

**Grain and the Politics of Control:
The Kashmir Darbar and The British Raj 1880-1930**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

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Introduction

The existing historiography on Kashmir exhibits a tendency of uncritically reproducing in its analysis certain articles of colonial common sense. Recently, though, ground-breaking works by Chitralkha Zutshi and Mridu Rai have posed a coherent challenge to the uncritical manner in which the logic of the colonial state is reproduced.¹ Their work has opened up promising lines of enquiry, some of which I have tried to follow up.

Chitralkha Zutshi has aptly pointed out the perils of uncritically accepting narratives of the exceptionality of the history of the region. Instead she emphasizes the importance of identifying and taking stock of the commonalities in the historical trajectories of Kashmir and the rest of the sub-continent. Likewise, in interrogating the colonial encounter in Kashmir, as elsewhere, it is important to be wary of finding clean ruptures where the continuities maybe equally striking.

The colonial intervention in Kashmir was framed in the language of good governance and the rights of subjects and the colonial state represented as the savior of Kashmiris oppressed by the injustices of the princely rulers. This is unfortunately a piece of colonial common sense that is deeply embedded in existing work on the region. The British are hailed as the harbingers of a new

¹ See Rai, Mridu, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights and the History of Kashmir*, (New Delhi, 2004); Zutshi, Chitralkha, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir*, (Delhi, 2004).

dawn for the Muslims of Kashmir. Following the astute analysis of Mridu Rai, I argue that the British intervention in Kashmir had a definite purpose that had less to do with the rights of Kashmiris than it did with the exigencies of empire. Through an examination of the colonial critique of and the subsequent reconciliation with control, I seek to illustrate the complex and contradictory nature of the colonial enterprise in Kashmir as elsewhere.

I then turn my attention to the operation and consequences of the imperial intervention in Kashmir. I argue that the British Raj could not and sometimes, did not attempt to, overwhelm native reality in one mighty imperial sweep. Native structures of state and society and the relationships of which they were composed were not neatly supplanted by a new set of relationships. The colonial encounter no-doubt induced profound transformations. I propose to argue that while the changes were striking, continuity could be equally stark. My enquiries suggest that the imperial intervention in Kashmir was motivated by and its trajectory shaped by myriad factors, not least the agency of the local administration and the subject population. Imperial interest itself was of a shifting nature, peculiarly sensitive to the events and processes unfolding in the valley.

There is a need to go beyond examining and re-examining legal aspects of the politics in princely states and their relationship to the paramount power. I have endeavored to understand paramountcy as not just a doctrine but as a concrete historical moment composed of real people and real processes. The attempt, on the one hand, is to understand the contradictions and the tussles

and on the other, the moments at which a common cause was found and the bargains that were struck between the Darbar and the Raj. While there were disagreements on various issues of policy, it was ultimately in the interests of both contending parties that a strong state existed in the Kashmir province, what with the volatility of frontier politics. As Mridu Rai argues, this led ultimately to an underwriting of Dogra rule by the Paramount power at the expense of the subject population.

Grain, and the various questions and contestations surrounding it, forms the entry point of my enquiry. The first chapter looks at the critique put forth by the colonial state of the strong state control over grain. Following the development of this critique and the manner in which its implementation was sought through the latter half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, the roles played by the Darbar, the Raj and the people of Kashmir are examined. The lack of a more keen insight into the latter, due to limitations of sources, remains a serious flaw in this work. In examining the revision of the colonial approach towards control, I have tried to capture the complexity of the interaction between two levels of statehood, both active agents in their own right. Pulling in different directions and yet converging at key points, the interaction between the two could and did generate deeply contradictory results that, perhaps, neither had bargained for. Equally important is the enquiry into the manner in which the local population, faced with a chronic scarcity of grain, impacted policy decisions and the operations of these policies. Contrary to exiting scholarship I find that Kashmiris, subject as they

were to the duress of populating a frontier, staked claims to what they felt entitled to (in this case grain), and not always unsuccessfully.

