishen Rao. Servottum Rao had two sons-in-law placed as Amildars in Nagar, namely Runga Rao in Honelly talook and Sreenevas Rao in Kumsi talook. Other relatives of Ram Rao also played prominent parts in the developments in Nagar Foudari, for instance Gopal Rao and Luchmun Rao.

Vencata Kistniah, Foudar of Manjarbad in 1827, stated his impression to the writers of 'The Report' that all the Nagar Amildars were either friends or relatives of Ram Rao. Vencata Kistniah had first hand information on these matters because he accompanied Ram Rao in his investigation into the Nagar affairs of 1827. The Committee presented him with a complete list of all of the names of Nagar Amildars and he confirmed that each one was either a relative or friend of Ram Rao.¹⁸⁹ Annapah confirmed the same when he was interviewed by the Committee: '[Question:] How many friends or relations of Ram Rao were employed as Amildars in Nuggur before the insurrection? [Answer:] I have heard that they were employed in seven or eight talooks.'¹⁹⁰

Ram Rao's party was also associated with the majority of the other persons holding power and influence. The Resident Sheristardar Chowdiah was mentioned by several of the persons interviewed. He used the potential sanctions imposed by the Resident as threats towards the Rajah and was reported to have stated the following: 'If you do not follow this advice the Resident may perhaps come himself and assume the reins of Government.'¹⁹¹ He played on his power, lending it to the highest bidder: 'Chowdiah was also in the habit of visiting the Hoozoor and state that it was the Gentleman's [the Resident] order that such and such persons should be nominated to certain offices.'¹⁹² Chowdiah carried out his own agenda. He protected his family, manoeuvred and manipulated, and used the Resident's name to have prisoners executed. Several of the persons on Chowdiah's execution-list in Chenroyapatam were people who presented complaints about the Amildars who were associated with him.¹⁹³ A person named Maray Gowda was hanged without trial, on Chowdiah's orders, which were presented as the Residents' recommendation. '[Question] Who was the Amildar of

¹⁸⁹ Vencata Kistniah, 'the Committee papers', p. 441

¹⁹⁰ Annapah, p. 311

¹⁹¹ Sunnoo Row, 'the Committee papers', p. 1433

¹⁹² Gooreekar Madapah of his Highness the Rajahs establishment, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers' p. 1493

¹⁹³ Sunnoo Row, , p. 1424

Honnwutty against whom Maray Gowda was about to prove corruption? [Answer] He was brother in-law to Chowdiah the Resident's Maatsuddy.¹⁹⁴

Most of the persons interviewed stated that Beenee Venketsoobiah, in addition to Ram Rao, was one of the two people who controlled most of the appointments to the positions as Foudjars, Amildars and Sheristadars, especially for the Nagar District administration. Beenee Venketsoobiah, also called Beenee Buckshee, was described by the Resident and the writers of 'The Report' as 'a Brahmin of the worst character'.¹⁹⁵ He was a musician by profession, and, as an entertainer at the court, he positioned himself to be one of the Rajah's closest advisors.

A few of the witnesses interviewed described Chowdiah as being at the centre of the web, together with Venketsoobiah, and that candidates to public offices were mostly nominated by these two, and that the nominees usually were friends or relatives of them. Gooreekar Madapah, a close servant to the Rajah, answered the Committee: '[Question:] Was it the belief generally in the country that these improper persons received their situations through bribery? [Answer:] It was generally the opinion that they obtained their offices by bribing the Dewan, Chowdiah and Venketsoobiah.'¹⁹⁶

There are two main factions, or parties, who distinguished themselves in the power struggle. One is Ram Rao's party and the other one is the Arus' of the royal family, including Vera Raj Arus, Vencata Raj Arus and Timmapah Raj Arus – all three persons at one point holding the situation as Foudjar of Nagar. Arus is the family name of the Mysore nobles of the royal lineage.

Chowdiah and Beenee Venketsoobiah being collaborators played other elite groups against each other and manoeuvred in ways that suited them best, even though the latter person at most times was involved with Ram Rao's faction. The royal family was not less corrupt than their opponents. Sometimes the two main parties struggled hard and competed for positions, and at other times they cooperated either to fool Rajah or to win his favour. Runga Rao, the amil of Honelly, told the writers of 'The Report' that there was a constant struggle at the

¹⁹⁴ Vakeel Ramapah of His Highness the Rajahs establishment, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers' p. 1507

¹⁹⁵ 'Report on', p. 16

¹⁹⁶ Gooreekar Madapah, 'the Committee papers', p. 1495

central Government administration between these two factions. ‘Thus both these parties greatly embarrassed the Rajah’.¹⁹⁷ An illustration of this power struggle is the fact that the criminals earlier mentioned were arrested or released dependant upon the shifting balance of power and change of people who decided in these matters.¹⁹⁸ The manoeuvrings of the Raos and the Arus can also be observed in the appointments of Foujdars to Nagar District. Before 1825, practically all Foujdars were adherent to Ram Rao’s party. From 1825 to 1831 these persons were Foujdars in Nagar:

