Social Anthropology
And the Study of Historical Societies

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In this article I will first discuss in brief the relation between Social Anthropology and Ethnology, and how modern social anthropologists regard the latter as a kind of conjectural or pseudo-history.

I will then show how the ethnological approach has obstructed the growth of scientific study of Indian history and sociology.

Finally, I will discuss how social anthropology can help the study of local history and thus contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Indian history.

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY emerged as a separate discipline in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Before this period, it formed a part of Ethnology (the study of peoples). The new discipline of Social Anthropology was conceived of as a branch of Sociology which studied primitive societies. Sociology was regarded, firstly, as the discipline which studied modern, civilized societies and their problems, and secondly, as theoretical science of human society. This distinction between Sociology and Social Anthropology is however beginning to disappear nowadays.

The commercial and colonial expansion of Europe, which began in the sixteenth century, had led to a great increase in the knowledge about peoples inhabiting the various parts of the world. From the seventeenth century onwards, anthropological writers cited primitive societies in support of their arguments about the theory of human progress of evolution. Various societies in the world were first compared and then arranged on a scale, showing the emergence of man from savagery to civilization. Primitive Societies in Africa, America, Oceania, etc, were supposed to represent the earliest stages in the evolution of human society. The earliest ancestors of the civilized peoples were supposed to be similar to the newly-discovered savages.

Evolutionary Anthropology

Thanks to the theory of evolution, the discovery of the origin and development of social institutions was the dominant interest in the researches of the anthropologists of eighteenth and nineteenth century. There were theories of origin of everything in society, of totemism and exogamy, of religion and law, of family, language and State, and of society itself. A common theory regarding the origin and development of family, for instance, was that there was first promiscuity everywhere, then there was matriliny and matriarchy, and finally there was patriarchy and monogamy. Religion was believed to have developed from magic, science from theology, monothelism from animism, property from communism, and contract from status.

The evolutionary anthropologists thought they were writing the 'history' of human society. This is evident in the titles of their books, such as Adam Ferguson's 'An Essay on the History of Civil Society', H S Maine's 'Early History of Institutions', Tylor's 'Researches into the Early History of Mankind', and McLennan's 'Studies In Ancient History'. The history written by evolutionary anthropologists was, however, conjectural history based on circumstantial evidence, and not critical history based on documents and monuments. Primitive tribes have had no tradition of writing, and there was therefore no means of knowing the nature of their past social institutions. On the other hand, the knowledge about the earliest stages of the history of mankind was confined almost entirely to the items of material culture discovered by the prehistoric archaeologists. Only because the material culture of prehistoric man was similar to that of primitive tribes, the prehistoric archaeologists conjectured that the social institutions of the former must also have been like those of the latter. Evolutionary anthropologists often disagreed among themselves about their historical reconstructions, but they all followed the same method of conjectural history.

Evolutionary anthropology was recast and re-presented in the beginning of twentieth century by a few writers such as Westermarck and Hobhouse. It also influenced Marx and Engels. The latter wrote 'The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State' almost entirely on the basis of Morgan, Bachofen, Lubbock and McLennan. The influence of evolutionary anthropology is also seen in the writings of that eminent archaeologist, Gordon Childe.

Diffusion of Cultures

In the middle of the nineteenth century there developed a school, usually called "diffusionist", which considered the aim of anthropology was to trace the movement and mixture of peoples and the diffusion of cultures. The diffusionists criticized the evolutionists, because once it was shown that a social institution was borrowed from another society due to some historical accident, it could hardly be considered as a stage in an inevitable unilinear evolution. The diffusionists were, however, quite often as conjectural as the evolutionists in their 'historical' reconstructions. They often failed to take account of the possibility of independent development of culture. Secondly, the evidence for their historical reconstructions usually consisted of racial and linguistic affinities and of what were called culture parallels.