The second chapter sets out, broadly speaking, with two tasks at hand: one to understand the various modes of controlling grain and two, to map the impact of colonialism and the reactions to it on the part of the native elite. Each mode of control, premised on land, capital and official power is discussed in some detail. The effort has been to bring out the fluidity of these categories and the overlaps between them. Due to the coherent but heterogeneous nature of the categories, it follows that their responses to colonialism would have been necessarily variegated even as they conformed to broad patterns. While individuals within controlling groups coped with the colonial impact based on their locations within the groups, there was an overall shift in the relative importance of modes of control. Control over grain as a function of control over land and capital became far more pronounced subsequent to the intervention of the British.

The third and final chapter grapples with the possible consequences of control, not just control over grain, but the effort of the colonial state as well as the Darbar to establish a wider regime of control over the Valley of Kashmir and its inhabitants. The implications of control are examined with respect to the circulation and production of grain as well as the implications for the control of land and labor. The conclusion takes stock of the limitations and shortcomings of this dissertation and outlines various questions for future enquiry.

Chapter One

The Darbar, The Raj And The Politics Of Control

*'It is not satisfactory that we should have on our frontier a ruler who brings us to discredit by his misrule, and at the same time ferments intrigues against our foreign policy'*²

In this chapter, the colonial intervention is taken as an entry point for a study of the relationship between the paramount power and the Kashmir Darbar in this period, 1880 to 1930. Colonial intervention represented a reversal of a fairly long-standing policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the Kashmir state.³ The widespread damages in the wake of a terrible famine in the years 1877-79 offered a ground for intervention.

The manifest form of the intervention consisted of, among other things, a permanent settlement of land revenue and dismantling of the strong state control over the circulation of agricultural produce. The revision of policy, bound to attract criticism, was framed in a pro-peasant and pro-poor rhetoric, and a simultaneous castigation of the Dogra Darbar for its 'rapacity' and 'mal-administration'.⁴ The colonial state accused the Darbar's administration of being a 'dictatorship of incapacity' and blamed it for having 'degraded the

² Mr. Henvey's Revised Note on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec. E, March 1883, Nos. 86, NAI

³ Mr. Henvey's Report on the Condition of Kashmir and the Reforms Required in the Administration, For. Dept., Sec E, January 1883, Nos. 239-240, NAI

⁴ Note by Mr. Fanshawe on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Sec. E, Pros. March 1883, No 81-82, NAI

people and taken all heart out of them.⁵ The package of 'thorough going reform' offered by the colonial state, on the other hand, was to foster the 'regeneration of Kashmir.'⁶ Special emphasis was placed on the 'reactionary' nature of two practices in particular: the collection of land revenue in kind or *mujawaza* and the extensive control the state exercised over the circulation of food grains.⁷ These two policies, the 'twin pillars of reaction', were intimately connected.⁸ The Darbar's policy of collecting almost all of its land revenue in kind afforded it formidable control over the circulation of grain. These policies were sharply critiqued by colonial administrators on the ground that they were inimical to the welfare of cultivators and the state alike.⁹

The system of grain control made cheap grain available to city dwellers at the expense of cultivators from whom the grain was taken at un-remunerative rates. The exact beginning of the system is not known, but it was generally assumed to be 'quite certain that this system has existed from centuries.'¹⁰ Under this system, the state was responsible for providing a subsidized food supply to the inhabitants of the city of Srinagar, its suburbs and also occasionally the towns of Baramulla, Sopore and Anantnag. The requirements of the army and of the various other establishments of the state were also met from the state reserve. The market price of *shali* was easily double the price at

⁵ Walter R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 3

⁶ Measures Proposed for the Regeneration of Kashmir, For. and Pol., A Pol. E, September 1882, No.253-265A, NAI

⁷ This is an opinion expressed in several documents written after the famine in 1877. See for example: Note by Mr. Fanshawe on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Sec. E, Pros. March 1883, No 81-82, NAI

⁸ *Note on the Assessment Report of the Lal Phak Tehsil*, 1890

⁹ Supp.ly of *Shali* or Un-husked Rice to the Inhabitants of Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, February 1892, Nos. 98-109, NAI

¹⁰ Correspondence Regarding the Administration in Kashmir, For. Dept., Extl. A, Oct, 1892, 149-160

which the state sold the grain and even higher than the rate at which the state acquired it. It was, according to Wingate, 'natural that every one should wish to handle a commodity in which there is so large a margin of profit.'¹¹ Henvey however reported that, 'the common people reaped little advantage from these low prices.'¹² The stores opened and closed fitfully at the whim of the officials in charge of them. The quantity of rice due to each family was clearly not enough to support life, as 'poorer inhabitants were put on half or quarter rations while the rich feasted to their heart's content.'¹³