Name:	Period in office:	Allegiance:
Servottum Rao	Until 1825	(Ram Raos party)
Vencata Raj Arus	1826	(Royal family)
Timmapah Raj Arus	1826	(Royal family)
Kishen Rao	1827	(Ram Raos party)
Vera Raj Arus	1828 – 30	(Royal family)
Kishen Rao	Nov.1830 – Jan. 1831	(Ram Raos party)
Annapah	Jan. 1831 –	(Presumably no allegiance)

Twice the Rajah removed a Foujdar from Ram Rao’s party, viz. Servottum Rao and Kishen Rao, and replaced him with one from his own relatives, namely Venkataj Raj Arus and Vera Raj Arus. He was aware of the stronghold Ram Rao’s party had developed in Nagar Foujdari and at Hoozoor and attempted to strengthen his own party of relatives. However, he remained powerless and outnumbered.

[Question:] Did the Rajah know that persons in his Durbar conferred situations for bribes? [Answer:] He knew it, but what could he do? He had not the power of checking them. They would frequently bring him threatening messages, as from the Gentleman and intimidate him by saying that the Gentleman would be angry and bring him into some trouble.¹⁹⁹

However, much of this power-play was concerning the daily affairs at the Hoozoor, in the state capital of Mysore, or served as struggles for the influential administrative positions in other districts than Nagar. In Nagar Foujdari Ram Rao’s party had the upper hand at most times and controlled the rural elite there.

[Question:] By whose influence /or patronage/ were the Amildars principally appointed? [Answer:] Through the influence of Buckshee Ram Rao’s party, the friends and natives of Hanegul Krishna Rao and of Annagherry Gopal Row were nominated

¹⁹⁷ Sunnoo Row, ‘the Committee papers’, p. 1433

¹⁹⁸ Runga Rao, ‘the Committee papers’, pp. 1009 - 1012

¹⁹⁹ Gooreekar Madapah, ‘the Committee papers’, p. 1495

to these offices in the talooks of the Nuggur district. ... [Question:] Was the Buckshee Ram Rao equally influential, whether he were at the Hoozoor or in the districts? [Answer:] Yes! He possessed great influence both in the districts and at the Hoozoor.²⁰⁰

The Committee thought that the Nagar District was in practice ruled by a single, determined, related elite faction, supported in the Hoozoor and the Durbar by influential patrons. The consequence of this monopolisation of power by rural elite was not beneficial to the people in Nagar District. The Committee was not merciful in 'The Report' in their characterisation of Ram Rao's associates. They were simply described by the Committee, as bandits and corrupted characters with doubtful careers:

Though many of the members of these families were not only suspected but accused of flagrant frauds and embezzlements ... even of giving encouragement to a notorious leader of marauding banditti, and partaking of the plunder, the influence of their patron, and the brahmanical party at Court which clung to him, maintained their places, and shielded them from scrutiny into their conduct. They were thus left to pursue unchecked their career of corruption and misrule²⁰¹

The Brahmin party of Ram Rao's dependants in the Hoozoor protected each other from investigation and punishment and were allowed to position their favourites, collect bribes and enrich themselves, with a special focus on their advantageous position in Nagar District. Mr. Casamaijor, the almost invisible Resident, was used as a potential sanction whose purpose was to limit the Rajahs ability to act against misconduct. In the next paragraphs I will describe how this monopoly of administrative power was taken advantage of in Nagar Foujdari.

Brutal revenue collection

Most witnesses interviewed revealed brutality in Nagar District in different forms, executed by the Amildars and their servants. Amildars occasionally resorted to the use of force to compel outstanding revenue, taxes and when imposing forced labour upon the peasants. Witnesses told the Committee stories of flogging and torture. Every now and then hostages were taken, usually women and children, and kept in confinement until the rent was paid. Mullagane, a peasant from Hurrunguttay in Shimoga talook, told the Committee that the village headmen, on behalf of the Amildars, pushed for increased rents over a period of two

²⁰⁰ Chender Rao, 'the Committee papers', p. 907

²⁰¹ 'Report on', p. 16

years previous to the insurrection. Those who cannot pay rent ‘are beaten, stones placed on their heads, and the money collected.’²⁰² Another witness told a story about a woman who was raped by the landlords and their servants. Annapah stated to the Committee: ‘I heard that they collected the money from the ryots by flogging them with...whips and placing them in confinement. ... If the ryots lie and conceal, the women and children are sent for.’²⁰³

Some Amildars forced the peasants to sell their horses and other belongings, and often they spared nothing. These stories could be exaggerated. The Committee wrote in ‘The Report’ that they were uncertain whether they could believe all the cruel stories told to them by some persons. Most of the witnesses, with administrative positions, and the military personnel, had not seen or heard of much violence. Some of the prominent persons only referred to stories they had heard being told by the peasants, and not to incidents they had experienced themselves. On the other hand, in his study of politics and culture of landholding in 18th century Bengal, John R. McLane, describes how physical coercion was a routine in collection of rent.²⁰⁴ Authority to enforce payment by use of torture, whipping and beating, was delegated to person assigned to gather revenue – all the way through the hierarchy from the Zamindar’s servants to revenue farmers and intermediaries beneath the Zamindars. Earlier I described the violence and kidnappings that took place during the insurrection, a result of dislike towards certain Amildars and Foudjars. It seems that at some level there had existed prior tension between the representatives of the Nagar regime and the peasants.