The whole concept of race as based upon skeletal measurements, hair-colour, skin pigmentation, colour of eyes, etc is now regarded as of doubtful validity, in view of the great advances made in the science of Genetics. The linguistic and cultural classifications, however, if carefully used, may supplement the work of the archaeologist. They may suggest hypotheses which may be confirmed by the discovery of documents and monu-
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ments. A historical probability may thus be turned into a certainty. By and large, however, diffusionist anthropology has provided at best probabilities, and at the worst, wild guesses. Rivers' 'History of Melanesian Society' and Elliot Smith's 'Ancient Egyptians' are monuments to the uncritical use of the idea of diffusion.

Structure-Function

There is also another point: evolutionists and diffusionists endeavoured not only to reconstruct the history of social institutions but also to 'explain' them in terms of such history. This tendency to explain social institutions by their hypothetical past was strongly criticized by the anthropologists of the "structure function" school—and most modern anthropologists belong to this school. One of the fundamental propositions in functionalist anthropology is that the first step toward understanding a society is to find interrelations among its various parts, just as a physiologist understands the functioning of a human body by studying the interrelations among its various parts.

The history of a society, where it is known for certain and in some detail, does help one in understanding the society. The knowledge of history, however, is never a substitute for the knowledge of society as a functioning system. Evolutionist and diffusionist anthropologists were doubly at fault; firstly, they tried to understand society solely in terms of history, and secondly, their history was conjectural. As a result of the recognition of this viewpoint, the discipline of functionalist anthropologists was considered as Social Anthropology, and that of evolutionist and diffusionist anthropologists as Ethnology.

II

The ethnological approach influenced, and unfortunately continues to influence, the study of Indian society. One of the fundamental problems in Indian Sociology is that of understanding the unity and diversity of India. This problem is usually explained away by a simple ethnological theory: India is diverse because it is a deep net into which various races and peoples have drifted and been caught, and there is unity because the cultural characteristics of one of the races, the Aryans, have spread all over the country. The theory is all right so far as it goes, but it does not tell us how unity and diversity are expressed in the social life of the people at the present day. The study of this empirical reality is obstructed by the ethnological approach.

Another ethnological theory that has greatly obscured the growth of scientific study of Indian society is the imaginary division of Indian culture into Aryan and Dravidian. Historians, archaeologists, linguists, Indologists, Orientalists, Sociologists, anthropologists and ethnologists, have all accepted this dichotomy and interpreted almost every aspect of Indian society in terms of it. The result is that the theory is no longer confined to the learned, but has become current even among schoolboys and laymen, and is also unfortunately a guiding factor in certain political movements in the country. Wrong academic theory has thus become a part of the dynamics of caste system.

Ethnological Approach to Caste

The ethnological approach has guided the study of caste system in India for about a century. All the well-known students of caste, belonging to the older generation, such as Ghurye, Hutton, Irawati Karve and D N Majumdar, have an ethnological bias. And it seems they are not in a mood to budge an inch from their old approach. When Dr Kapadia changed the title of his book from 'Caste and Race' to 'Caste and Class', and also dropped the chapter "Race and Caste" in the second edition, one was led to hope that he had become less ethnological. In the latest edition of the book, however, the chapter "Race and Caste" is reinstated, which shows the revival of Professor Ghurye's interest in old-fashioned racial classifications based on inadequate data. In the same way, Professor D N Majumdar has repeated in his paper "Caste and Race" in "Ghurye Felicitations Volume" (ed K M Kapadia, Bombay, 1955) what he had written previously in his book 'Races and Cultures of India' (Lucknow, 1944). Dr Karve's ethnological bias is evident even in her recent papers on caste in 'The Economic Weekly' (see particularly the article "What Is Caste?—Caste As Extended Kin" in the Annual Number, January, 1958). In his first book 'Hindu Kinship' (Bombay, 1947) Dr K M Kapadia preferred the analytic method to the ethnological one. In the Introduction to that book he clearly mentions his doubts regarding the question of the Aryan origin, and quotes Malinowski, a functionalist, to support his rejection of hypothetical history (though in the body of the book we do find some ethnological interpretations). In his recent book 'Marriage and Family in India' (Bombay, 1958), however we find a reversal to ethnology. He writes in the Introduction, "Ethnological analysis of culture is the basic need of Indian sociology. Ethnological analysis has been criticized by Malinowski and his school, but, to our mind at least, the quarrel between the two schools has not much of substance in it." In the first book Malinowski is quoted to support the analytic method, and in the second, his criticism of the ethnological approach is dismissed as of no substance! Dr Kapadia now tries to support his viewpoint by quoting Rivers' study of Melanesian society, which is, as I have already stated, a monument of conjectural history.