However, not too long after its initiation, their program for the 're-generation of Kashmir' was discretely set aside. The unequivocal condemnation of *mujawaza* and state control was considerably softened. An examination of the colonial handling of these very same issues on the geographical frontier of the Valley shows up the colonial critique in an interesting light. The present chapter attempts to map the genealogy of this rollback and tease out some insights into the interaction between the colonial state and the Darbar. To what extent was the colonial state able to effect the transformations it sought to make? In what ways and in what contexts did the colonial authorities amend their approach towards the 'twin pillars of reaction'?

To understand the intervention of the colonial state in the 'internal' affairs of the Kashmir Darbar, it is essential to appreciate the nature of the interests of

¹¹ Quoted in Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*. p. 439

¹² Mr. Henvey's Revised Note on the Famine in Kashmir, For. Dept., Sec. E, March 1883, Nos. 86, NAI

¹³ Ibid.

the Raj in Kashmir. The relationship of all princely states under the paramountcy of the Raj with the latter was governed by some treaty or agreement. Interestingly, the agglomeration of territory that came to be known as the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, owed its very existence to two treaties signed by the British: the treaty of Lahore which severed the valley of Kashmir from the Sikh empire and the treaty of Amritsar which placed Gulab Singh on the throne.¹⁴ The colonial state, in other words, literally designed the borders of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, for reasons of state, as it were. It therefore took a keen interest in the Dogra state from its very inception.

The volatility of frontier politics saw the British anxious to replace the capricious and potentially hostile Sikh presence in Kashmir with a 'loyal' ally.¹⁵ Such an ally was found in Gulab Singh who was entrusted with the administration and defense of the frontier.¹⁶ The 'chief object of our relations with Kashmir' wrote an official of the Punjab government, 'is to secure the Maharaja's service as a political ally with reference to trans-frontier politics.'¹⁷ The interest of the Raj in Kashmir was primarily a political and diplomatic one; therefore the general policy of non-interference in matters other than those bearing directly on frontier politics.

¹⁴ Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights and the History of Kashmir*. New Delhi, 2004

¹⁵ Mr. Henvey's Revised Note on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec E, March 1883, Nos. 86, NAI

¹⁶ The territories comprising the geographical frontier of the Kashmir State i.e. Gilgit, Ladakh and Baltistan were taken over by Gulab Singh's forces, while the Treaty of Amritsar transferred to him control over the valley of Kashmir. Interestingly, the conquest of the frontier took place in the 1830s, after Gulab Singh confirmed that the Colonial government had no objection. See Madhavi Yasin, *British Paramountcy In Kashmir 1876-1894*, 98-99, New Delhi, 1980

¹⁷ Mr. Henvey's Revised Note on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec E, March 1883, Nos. 86, NAI

However, this policy of the colonial state changed by the 1880s, an uneasy decade for the frontier areas. The Afghans and Chinese were reported to be 'intriguing' with frontier tribes trying to acquire bits of territory and rights of passage.¹⁸ Reports of Russian surveyors with armed escorts fuelled apprehensions that the upcoming trans-Caspian railway would be used to concentrate forces in Central Asia to attack and usurp the British possessions in India.¹⁹ The Gilgit Agency, first established in 1877 and later withdrawn, was re-established in 1889.²⁰ A garrison was stationed once again in the Gilgit district and the district itself placed under a Political Agent. The Maharaja's opposition to this loss of revenue, territory and autonomy did not go down well with an empire perturbed by the disquiet on frontier. The colonial state had now begun to seriously contemplate a revision of the policy of non-intervention and subsequently a Resident was appointed in 1885 at the Maharaja's court to 'rein him in'.²¹

The political difficulties likely to be caused by such an intervention were significant. The body of Princes was bound to get riled up, and the press would go to town with it.²² An article in the Pioneer agonized:

Forty years have passed since Lord Hardinge and Sir Henry Lawrence sold the wretched Kashmir people into bondage for a mess of pottage...the circumstances impose on us the moral obligation of taking some thought for the welfare of the race we disposed off to the