Corruption

Pamela Price’s study of nineteenth-century Zamindars under the reign of Madras Presidency in Tamil country, together with Frykenberg’s study of Guntur District, indicates that corruption was widespread in South India in the 19th century. A *Zamindar* was the holder of a *zamindari*, a revenue estate (often corresponding to a pre-colonial little kingdom), in which the Zamindar was responsible for revenue collection. The system was introduced by the Company and a Zamindar was often formerly a poligar.

²⁰² Mullagane, ‘the Committee papers’, p. 351

²⁰³ Annapah, ‘the Committee papers’, p. 321

²⁰⁴ McLane, John R., *Land and local kingship in eighteenth – century Bengal*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 69 – 96

Pamela Price proposes: ‘that corrupt actions result not just from a straightforward desire for material aggrandisement, but are also or even primarily important tools for political negotiation and the achievement and/or protection of unstable rank and status.’²⁰⁵ Price suggests that, in India, headship of a political faction or other kind of domain is modelled on notions of lordship and that the lord or ‘patron exerts personal authority allowing his subordinates to build, protect and sustain their own personal domains.’²⁰⁶ In Price’s study of the nineteenth-century Ramnad, a zamindari in Tamil country, she found that largess became one of the most important methods for the zamindari lord to develop networks of support. Presents in the form of land, cash, clothes and jewels, and bribes were tools to bind followers.

In the absence of more direct tools, namely legitimate armies, largess gained in prominence. The Zamindar as a vallal [a man of largess, of generosity] exerted the royal prerogative of social ordering, affecting the local status of his subjects through distribution of the resources of his domain.²⁰⁷

The largesse and the right to determine distribution of wealth, are both regarded as notions of lordship, meant to be tools to achieve and confirm high status. Price further states: ‘What Frykenberg’s study of local colonial administration and my study of zamindari management suggest is that subordinates felt that they had the right to carve out their own micro-areas inside wider structures of rule.’²⁰⁸ Corruption became a strategy for gaining status.

Subsequent to the Rajah’s assumption of power in 1811 the Amildars increasingly turned corrupt. The shurtee system that let the highest bidders receive Amildar posts, and the fact that the factions in the central administration influenced the employment of officers, led to a gradual replacement of the experienced Amildars, by persons who sought to make easy money: ‘... [T]he old and experienced Amildars were displaced and others put in their room who were unexperienced and persons set up by those who had their influence at court’²⁰⁹ In addition to this, witnesses stated to the Committee, that the officers who had in Purnaiya’s time acted reasonably and efficient also became corrupt and committed grave irregularities meant only to suit their own interests.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ Pamela Price, ‘Cosmologies and Corruption in (South) India – thinking aloud’, *Forum for development studies*, no 2, 1999, p. 319

²⁰⁶ Pamela Price, ‘Cosmologies’, p. 325

²⁰⁷ Pamela Price, *Kingship*, p. 79

²⁰⁸ Pamela Price, ‘Cosmologies’, p. 326

²⁰⁹ Ramiah, ‘the Committee papers’, p. 472

²¹⁰ Chowdiah, Sheristardar at the Resident’s cutcherree, to the Committee, ‘the Committee papers’, p. 1635

In the Nagar District, where central political control was weak and unstable, the possibilities for individuals and kin to carve out personal domains encouraged corruption among elite Maratha Brahmins. The Amildars manoeuvred to achieve and uphold their status, not unlike the Maratha Brahmins of Guntur District. In particular cash came to be important for the development of domains of influence among servants in Nagar Foudari. The situation in Nagar went out of control and was considered, by witnesses, who appeared before the Committee, to be much worse than in any other district in the state of Mysore. Chowdiah, the Resident's Sheristardar, who had no interest in either protecting the Rajah or Ram Rao's party, quoted what he had heard from the ryots of Nagar: 'The Amildars take bribes from us making each of us contribute towards the amount and the custom renters exact undue cesses from us.'²¹¹ Chowdiah described how the Amildars forced and bribed the Potails to participate in pressing the ryots harder for rents and in imposing free labour from the ryots. Corruption on this scale was regarded by the inhabitants in Nagar to be a new phenomenon in the District and the Amildars' behaviour was explained as one of the reasons to why the district had fallen into disorder in the 1820s: 'The reasons are that the Amildars have not observed the custom of that district.'²¹²