It is no wonder that Dr Kapadia's book contains a number of patent arguments of evolutionary and diffusionist anthropology. Only a few instances may be given here. In the discussion of Khasa kinship, there is a well-known generalisation of evolutionary anthropology, "Laxity in sex is associated with matri-locality, and regulated sex with patri-locality and patriarchal family organization." This is followed by a question about Khasa kinship, "Can it be that the original matri-locality, sex laxity and perhaps matriliney of the Khasas have come to be replaced by polyandrous sex life, patri-locality and patriarchal family organization?" (p 70). Similarly, we are told about the Nayars of Malabar, "Nair marriage had no legal or religious basis. There was no agreement between the contracting parties, and there was no law of divorce or customary convention to regulate divorce. Such sexual relations dissociated from economic relations and social sanction, represent the most primitive sexual organization" (p 82). And about the Todas, "In short, marriage is superimposed on the original condition of unregulated sex life, but it has not evolved so far as to impose the sexual ethics of a monogamous patrilinial community" (p 91).
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Introduction to the Study of Indian History' (Bombay, 1950) is another recent attempt to revive the ethnological approach. Kosambi claims that he is putting forth "a modern approach to the study of Indian history" (p vii). In so far as the book emphasises the need for a history of the Indian society as a whole, it is indeed a good antidote to the usual history—of kings, queens, ministers, and generals. But Kosambi's approach is by no means a modern or correct one. It is nothing but an application of evolutionary anthropology of eighteenth and nineteenth century to Indian history via Marx and Engels. Kosambi himself states, "what has to be done is to take stock of later studies under Marx's direct inspiration by his colleague Engels, on the nature and decay of tribal organization. These, applied to modern discoveries in the field, will give us new results" (p 13). It has been pointed out above that Engels derived his ideas on tribal organization from contemporary anthropologists who were all evolutionists.

Kosambi also repeats the same old argument about the relation between archaeology and ethnography, "To work back from the houses, grave-goods, tools, and utensils found by the archaeologist to the former productive relations, usually relations between classes and groups, needs a study of ethnography. The principle has been used by modern archaeologists, who utilize studies of modern but still primitive African or Australian tribes to evaluate finds in Europe" (p 7). Naturally, this method leads Kosambi to make such conjectural statements as: "Certain types of joint burial would indicate whether the society was predominantly matriarchal, patriarchal, in transition from the former to the latter, or in the pre-cian stage preceding both" (p 7) and "The vast majority of country-side gods are still daubed with a red pigment that is palpable substitute for long-vanished blood sacrifices" (p 8). All this shows nothing but rank ignorance of modern anthropology.

Ethnology in Indology

In Vedic studies, an attempt is always made to disentangle Aryan characteristics from the non-Aryan or pre-Aryan. It is doubtful to what extent this attempt itself is justifiable, because the supposedly different characteristics might actually be forming an organic whole. But that apart, the distinction between the two types of characteristics is usually made on the basis of the notions of what is 'civilized' or 'advanced' and what is 'primitive' or 'tribal'. Frequently, the Aryans themselves are also described as having tribal organization. Indo-logists have usually derived these notions of 'primitive' or 'tribal' from older anthropology. Similarly, they use several terms and concepts, such as totemism, animism, taboo, clan and lineage, in the same way as did the older anthropologists.