¹⁸ Madhavi Yasin, *British Paramountcy In Kashmir 1876-1894*, 98-99, New Delhi, 1980

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Mr. Henvey's Revised Note on the Famine in Kashmir. For. Dept., Sec. E, March 1883, Nos. 86, NAI

²² Kashmir Affairs, For. Dept, Sec. E, August 1889, Nos. 162-203, NAI

most bloodthirsty tyrant in India...we are bound to use our best endeavors to provide decent government for races governed by our own princes...²³

The colonial authorities were aware that 'such interference as was being advocated' could 'only be justified by exceptional circumstances.'²⁴ Official literature together with the writings of missionaries painted a truly heart wrenching picture of Kashmir 'utterly ruined' by the Dogras, and etched a handsome portrait of the colonial state as savior.²⁵ The colonial government positioned itself as a harbinger of justice and good governance against an unjust and unresponsive oriental government.²⁶ Other sections of the press though differently, an article in the tribune in October 1885 accused the British of 'wistfully casting their eyes towards the happy valley...' Further, dismissing the famine as a pretext, the article continued, 'Talk not of the famine that ravaged Kashmir...a single year does not pass without...a famine...in one or the other part of British India...famine has become a part and parcel of British Government.'²⁷ The Government wrote to the Secretary of State for India, assuring him of their noble intentions:

the...(intervention) appears to have been regarded in many quarters as the result of a selfish desire on the part of the Government of India to extend its influence in Kashmir, and possibly to prepare the way for the ultimate annexation of the state...*the consideration which has had most weight with us has been the responsibility...of securing for the people of*

²³ D.C Sharma, *Documentation on Kashmir*, Jammu 1982, pp. 32

²⁴ Mr. Henvey's Revised Note on the Famine in Kashmir, For. Dept., Sec. E, March 1883, Nos. 86, NAI

²⁵ Reverend Tr. Wade a missionary who lived and worked in Kashmir wrote of the famine years. 'I do not think I saw so many dead as in the previous winter, *but there were fewer to die.*' See Mr. Henvey's Revised Note on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec E, March 1883, Nos. 86. Emphasis added

²⁶ Kashmir Affairs, For. Dept, Sec. E, August 1889, Nos. 162-203, NAI

²⁷ Sharma, *Documentation on Kashmir*, pp. 39

*Kashmir a form of government less intolerable than that to which they have been subjected for the last many years. The circumstances under which the destinies of the Kashmiris were handed over by the British government for political considerations to an alien dynasty...impose upon us an obligation which we cannot ignore...*²⁸

The case for intervention was built amidst the ravages of the 1877 famine, which resulted in a monumental loss of life. While there is no precise record of mortality, it was estimated that nearly 4,80,000 to 6,20,000 of the valley's residents perished, succumbing to starvation and the cholera that followed in its wake.²⁹ Known to the Kashmiris as the famine of Sher Singhi or the *Sher Singhi* famine, it was to have far reaching consequences for years to come.

In the autumn of 1877, a 'fine rice crop' stood in the fields, waiting to be assessed.³⁰ The official visit, before which the crop could not be cut or stacked, was delayed. The cultivator, forbidden from cutting his crop, watched helplessly as rain beat down, causing at least half the crop to rot away.³¹ Despite the heavy damage to crops, no remissions were granted, instead, 'all grain was swept into public granaries and the cultivators were left to starve in the winter.'³² Whereas revenue was previously collected in cash in some areas, in these years it was collected in kind without exception.³³

²⁸ Kashmir Affairs, For. Dept., Sec. E, August 1889, Nos. 162-203, NAI. Emphasis Added

²⁹ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 213

³⁰ Note by Mr. Fanshawe on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Sec. E, Pros. March 1883, No 81-82.