Organised crime

The practice of protecting criminals and then receiving a yield of the stolen goods, in return for this service, was a widespread custom among officers in Nagar Foudari. The countryside, containing both mountains and forests, combined with shady alliances of public officers and bandits, facilitated criminal operations. Foudar Servottum Rao, a dependant of Ram Rao, pressed people for bribes and was directly involved in criminal activities.²¹³ Vencata Raj Arus, one of the Rajah's relatives, who had the position of Dewan during the rebellion, followed as Foudar in Nagar after Servottum Rao, when the latter was removed because of gross maladministration. Twice Foudar Kishen Rao was directly connected to corruption. He was removed from office in 1827 accused of embezzling public money, and also removed in 1830 for alleged inactivity in execution of his duty.²¹⁴ The decision to remove him from office the second time was officially based on the grounds of his incapability to end the insurrection.

²¹¹ Chowdiah, 'the Committee papers', p. 1604

²¹² Soorhe Sobiah, 'the Committee papers', p. 999

²¹³ Vencata Raj Arus, Dewan and ex-Foudar of Nagar, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 649

²¹⁴ 'Report on', p. 16

The members of Ram Rao's party in Nagar were involved in crime to a degree that one perhaps can maintain that they were criminals themselves. One grave example is the story of Goonda. This man, of whom there are few records left, led a gang of bandits collaborating with the mentioned Foudjar Servottum Rao, the latter encouraging and protecting him. As a return favour Goonda shared the stolen goods with Servottum. Vencata Raj Arus told the Committee: 'I examined Goonda when he stated as follows[:] 'The property and money which I plundered in some places were given by me to Servootum Rao''.²¹⁵ Goonda was for a period also associated with Foudjar Kishen Rao. The Foudjars involved in these scandals, and most Amildars involved in similar cases, were occasionally charged with allegations of corruption, and they were sometimes punished, but then usually reinstated back into their positions. Goonda himself was released from prison twice, even after being found undeniably guilty of committing robberies.²¹⁶ The same treatment usually also applied to his accomplices who carried out the essential jobs in the crimes. Runga Rao claimed that Goondas robberies could be traced to, via Servottum Rao and Kishen Rao, to Buckshee Ram Rao and Beenee Venketsoobiah, and that the former person acted as Goondas patron.²¹⁷ The panchayat, which was formed to investigate Servottum Rao's alleged connections with Goonda and the robbers, consisted merely of persons close connected to Servottum Rao and Ram Rao, namely Baboo Rao, Veera Rao, Tippiah, Gungada Rao and Ram Rao himself. Servottum Rao was only fined for his crimes.

There are other stories of organised crime described vaguely and seemingly based upon rumours, for instance, one incredible story about the robbery of a banking house in 1827. In this case it was suspected that the Foudjar Kishen Rao and the Amildar of Chinnagerry, Anegerry Venket Rao, supported the gang of robbers and also participated in the plunder. All attempts to investigate failed because of Buckshee Ram Rao's influence at the Durbar: 'The officer sent to conduct it was suddenly recalled to Mysore, and the investigation allowed to drop.'²¹⁸ This particular story is exclusively based upon rumours that circulated in the whole of Mysore state. Nonetheless, together with the other stories, where circumstantial evidence exists, one can suspect that the rumours point to historical conditions which are supported by statements like this:

²¹⁵ Vencata Raj Arus, 'the Committee papers', p. 660

²¹⁶ 'Report on', pp. 17-18

²¹⁷ Runga Rao, 'the Committee papers', p. 1004

²¹⁸ 'Report on', p. 18

[Question:] Have robberies been more or less frequent in the country of late years than they were formerly? [Answer:] Latterly the robberies have increased. [Question:] From what cause? [Answer:] From the absence of investigation on the part of the Sirkar.²¹⁹

We can assert that some officers cooperated to a certain extent with criminal elements and that this could have caused a strained relation between themselves and the local population, as the Committee observes: '[These circumstances] have been productive of such an impression on the mind of the people to the disadvantage of the Government...'²²⁰

An important aspect is that the justice system was not altogether helpless. The officers were occasionally investigated, convicted and punished. Therefore, an interesting feature of this discussion is how the officers' self-respect dropped during the 1820s, and how this hardened their attitude towards their own subordinates. Mark Cubbon remarked:

The Amils were sometimes confined in irons, for corruption, or neglect of duty, or summoned to Hoozoor, and exposed before the Palace, with their faces covered in mud, and with pincers on their ears, they were occasionally flogged ...; yet such men were not by any means looked upon as disgraced, but were frequently re-appointed to office, and some of the talook servants now in employ, are said to have formerly suffered such inflictions. The natural consequences of this was the extinction of all self respect and honorable feeling amongst the public servants.²²¹