In the works on ancient Indian polity considerable attention is given to the problem of the origin of the ancient Indian State, and this problem is usually discussed within the general framework of evolutionary anthropology. Dr A S Altekar begins the chapter "Origin and Types of the State" in 'State and Government in Ancient India' (Delhi, 1958) with the statement: "The modern speculation (on the origin of the State) is largely influenced by the scientific method and the theory of evolution, and seeks to fortify its conclusions by such analogies as can be drawn from the known condition of societies which are more or less in an uncivilized condition at the present time." And then Dr Altekar piles up evidence to show that "as far as the Indo-European communities are concerned, the institution of patriarchal joint family seems to have been the germ out of which State was gradually evolved" (p 34). Similarly, the long chapter on the evolution of kingship among the Indo-Aryans in N N Law's 'Ancient Indian Polity' (Oxford, 1921) is based on the ideas borrowed mainly from Spencer, Frazer, Maine and the end of all the discussion is to reject all evolutionary theories except that of the author's, viz, the theory of the origin of kingship in patriarchal family. Pramathnath Banerjea also subscribes to the same view in 'Public Administration in Ancient India' (London, 1916, p 38).

Other Indologists, such as D R Bhandarkar ('Some Aspects of Ancient Hindu Polity', Benares, 1929, pp 129-168) and K P Jayaswal (Hindu Polity', Calcutta, 1924, Part I, pp 4-6), followed the social contract theories of Hobbes and Locke, and traced the origin of kingship in a state of war or of perfect harmony. Even such a careful scholar as Dr U N Ghosal cannot help speculating on "the true origin of Vedic monarchy; he traces it "in the military and other necessities of the people during the Indo-Iranian or even earlier times" ('A History of Hindu Public Life', Calcutta, 1945, p 9). We find both the patriarchal and the war theory even in 'The Vedic Age', which is one of a series of books promising to provide a modern history of India (Bharatiya Itihas Samiti's 'History and Culture of the Indian People', Vol I, Ed Majumdar and Pusalkar, London, 1952, p 352).

Origin of Vedic Religion

One of the preoccupations in the studies of Vedic religion is a search for its origin, and this search is usually based on the general theories of the origin of religion formulated by anthropologists and sociologists, such as Frazer, Tylor, Spencer, Durkheim and Codrington. It is noteworthy that one of the trenchant criticisms against the search for the origin of religion has come from that great Indologist, A B Keith (see his Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upnishads', Harvard Oriental Series, Vol 31, Cambridge, Mass, 1925, Chapt 4). Still, however, in 'The Vedic Age' (op cit) we find crude evolutionary statements about the origin of Vedic religion. For instance, "We find in the Rigveda thoughts, beliefs, and practices that one would associate with the most primitive grades of society and with an unsophisticated age." "Their hymns reflect in places that primitive attitude of mind which looks upon all nature as a living presence, or an aggregate of animated entities" (p 360). "Although Rigvedic mythology is not as primitive as some scholars once believed it to be, in no other literary monument of the world do we come across this primitive phase of the evolution of religious beliefs which reveals to us the very process of personification by which natural phenomena developed into gods" (p 361).

Older anthropology also influenced the attempts to find the origin of Indian village community and of joint family. It would indeed be very useful to review the whole of Indological literature from the viewpoint of modern social anthropology. At the present moment, however, the discussion of methods and con-
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cepts seems to be a taboo among most Indologists, and among most of those sociologists and anthropologists who have their moorings in Indology. As long as this situation prevails they will continue to use concepts and methods which they consider to be modern but which are actually out-of-date.

III

It has already been remarked that social anthropologists regard the history of a society as relevant to its understanding, where history in known for certain and in some detail. To know a society's past gives one a deeper understanding of the nature of its social life at the present time. Some social anthropologists even consider social anthropology as a branch of historical scholarship, the only difference being that social anthropologists make field-studies while historians depend upon documents and monuments. Even this distinction is now being blurred. It applied only so long as anthropologists studied primitive societies which had no recorded history. With the extension of the field of social anthropology to countries with a long and recorded past, such as India, Japan, China and Arabia, anthropologists feel more and more the relevance of history to anthropological studies. They also feel that their monographs on tribal societies are fascinating source books for modern history on account of rapid social change tribal societies are undergoing in all parts of the world. The same would happen to the studies made at present.