NAI

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ J.L.K. Jalali, *The Economy of Food Grains in Kashmir*, p. 43

Cultivators were left with just about one fourth of the grain they had managed to salvage.³⁴ Thereafter:

The authorities turned their attention too late to the problem of obtaining seed for the autumn crops...unfortunately an order was given to search houses for seed grain and by this time the people were utterly demoralized, and rather than make over their scanty stocks to greedy and unprincipled officials they hid their grain in the damp earth or sunk it in the river.³⁵

To make matters worse, profiteering by officials caused tremendous distress among the city population as well.³⁶ This 'awful visitation' left its mark in that it 'destroyed many important irrigation works' and 'permanently submerged large areas of valuable cultivation.'³⁷

Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, ostensibly deputed to ensure the welfare of European visitors to Kashmir, had for long been a figure through which some influence was brought to bear. At the time of the famine, the Officer, an official by the name of Henvey, was sent into the valley to investigate. Henvey proclaimed the famine a 'man-made' tragedy could have been averted. His report inveighed against the Maharaja and his bureaucracy, whose 'deplorable management' of the situation had allowed losses that could have been prevented.³⁸ In an angst-ridden plea for the deliverance of Kashmiris Henvey wrote:

³⁴ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 242

³⁵ Ibid. p. 215

³⁶ Note by Mr. Fanshawe on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Sec. E, Pros. March 1883, No 81-82, NAI

³⁷ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 213

³⁸ Notes by Mr. Henvey on the Famine in Kashmir, For. Dept., Sec. E, March 1883, Nos. 83-85, NAI

it might not unreasonably be supposed that the British Government would watch with peculiar tenderness over a people whose destiny it had bartered away...have they no blessing left for the unhappy *mussulmans* of Kashmir, whose lot they could ameliorate by a word or a hint?³⁹

The famine was, he argued, just an acute manifestation of a more pervasive malaise that afflicted the Valley. Henvey's prognosis blamed first and foremost, the revenue administration. The land revenue was 'excessively crushing, irregular and unpredictable' and, regrettably, collected almost entirely in kind. The state monopoly on the grain trade was equally deplorable. Lawrence succinctly articulated the remedy, for the decrepitude caused by excessive state control; 'to leave the people alone to recover from the atrophy which has been caused by over-government'.⁴⁰

The bouquet of reforms was intended to hem-in the state presence. The end of state control over grain was to be accomplished by conversion of the state's claims entirely into cash and the abolition of the state granaries. The operations of the settlement department started in 1880 and in a few years, nearly half the valley was under the new settlement of land revenue. The colonial state anticipated that it was only a matter of time before *mujawaza* and the state granaries would be abolished altogether.⁴¹ In the frequent periods of acute scarcity of food seen in the years that followed, state

³⁹ Mr. Henvey's Revised Note on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec E, March 1883, Nos. 86, NAI

⁴⁰ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 9

⁴¹ Numerous examples are available, see: Report on the Progress Made in the Reform of the Administration of Kashmir Since April 1889-90 (ending 11th April 1890), For. Dept., Sec. E, February 1891, nos. 295-326, NAI

intervention in the grain market was often qualified by declarations that the arrangements were temporary and would be discontinued with immediate effect at the earliest opportunity.

However, despite insistent pronouncements to the contrary, both *mujawaza* as well as the state granaries continued to exist throughout this period with colonial administrators participating actively, even if sometimes reluctantly, in the handling of grain. These two policies became the eye of a storm that lasted well over a century. In the section that follows, I examine the colonial critique of these policies. The subsequent section gives an account of the conditions under which the Raj attempted to implement the proposed reforms, and analyzes the modifications foisted on British designs by various pressures.

The Colonial Critique of Control

Officials of the colonial state subjected the policy of control to a resounding critique. The first settlement commissioners of Kashmir, George Wingate and Walter Lawrence, further developed the arguments put forth by Henvey. The state, they argued, was an overbearing and distorting presence in the arena of the circulation of grain. As such, it had retarded the development of a free market in general and private trade in food grains in particular. The fiscal interests of the state had suffered considerably for a lack of cash revenues and the resultant diversion of surplus to the pockets of corrupt officials

emboldened by the system itself. The cultivators, subject to heavy demands both 'legal' and 'illegal', were so oppressed that they retained no interest in cultivation. Professing the virtues of the free market, Wingate and Lawrence argued that the only way to inject some vitality into this dismal state of affairs was for state involvement to be kept at a bare minimum. The end of state control was to be the cornerstone of a new Kashmir.⁴²