However, respect and obedience towards officers and their authority still prevailed, a point emphasised by military witnesses based upon observations on how the rebels in most cases treated the Amildars and other officers representing the Government. It seems that the hatred had been built up and became directed towards specific persons, especially Kishen Rao. He was regarded by the peasants to be a cruel man. Seebiah, a former Sheristardar of the Dewan's cutcherree answered to the Committee:

[Question:] Why were the Ryots dissatisfied with the second appointment of Krishna Row to the Foujdaree? [Answer:] Both because of his severity in enforcing payment of the revenue and because the Poligars had promised the Ryots to remit part of what they owed to the Sirkar, if they would join their standard.²²²

²¹⁹ Kullay Gowda, from Bookapatnam in Seera talook, to the Committee, 'the Committee papers', p. 1112

²²⁰ 'Report on', p. 18

²²¹ Mark Cubbon, 'Report on', p. 14

²²² Seebiah, 'the Committee papers', p. 1337

The elites at court and in the state administration combined to influence appointments throughout Mysore. Nagar Foujdari was left alone to Ram Rao's party, where the members of this faction seemingly unhindered engaged in corruption, crime and violent methods of collection of rent. Evidence further suggests the lengths to which members of the faction would protect their influenced: the rebellion could have been indirectly instigated by the leaders of Ram Rao's Brahmanical party.

Ram Rao's party and the rebellion

Seebiah told the Committee that the insurrection was triggered by Vera Raj Arus' attempt to collect the balance which had been remitted earlier by Ram Rao. Vera Raj Arus was removed because in this process he revealed gross corruption: 'I have heard that Kishen Row [,] fearful that his malpractice and those of his father /uncle/ would be exposed of if Veer Raj Arus continued in the office of Foujdar, induced the ryots to rise in Cottum.'²²³

Indicia can support the claim that the first uprisings were instigated by the Brahmin party connected to Ram Rao, by persons associated with and/or paid by this party, with the purpose to have Veera Raj Arus removed from office and Kishen Rao reinstated as Foujdar. The Committee wrote in 'The Report' that they are quite certain that a conspiracy took place with this purpose. The Committee considered Ram Rao's brother in law, Luchmun Rao, who arranged Buda Basveppas marriage, to be the focal point of this conspiracy, and referred to a letter from him:

This document ... which has been admitted to be genuine by its author Luchmun Rao himself, in our opinion strongly tend[s] to prove, that at least there were some among the members of Buckshee Ram Rao's party who instigated the people to sedition, for the purpose of, we may reasonably conclude, of effecting the removal of the Foujdar Veera Rai Arus, and of thereby securing themselves in the enjoyment of place and power, and escaping the disgrace and punishment which his inquiries would probably have brought down upon them.²²⁴

Luchmun Rao had served as Amildar in several talooks. His elder sister was married to Ram Rao, thus he drew on the advantage of his acquaintance with a mighty patron. Luchmun declared to the Committee that he first noticed that Buda Basveppa was called Nuggur Poligar

²²³ Seebiah, 'the Committee papers', p. 1337

²²⁴ 'Report on', p. 25

in August 1830, but admitted to the Committee that he heard rumours already in April, subsequent to Buda's wedding, that Buda Basveppa had taken the name Nuggur Khawind (Rajah of Nagar). He did not consider Buda to be the rightful Nagar sovereign, but still issued the sunnud mentioned before proclaiming Buda as sovereign of Nuggur. Luchmun denied this to the Committee, saying that he was not aware of the content of the sunnud because he could not read Kannada. He claimed that he believed he had signed a requisition for firewood for Buda's wedding, but that he was tricked by a person called Deshkar Sreenappah. There is no other mention of this person.²²⁵ The Committee wrote:

To what extent the party of the Buckshee Ram Rao, with the view of bringing about the removal of Veer Raj Arus, may have encouraged these proceedings, we do not feel ourselves able to say. It is certain, however, that in the instance above stated encouragement was given to them by one member of that party; and it cannot be doubted that they never could have taken place, and passed as they did without notice, if other public officers, besides that one, had not been at least guilty of gross neglect of their duty, and disregard of the interest of the Government they served.²²⁶

Other persons connected to Ram Rao were also involved. In September, in the Nagar talook of Chinnagerry, the ryots were encouraged by a letter from Gopal Rao, a member of the Anegerry-family related to Ram Rao and Kishen Rao, to start an uprising against the local Amildar – who was not of Ram Rao's party.²²⁷ The letter, which was presumed to be in Gopal Rao's handwriting, recommended that the ryots not return to the villages even if the Rajah of Mysore asked them to. The peasants and potails were easily persuaded because they were already annoyed by the fear of having to pay the remitted rents: '... there is evidence that these various moves were tacitly supported, perhaps inspired, by some Maharatta Brahman officials seeking to embarrass a member of the Mysore royal family...'²²⁸