While social anthropologists are thus becoming more and more aware of the usefulness of history to anthropological studies, they are at the same time disappointed to find that the history books as they are written at present in India do not help them much. This happens because few historian in India have sociological aims in the study of Indian history. It is difficult to know from their books the pattern of inter-relations between various aspects of society at different periods of time. Narrating the life of kings, governors and military generals is what is most common in historical works. Very little attempt is made to interrelate the data presented in different chapters on political history, religion, philosophy, economy, literature, administration, law, kinship, etc. In the chapter on social life we would find the names of several castes, but from the discussion on marriage it would appear as though a single kinship system prevailed in all the castes. Regarding law, we are not told whether it was observed by all sections of society. The treatment of the subject of position of women is always partial; it is forgotten that divorce and remarriage of women are common among the lower castes. The problem of life in the villages and of the relation of villages with the larger society, is dismissed with a facile assumption that villages were little republics with self-sufficient economy, and that they neither influenced nor were influenced by what happened in the larger society. Facile all-India statements are made about food and drink, dress and toilette, amusements and games, beliefs and superstitions, customs and manners, and estimate of character. We find little awareness of the fact that Indian society was always divided into numerous groups, some of which differed widely from one another.

Records Neglected by Historians

Historians might retort that there are not enough data to study the kind of problems social anthropologists are interested in. This is, however, not entirely true as far as the more recent periods of Indian history are concerned. Social anthropologists themselves have found records which have failed, unfortunately, to attract the attention of historians and archivists. Professor M N Srinivas has used the records of caste panchayats in his study of dominant caste in Mysore (see his paper "The Dominant Caste in Rampura" in The American Anthropologist, Feb 1959, Vol 61, pp 1-16). Dr Bernard Cohn of Chicago University is studying the relation between social, change and legal change in four districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh from the late eighteenth century to the present time. He has already worked on the records in the India Office Library, London, and at the Central Record Office, Allahabad. He has also planned to study the actual working of courts at the present time. Dr F G Bailey has made use of published records in his study of a village in Orissa ("Caste and the Economic Frontier", Manchester, 1957).

My friend Shri R G Shroff and I are using records in our study of social change in villages in Central Gujarat. Among the records we are studying, there are genealogical and other records kept by the Barots, a caste of professional bards and genealogists. We have given an idea of the nature of these records in a paper "The Vahivancha Barots of Gujarat: A Castle of Genealogists and Mythographers" in Traditional India: Structure and Change (Milton Singer, Ed, Philadelphia, 1958).

We are also studying the records of the Revenue and Topographical Survey of Ahmedabad and Kaira Districts conducted in 1820-26 AD. These records lie neglected in taluka offices. They are voluminous, and only a superficial idea of their contents can be given here.

Jarif Books in Gujarat

For every village and town there is a bulky book called Jarif no Chopdo written in Gujarati (Jarif land survey, chopdo = book). A Jarif book contains the following kinds of information:

1. A census giving the following details for each family: name of the head of the family, the number of men, women and servants in the family, and the number of houses, livestock, ploughs, carts and wells owned by the family. The names of heads of families are listed according to caste and religion, so that we get figures of population, livestock, ploughs, etc for each caste and religious group. At the end of the census, the houses are classified according to building materials.

2. A table of births, deaths and marriages for five years preceding the year of the survey.

3. A land register showing the following details for each plot of land in the village: name, area, boundaries, nature of soil, owner, tenant, crops grown in each season, acreage and yield of each crop, facilities for irrigation, the number of each kind of tree, and disputes regarding ownership, passage or irrigation.

4. A list of wells showing, for each well, the name of the owner, whether the well is built with bricks, and whether equipped with irrigation devices, an estimate of the amount of water in the well, and an estimate of cost for repair or for constructing irrigation devices.

5. A table showing the area of land under different tenures, and the amount of revenue realized by the government from each category of land.
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A statement of rules, including the rates of revenue, for different land tenures.

A statement of the rates of taxes and cesses other than land tax, and of hereditary dues and fines. As an example, in one village there were, a plough-cess varying according to the cultivator's caste, a hereditary fine on turbulent Rajputs and Kolis, cesses on artisans such as rope-makers and tanners, and a wedding-cess on the lower castes.

A statement of the sources of miscellaneous income to government, such as income from trees, manure, and licence for selling opium.

A table of current prices or various grains.