At the time that the intervention in Kashmir was being contemplated, colonial authorities believed that the Kashmir state was on the 'brink of financial crush.'⁴³The Pioneer reported on the 25th of September 1885, that the 'treasury was empty and the troops unpaid.'⁴⁴ An enquiry into the financial position of the Darbar, just before the settlement revealed that the 'finances were in disorder...state was indeed rapidly drifting into a condition of insolvency.'⁴⁵ The treasury was nearly empty; apart from a few thousand rupees in cash and liquid assets the only wealth the state could claim was 15,00,000 rupees in grain, and the existence of even this reserve was to be doubted.⁴⁶ The problem of meager cash revenues had plagued the Kashmir Darbar for long.⁴⁷ Lawrence reports, not without a touch of irony,

in 1889 I was requested to take oilseeds, in lieu of cash, in payment of the salary of myself and my department...oil seeds were looked upon

⁴² This section is based on various writings by Lawrence, Wingate and Henvey, especially: Mr. Henvey's Report on the Condition of Kashmir and the Reforms Required in the Administration, For. Dept., Sec E, January 1883, Nos. 239-240, NAI; Notes by Mr. Henvey on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec E, March 1883, Nos. 83-85, NAI

⁴³ Kashmir Affairs, For. and Pol. Dept., Sec E, May 1884, Nos. 354-357, NAI

⁴⁴ Sharma, *Documentation on Kashmir*, p. 30

⁴⁵ Correspondence Regarding Administration in Kashmir, For. Dept., Sec. E, March 1892, 91-99, NAI

⁴⁶ Kashmir affairs, For. Dept., Sec E, October 1886, nos. 235-300, NAI

⁴⁷ Supp.y of *Shali* or Un-husked Rice to the Inhabitants of Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl A, Feb 1892, Nos 98-109, NAI

as an appreciated currency, while maize and *singhara* nuts, with which many persons were paid, were regarded as a depreciated medium. Not only did the state pay its officials in grain, but private persons paid their servants in the same fashion...⁴⁸

The need to 'place the finances of the state on a sound footing' was, clearly an urgent one, and there was much to do by way of improvement.

...

A brief description of the Kashmir that these administrators encountered is in order at this stage. The land revenue of the entire valley, on assigned as well as state lands, was collected in kind with few exceptions.⁴⁹ The commutation rates offered varied interestingly. The rates offered for cotton, pulses and oilseeds were easily twice the rates for which they could be procured on the market, and the rates for food staples were just about half the market rates. It was inevitable therefore that the cultivator would not surrender grain willingly. The state of the accounts was notoriously confused, choked as they were by the numerous frauds they concealed. The estimates of land revenue and the cash-kind breakups supplied by *darbari* officials were often found to be completely useless as they were far in excess of actual collections.⁵⁰

The method of assessment most widely employed on *khalsa* lands or state was *ghalla batai*, or an assessment of standing crops. The state share was nominally 50% of gross produce, but Lawrence believed that after the 'illegal' exactions

⁴⁸ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 243

⁴⁹ Notes by Mr. Henvey on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec E, March 1883, No 83-85, NAI

⁵⁰ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir* p. 257

by officials, the cultivator would be lucky if he retained more than 1/5 of his harvest.⁵¹ An official called the *harkara* stood guard over the ripening crops to ensure that the villagers did not conceal any from the state, though for a price he could be induced to look the other way. The crops could not be harvested until the village headman had inspected them, to ensure that there was no discrepancy between the field and the threshing floor. Once on the threshing floor, the grain was examined and weighed by *tarazudars* who would demand bribes to under-weigh the grain, failing which they would over-weigh it and keep the extra *trakh*. The grain would be separated into two heaps and the state would claim, inevitably, the larger heap. This manner of assessing and taking the state share, allowed 'peculation', 'theft' and oppression at every step, precisely because there was a strong official presence at every step. Whether these officials acted in the interests of the state, or their own, they were inimical to the interests of the cultivators.