To conclude, it seems that certain indications points towards a planned conspiracy staged by members of Buckshee Ram Rao's party, including Beenee Venketsoobiah, in alliance with their client village head men. In their attempts to, once again out-manoeuvre the Rajah, members of the faction went so far as to instigate an uprising in Nagar District – or the Brahmin alliance was at least one of the major factors that contributed to the outbreak of the

²²⁵ Luchmun Rao, 'the Committee papers', p. 1287

²²⁶ 'Report on', p. 24

²²⁷ 'Report on', p. 25

²²⁸ Burton Stein, *Notes on " Peasant insurgency" in colonial Mysore: Events and Process, South Asia reader*, Curzon Press, 1993 p. 190

insurrection. However, the rebellion, instigated with the purpose of removing Vera Raj Arus, spread unexpectedly far and fast and ended not according to the plans behind the plot. It ended with British take-over of Mysore.

8. Conclusion

Stephen Blake offers a model which describes the patrimonial-bureaucratic state, in order to explain the administration of the Mughal Empire. This is an ideal type of a state. The patrimonial-bureaucratic state is an extension of the patrimonial state, which Stephen Blake describes, drawing upon Max Weber's work:

The ruler of such a state [the patrimonial state] governs on the basis of a personal, traditional authority whose model is the patriarchal family. Patrimonial domination originates in the patriarch's authority over his household; it entails obedience to a person, not an office; it depends on the reciprocal loyalty between a subject and his master; and it is limited only by the ruler's discretion.²²⁹

The state becomes patrimonial when the ruler's authority extends from patrimonial household to the political sphere – the revenue, military and judicial – and thus controlling other patrimonial masters, namely local lords and chiefs. The larger realm will then be seen as a huge household. In the smaller kingdoms there was little difference between functionaries of the state and household officials. In larger and more complex patrimonial-bureaucratic empires the rulers could lose control of administration and, 'Under such conditions the strength of personal, patrimonial authority began to wane and officials began to appropriate prebends and declare their independence.'²³⁰ In patrimonial- bureaucratic regimes, the ruler and his advisors had to be constantly on the alert against subordinates who would undermine the authority of the central government.

When the Mysore state became more centralised under Hyder Ali, Tipu Sultan and Purnaiya, elements of bureaucratic rule came into governance. The Mysore Kingdom then resembled the patrimonial-bureaucratic state model which Blake describes. One cause for the centralisation was warfare and the presence of large standing military forces, which lead to an increased need for efficient administration and control of resources:

To compete militarily against rivals, states were forced to expand their powers of taxation as well as conceive other methods by which to command wealth and income.

²²⁹ Stephen Blake, 'The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals', In Hermann Kulke (ed.), *The state in India 1000-1700*, (Oxford University Press/Oxford India Paperbacks, 1997), p. 281

²³⁰ Stephen Blake, 'The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic', p. 283

This led to the development of new, more centralised state formations that had greater control over resources within their territories.²³¹

Blake focuses not solely upon the ruler's role as patriarch; however, Blake also considers the patrimonial elements in the operation and outline of administration. In patrimonial-bureaucratic empires the state and the household officials could become separated spheres. This extension of control beyond the household domain required extra-patrimonial officials who administered the collection of taxes and the judicial affairs. In patrimonial-bureaucratic states resources became more and more beyond the ruler's control, and officials declared their independence.

The Mysore state as it appeared in the years prior to the insurrection resembled the patrimonial-bureaucratic state model that Blake presents. In Mysore a service elite of Maratha Brahmins had filled most of the administrative positions since the late 18th century. They were foreigners recruited as administrators. The shurtee system allowed for the administration of revenue to be constantly changed and the new elites of Maratha Brahmins increasingly received positions which they only held for a couple of years at a time. These new elites and administrators were not recruited in traditional patrilineal sense, i.e., because of close kin and/or personal ties, but because of the need for administrators in the new semi-bureaucratized state.

The kings of Native States were deprived of their military advantage in the early 19th century, either by the abolition of military forces or by severe restrictions on armed defence, a development directed by the new overlord, the Company. Pamela Price describes how one Zamindar in Tamil country dealt with this situation: 'The Setupati lost his armies and his right to adjudicate after the Permanent Settlement [1801 – 03], but he did not lose his capacity to affect social and political ordering. This a ruler did through controlling access to resources.'²³² A way to control the resources, and to prevent the fragmentation of status, was through spending money on building support, or royal largesse:

Contradiction among principles of political action was an creative element in patterns of state formation during the late precolonial period. In the nineteenth century, in the context of a new type of overlord, these elements of fragmenting tension would prove

²³¹ Prasannan Parthasarathi, 'Merchants and the rise of colonialism', in Burton Stein & Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed), *Institutions and economic change in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press/Oxford India Paperbacks, 1996), p. 85

²³² Pamela Price, *Kingship*, p. 77

destructive, contributing to the fragmentation of precolonial monarchical cosmology. The desire to reproduce royal honour and status was a dynamical element in continuing evolution of monarchical ideology in the course of the nineteenth century.²³³

This largesse became a powerful tool: 'for protecting and enhancing royal authority in the attempt to fulfil common expectations of appropriate behaviour for a royal personage.'²³⁴ The Rajah of Mysore, as well, had limited power and status, compared to pre-colonial kings, and in a similar manner as the Zamindars of Tamil country, his actions can be seen in this light: he attempted to reproduce his royal status and honour. Through royal largesse and gift-giving the Rajah endeavoured to sustain, or moreover, regain his status.