A balance sheet of village accounts kept by the village accountant. On the credit side, the most important entries were regarding money realized from different taxes. On the debit side, the most important entries were regarding money sent to the government treasury, and the expenditure for administration, for protection from thieves, robbery, and marauders. For entertainment, and for social and religious activities of the village community.

A brief account of the revenue administration of the village, year by year, from the date the village came under British administration (i.e. from 1802, 1803 or 1817, as the case may be) to the year in which the village was surveyed. It mentions who ruled over the village before the British acquired it. Then it shows for each year, whether the revenue was collected through a revenue contractor or through the government officers, the amount of revenue assessed or contracted, the net amount realized, and reasons for an increase or decrease in revenue.

Miscellaneous information, such as disputes regarding village boundaries, and the names of village headman, village accountant, village leaders, and district accountant.

Village Records

In addition to the Jarif book, the Surveyors also wrote remarks in English about every village. We saw two bulky volumes of such remarks among the archives in the Secretariat Record Office, Bombay. The remarks refer to the general economic condition of the village, the general nature of agriculture, the condition of wells, bunds, and canals, a history of the village, immigration and emigration, boundary disputes between villages, headmanship disputes, and the character and social status of the headman, of big landlords, and of other village leaders.

Captain Cruikshank, the Superintendent of the Survey, wrote general reports on the different sub-districts (purgunnahs and tuppas) of Ahmedabad and Kaira districts, on the basis of the above-mentioned remarks on villages. The reports of some sub-districts are published in two volumes. 'Selections from the Records of the Government of Bombay', No X and XI (Bombay, 1853). The unpublished reports are found among the archives in the Secretariat Record Office, Bombay.

Cruikshank mentions in his reports that the Surveyors prepared a map of each village, and of each sub-district on the basis of village maps. Bishop Heber, who visited Gujarat while the Survey was going on, had seen these maps, and commented on their accuracy ('Heber's Narrative', Vol. 11, London, 1828, p. 140). Governor Malcolm also thought highly of them ('Bombay Gazetteer', Vol. 111, 1879, p. 99). We have, however, not yet been able to locate these maps in any office.

Another important kind of village records in taluka offices in Central Gujarat are known as Kalambandhi books. A Kalambandhi book is a record, under different heads, of the details of village organization in general and administrative organization in particular. For almost every village there are three or four Kalambandhi books, each written in a different year at an interval of sometimes one and sometimes more than one year. Most of them were written before the Survey, but there are several written after it. Changes were also made in the kalams or heads from one year to another. In general, however, the Kalambandhi books give information about rules and regulations for different land tenures and taxes and cesses, about the modes of renumeration paid to artisans and servicing castes and to village officials and servants, about protection-money paid to marauders, about the management of village shrines, about population of different caste and religious groups, and about the customs of marriage payment, funereal expenses, and inheritance of an heirless person's property, among different castes. A Kalambandhi also contains a sketch map of the village site.

Sources of Local History

Some other sources of local history are the commercial correspondence and account books of local merchants, records of caste panchayats, caste constitutions, and caste puranas. Finally, all the local records have to be studied in relation with the already well-known archives, the published collections of records, and literary works.

Among the official archives, mention may be made here about the records relating to female infanticide. The British tried to stop infanticide because they considered it an inhuman practice. On the other hand, it was related with the social system, particularly the kinship system, of the people practising it. The correspondence between officials concerned with the work of stopping female infanticide, and between officials and people, has been preserved in several record offices, and is a useful source for the study of social life. A part of these records have been published, such as 'Suppression of Infanticide in Kattywar', Bombay Selection No XXXIV—New Series, Part II. 1856, and 'Repression of Female Infanticide in Bombay Presidency', Bombay Selection No CXLVII—New Series, 1875. I have found from my work on the infanticide records in Bombay Secretariat Record Office that the published records form only a fraction of the extant records.