Cultivators were barred from marketing their produce till government stocks were fully exhausted. When sales by cultivators were permitted, they were ordered to sell grain at prices so low that they could not possibly compete with government rates.⁵² Even when there was no legal injunction prohibiting the sale of grain, officials would dissuade the cultivators from selling grain to anyone but them. Cultivators found selling or hiding grain were severely punished.⁵³ Every step of the way, cultivators were subject to intrusive state

⁵¹ *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Lal Phak, 1890*

⁵² On the *Shali* Matter, For. and Pol., A Pol. E, September 1882, No.253-265A, NAI

⁵³ *Ibid.*

control. This lack of autonomy was believed to have created a class of cultivators disinterested in cultivation.⁵⁴

A significant amount of grain was extracted from the cultivators as bribes and 'illegal' taxes. This grain enriched the state in no way and passed into the hands of corrupt officials. State control, it was argued, was a reactionary system ruining the state and cultivator alike, and kept in existence only by corrupt vested interests. The settlement proposed to fix cash revenues with individual cultivators, with the producers of grain left independent to circulate it in any way they pleased. The state would be freed from the 'ruinous business' of controlling grain.⁵⁵

The valley, always sparsely populated, had been depopulated further by the famine; many died and still more fled to Punjab, as Kashmiri peasants were wont to do if demands for revenue or forced labor, known as *begaar*, became unbearable.⁵⁶ This further depopulation threatened to destabilize the state's income from land, the single largest source of revenue to the Kashmir state at the time. The cultivators had to be *induced* to cultivate. The control of labor under pre-colonial arrangements was attendant with brutal physical violence; revenue collectors would be accompanied by the *nizamat paltan*⁵⁷ and those who did not pay up were subject to cruel corporeal punishments.⁵⁸ This regime of controlling labor did not seem to be working too well, as was

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir* p. 9

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ A platoon of soldiers, *Note on the Assessment Report of the Lal Phak Tehsil*, 1891

⁵⁸ Ibid.

evident in dwindling land revenues and mounting arrears. As an alternative, the settlement set out to create incentives for cultivators so that they would 'attach' themselves to their land. The cultivators were to be granted the autonomy to sell their produce in the 'best market' and the 'power to make their own contract with the state'.⁵⁹

The city of Srinagar was home to 118,960 people in 1891.⁶⁰ Almost all of them depended on state supplies and it was believed that, 'they would starve unless they were fed with grain at state rates'.⁶¹ A great part of the city population consisted of shawl weavers. In the hey-days of the Kashmir shawl industry, the state derived large cash revenues from it, amounting to Rs 6,00,000 or 7,00,000 per annum. Taxes on shopkeepers and various other traders and professions in the city amounted to Rs. 1,13,916. For Lawrence, the Darbar's logic of pampering the city of the countryside was reasonable while the shawl weavers were earning profits:

in those days, from a financial point of view, it paid to give the shawl weavers cheap grain, in spite of the fact that the system of realizing the greater part of the revenue in kind checked cultivation and utterly impeded the development of agricultural resources of Kashmir.⁶²

However, the shawl trade soon perished and the Darbar's logic fell apart:

⁵⁹ See chapter three

⁶⁰ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 310

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 311

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 410

now the shawl trade is dead, the artisans contribute nothing to the exchequer and the state might in all fairness withdraw from its former position...⁶³

In demonstrating the erroneous nature of the Darbar's logic, Lawrence made a revealing admission about the logic of the colonial state. For the colonial state therefore the problem was not one of principled opposition to the Darbar's policies, but simply that these policies, were no longer seen as economically viable. It was patently tragic then, according to Lawrence, that the, 'old system continued, and the state still accepted the difficult and ruinous responsibility of feeding 1,30,000 persons at pauper rates.'⁶⁴

The colonial critique went on to denounce several other aspects of this regime of state control. Keen to expand the export trade of Kashmir, the colonial administration considered the unfettering of local markets as a necessary first step in this direction. The lack of a sizeable class of traders and indeed of the entrepreneurial instinct was frequently lamented, and both Wingate and Lawrence quite forcefully advocated the need for 'capital and foreign enterprise'.⁶⁵ The state's monopolistic control over trade, it was agreed, had retarded its development. For instance, the rice trade was almost entirely monopolized by the Darbar and the private trade was described as 'meager'.⁶⁶

Merchants in the city of Srinagar and the towns imported grain in small quantities from the villages after the state had collected its share. Their

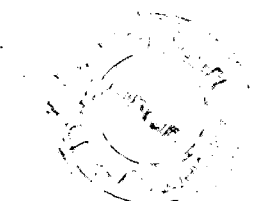
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⁶³ Ibid. p. 230