According to Blake the patrimonial-bureaucratic state shaped district officer positions with overlapping responsibilities. In addition, patrimonial-bureaucratic officials frequently filled positions that were not clearly defined and imperfectly structured, thus allowing the local administrators to some extent to define their power spheres themselves. According to Pamela Price, in concept of dharma lies the idea that persons have the right to build and protect domains of their own, within the natural given restraints their position in the hierarchy. That means that subordinate civil servants felt they had the privilege to enhance their own honour and develop, on different levels, their own possibilities for patronage. Civil servants and administrators on all levels use the same tools as the king, though on a smaller scale. In this system all positions in the hierarchy attempt to follow the example of their superiors and carve out their domains.

There are indications of a growing conflict between the two different Mysore state institutions, the Hoozoor and Durbar, which fit into the discussion of difference between centralised patrimonial-bureaucracy and patrimonial state governance. The Hoozoor and the Durbar represented different connotations of royal power. A bureaucratisation of state administration from the Muslim Sultan's time to Purnaiya's and the Rajah's rule in the early 19th century should have made the Hoozoor into a place where the ruler's will and authority over the districts met and formed a single institution. Patrimonial bureaucratisation implied separation of lower responsibilities; revenue, magisterial and judicial. In Mysore the Hoozoor was a central unit, that is, it resided in Mysore. In the sources, we observe, for instance, that

²³³ Pamela Price, *Kingship*, p. 37

²³⁴ Pamela Price, *Kingship*, p. 104

corrupt officers were sent from the districts to appear before the Hoozoor, that officers were detached from the Hoozoor to investigate affairs in the districts and that the Hoozoor stored archives containing official communication.

The Durbar was a royal court. Rajah led assemblies in the Durbar hall, where he resembled a divine authority. The right to hold Durbar was an important manifestation of royalty for the Hindu Woodeyars that reigned in Mysore prior to the period of the Muslim sultans. Kate Brittlebank describes the importance of durbar during the annual *Dasara* festival:

An important part of the festival was the darbar aspect, where homage was paid to the king, gifts were exchanged and the sacrificial reconsecration of the royal arms, soldiers, horses and elephants took place. As an essential element of the incorporative nature of the whole Dasara ritual, at this time all the subordinate chiefs were required to be present.²³⁵

In the Durbar royal distribution was symbolically manifested through gift-giving and distribution of betel nuts. The Durbar was closely tied to rank, as a visual display of order of things, and a place to manifest respect, while the Hoozoor, having bureaucratic elements of administration, supervised the officers of the Foujdaris and the talooks.

It looks as if the as if department mandates and administrative positions were not clearly defined in the state of Mysore during the time of Krishnaraja Woodeyar III. They seem to have been imperfectly structured, with overlapping responsibilities, resembling the patrimonial-bureaucratic state type that Blake proposes. The Rajah was losing control of resources and positions and Maratha Brahmins, relatives of Rajah and other characters like Beenee Venketsoobiah and Chowdiah manoeuvred to carve out their domains. Ram Rao held different positions through his career, Foujdar in Nagar, positions in the Civil Office, commander of the Cavalry and at one time he functioned as a Dewan. However, Ram Rao is always referred to as a member of the Hoozoor. 'Ram Rao was on of the "Hoozoor Moosahibs"', or persons habitually consulted by the Rajah on public affairs.²³⁶ It seems that the Hoozoor was the centre of influence in Mysore and that the foreign Brahmin administrators were aware of this. There are indications that the state of Mysore struggled with problems of defining the spheres of the Hoozoor and the Durbar. It seems that the

²³⁵ Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search for legitimacy, Islam and Kingship in Hindu Domain* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 59

²³⁶ 'Report on', p. 15

different factions struggled for increased power within the new bureaucratic structures in a patrimonial-bureaucratic state. The insurrection tells us that the nature of governance in this patrimonial-bureaucratic regime was fragile and the leadership incapable of upholding an effective state administration. The Rajah did not manage to fill his position as king in a way that would have made the governance of Mysore work effectively.