The records I have mentioned provide information not only about the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, but about the earlier periods also, I may give one instance. According to the Survey records of 1820-26, Rajput lineages in several villages in Gujarat held land under Wanta tenure. Wanta land usually formed one-fourth of total land in a village. The remaining three-fourths was called Talpad land. Wanta land was charged a fixed quit-rent or salam, while Talpad land was charged a regular land tax according to assessment made by government officials. The records mention that the Wanta holders had been enjoying these privileges since the time of the Badshahs, i.e., Muslim kings.
Persian Chronicles

The information given by the Survey records is corroborated by the Persian chronicles Mirat-i-Sikandari (trans. Fazlullah Latifi, p 239) and Mirat-i-Ahmadi (Supplement, trans. All and Seddon, Baroda, 1928, pp 193-4). They mention the same one-to-three ratio between Wanta and Talpad land during the rule of the Sultans of Gujarat (1391-1572) and of the Moguls (1572-1757). The chronicles further inform that the Wanta and Talpad divisions were made out of the Gras estates of Rajput chieftains, and the holders of Gras estates were called Grasiyas. The Sultans of Gujarat seized three-fourths of each Gras estate as a punishment for the Grasiyas' rebellions against the Sultans during the years 1411-1442 and 1551.

It can be inferred from this evidence that the ancestors of each lineage group holding a Wanta estate in 1820-26 were holding the entire village as a Gras estate before the rule of the Sultans of Gujarat. This inference is also confirmed by the Barot genealogies which always refer to the ancestors of Wanta-holders as village chieftains during the Rajput Period (789-1300).

Inscriptions, shrines and sculptures in villages may also help reconstruct local history. I discovered a significant epigraph from the ruins of a shrine on the outskirts of Radhvanaj, the village of my field-study. The epigraph, inscribed at the base of an image of Mahishmardini, reads: Raja Jagdev Samvat Shree 1290 Shravan (Samvat 1290 - 1234 AD). The name Jagdev also occurred at about the same date in the genealogy of the Rathod Rajputs of the village. The genealogy also informs that Jagdev was the chieftain of Radhvanaj. He married the daughter of the Rajput chief of Matar, a neighbouring town, and received Vansar, an adjoining village, as dowry. Jagdev thus became a chief of two villages. In 1820-26, the descendants of Jagdev held Wanta estates in both the villages. All this evidence further confirms the inference regarding Wanta estates mentioned earlier.

Solid Basis for Study

It is very probable that sources of local history exist in every part of India, though they may not be as rich as in Central Gujarat. A proper study of these sources will enable us to obtain a fairly comprehensive view of village and town life during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Such knowledge will provide a solid basis for understanding social changes that have been occurring in the country since the arrival of the British. Moreover it will provide an insight into the earlier periods of history. A study of local history will provide a lively dimension to the whole of Indian history.

It is quite certain that local history can be studied with insight by one who has made a field-study of the local area, or who has at least a knowledge of the results of such a study. I can do no more than quote the words of Professor Srinivas in this connection: "Historians have stated that a knowledge of the past is helpful in the understanding of the present if not in forecasting the future. It is not, however, realized that a thorough understanding of the present frequently sheds light on the past. To put it in other words, the intimate knowledge which results from the intensive field-survey of extant social institutions does enable us to interpret better, data about past social institutions. Historical data are neither as accurate nor as rich and detailed as the data collected by field-anthropologists, and the study of certain existing processes increases our understanding of similar processes in the past. It is necessary to add here that great caution has to be exercised in such a task, for otherwise history will be twisted out of all recognition. There is no doubt that our knowledge of the working of historical processes will be enhanced by this method". ("Village Studies and Their Significance", 'The Eastern Anthropologist', March-August, 1955, p 227)*.

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University of Bombay
Department of Economics

APPLICATIONS are invited for the post of a Research Assistant in Monetary Economics in the Department of Economics in the grade of Rs. 160-15-250 plus D.A. admissible under the existing rules.

Applicants should have a good post-graduate degree in Monetary Economics and some experience of research work, particularly in Monetary Economics. They should state their research qualifications and the subject in which they have specialised. Preference will be given to those who have specialised in Monetary Economics.

Eight copies of the application in the prescribed form (to be had from the Registrar, University of Bombay, Bombay-1), should be submitted. Selected candidates will have to present themselves for interview at their own expense.

Applications should reach the undersigned on or before 30th July, 1959.

T. V. Chidambaram
University Registrar.