In Nagar Foujdari the Brahmin administrators, mostly recruited among the dependants of Ram Rao, acted on their own within their undefined spheres, attempting to take advantage of the possibilities given within the system: their protection by patrons at the central administration and the advantages of the shurtee system. And like the Zamindars in Tamil country: ‘Cash and other movable gifts became essential for the development of secret domains of influence among local servants of the state.’²³⁷

Parallel to the manoeuvring of Maratha Brahmin officers, the Nagar poligars attempted to reproduce their lost status. Pamela Price study of Zamindars in Tamil Country in the 19th century shows us that even under direct British administration, in Madras Presidency, poligars struggled to reproduce their ruling status.

In Mysore the poligars were to some degree pacified by Tipu Sultan at the end of the 18th century. However, their descendants carried claims to power. Like other places in South India the descendants of the poligars were representatives of the earlier power of former little kings and chieftains and existed side-by-side to the evolving central administration. In Nagar the poligars’ attempt to reproduce and regain ruling status and honour coincided with peasants’ displeasure with the running of affairs in Nagar and the hardships of economic recession. They were helped on the way to revolt by the Maratha Brahmins struggling for dominance. In the early stages of the insurrection the poligars were seen as a tool for the faction of Maratha Brahmins related to Ram Rao in their intriguing against the royal faction. The poligars, however, had their own agenda. They were on a mission of recovering the past as the future – to recover what they felt was their ancestral domains. Their ambitions were directly linked to a sense of loss on their behalf – loss of land, territory and prestige.

²³⁷ Pamela Price, *Kingship*, p. 104

One might say that the Rajah, the Amildars, other officers and the poligars in varying degree and with different methods all aiming to reproduce honour and status, and increase and uphold their domains. The peasants residing in Nagar District, however, wanted to improve their welfare. The peasant's ambitions were linked to different types of losses: loss of money due to the increased revenue demand, decreased standards of living and loss of safety due to hard times given them by the Amildars in the 1820's. In the insurrection, however, the peasants and the poligars became linked together. In 'The Committees Report', little is stated regarding the peasant's forms of political action and/or their values. However, in the Committee's notes we can find several 'voices' on their behalf. Concerning the peasant's forms of political action, it seems that kuttam was one of the few options left for them to express protest. Holee Mutha Sidda Gowdah, headman in the Seera Talook, stated to the Committee that during the 'old days' and in Purnaiya's time the ryots could bring forward their complaints to the Rajah. But not anymore, the Amildars would beat them and trouble them on the way. The peasants had stopped going to Mysore for redress, he told the Committee. During the rebellion, the peasants received letters encouraging them to gather in kuttams, and so they did.²³⁸ Most of the witnesses said that to rise in kuttam was a tradition in Mysore. Kullay Gowda from Bookapatnam in Seera talook stated to the Committee that kuttam was a last resort, prior to the insurrection: 'If the ryots were dissatisfied with an amildar, it has been an ancient custom for the whole of them to rise in Cootum, that is, if they have no other means left of obtaining justice /or means/ they assembled in Cootum.'²³⁹

From the Committee's papers we can also find evidence regarding the peasants' values and their view on the Rajah and government matters, apart from their disgruntlement concerning increased rents and imposed labour. The peasants' statements indicate that they were to some degree aware about the Rajah's relations to his own advisors and administrators. Kittenhully Venkatak Gowda of the Nelwcnigelum Talook stated to the Committee what he believed was the general opinion of the Rajah, among the people: 'There was, is not, and never will be a person in the world equal to him, but he has some wicked ministers about him by whose means this country has been destroyed.'²⁴⁰ Holee Mutha Sidda Gowdah underlined this when he claimed that the Rajah '...was much beloved by them. The people offered their prayers to

²³⁸ Holee Mutha Sidda Gowdah, Gowda of the Seera Talook, to the Committee, the 'Committee papers', p. 1100

²³⁹ Kullay Gowda from Bookapatnam, the 'Committee papers', p. 1111

²⁴⁰ Kittenhully Venkatak Gowda, from Nelwcnigelum Talook, to the Committee, the 'Committee papers', p. 1082

God that he might become more prosperous/or greater...from resigning it to his evil counsellors the country has been brought to its present state.’²⁴¹

The Committee’s notes open opportunities for historians to learn more about the society of a South Indian Native State under indirect British imperial rule from early 19th century to its inclusion into the British Empire in 1831, all dependent upon the questions asked to the sources. The material is extensive and vast and I could only make use of small parts in the course of writing this thesis. This study could be expanded to include extended data on the compound of the rebellion, regarding caste, class and religious belonging – a full-scale mapping of the involved persons. Secondly, further research into the political participation, of officers, village headmen and ryots, could be an interesting and fruitful task. Thirdly, I propose that more work be done on the notions of values of the involved parties in the rebellion. The material could be valuable to future scholars regarding further research into nature of governance in 19th century South Indian Native States, in comparative studies, studies on corruption, and finally, disintegration of indigenous rule under British imperial rule.

²⁴¹ Holee Mutha Sidda Gowdah, the ‘Committee papers’, p. 1105

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