⁶⁴ Ibid p. 400

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 390

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 215



position, however, was rather precarious. They never knew how much grain the state would bring to the city; how much of it would be left for them to source and how much of the demand in the city would be left for them to cater to.⁶⁷ Moreover, private trade could not be openly conducted. A tax was imposed on the private import of *shali* to the city of Srinagar at the prohibitive rate of 2 annas per rupee.⁶⁸ It is reported that cultivators bringing *shali* to the city would have to sell at rates dictated by the state, 'paying a duty of twenty percent for the privilege.'⁶⁹ Even if an entrepreneur were to undertake the hazardous and costly task of importing grain into the city, 'the state would not suffer him selling it at any price other than that convenient to the state.'⁷⁰ The officials who derived immense benefit from real or artificial scarcity did their best to preempt the import of grain by private individuals. The colonial state hoped that as the state gradually eased out of the grain trade, private enterprise would 'spring up slowly but steadily' and that there would arise a class of merchants, 'trading on a rational system unfettered by monopolies and by an arbitrary regulation of prices'.⁷¹

In his preliminary settlement report Wingate had strongly recommended the immediate reversal of both these policies. The assessment of various tehsils got underway with his successor Walter R. Lawrence, a veteran of the Punjab settlements. Lawrence was, like his predecessor, keen on the immediate

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 217

⁶⁸ Sharma, *Documentation on Kashmir*, p. 23

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 33

⁷⁰ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 391

⁷¹ Ibid p. 392

discontinuation of *Mujawaza* and the State granaries; but was eventually persuaded by the Darbar to settle for a gradualist phase out policy. A purely cash settlement did not appear a feasible option for the cultivators informed Lawrence that they would not be able to pay up.⁷² Significantly, a note on the assessment report of the Lal Phak Tehsil offered one more reason for the impossibility of a full cash assessment, 'the absence of the *buniya*'.⁷³

Likewise, discontinuing state supplies without a sufficiently developed private grain trade to fill the vacuum created by the state's withdrawal was likely to disrupt food supplies to the city. A sudden stoppage of supply of cheap grain to the city population was considered politically inexpedient, for the threat of 'popular clamour' proved to be a strong disincentive:

'If the *Srinagris* see that he (resident) does not know what to do, they will certainly resort to their ordinary practice of howling round the palace and the Maharaja who will hasten to give way. I had to deal with a huge popular clamour last spring, as Colvin notes, *shali* and maize were much cheaper than current prices.'⁷⁴

Therefore, Lawrence fixed the share of revenue in kind at one third of the total annual demand and allowed the cultivators the option of commuting the kind demand into cash rates. Lawrence stipulated that only rice and maize be accepted. The commutation price of rice was fixed at a low Rs 2 per kharwar, as a disincentive for the payment of revenue in kind. The cultivators, so went

⁷² Ibid. p. 209

⁷³ *Note on Assessment Report of the Lal Phak Tehsil*, 1891. The question of capital the locus of a mode of control is discussed thoroughly in the second section of chapter two.

⁷⁴ Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, August 1903, nos. 94-101, NAI. See below for discussion on '*shali* agitations'.

the logic, would then be encouraged to sell their produce in the market to pay revenues in cash, thus embarking upon the commercialization of agriculture. With cultivators marketing their own produce and the development of a trading class, the state would be freed from the 'ruinous' responsibility of being at the helm of grain circulation. He expected that the system of *mujawaza* would be phased out slowly in this manner.⁷⁵

The colonial critique of control was comfortably nestled in a pro-peasant rhetoric. I propose to argue that irrespective of how it was trumpeted, the colonial intervention was geared towards consolidating imperial interest. The strategic importance of the valley of Kashmir and the frontier districts for the colonial state has been discussed above. These priorities of the colonial state are laid bare when one examines the reasons for a revision of the colonial approach to state control over grain.

Rethinking Control

The colonial critique of control, we must remember, was watered down considerably in subsequent years. In this section, I argue that the pro-peasant rhetoric of the colonial state was motivated primarily by a desire to undercut the Dogra regime and to legitimize its controversial revision of the policy of non-interference in the Kashmir state. As discussed above, the intervention itself was motivated by a desire to secure the frontier of the Empire.

⁷⁵ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 207

It is entirely possible that colonial administrators intended, in right earnest, to end state control, commercialize agriculture and 'emancipate' peasants in a sense. However, the Empire's interests were paramount and easily took precedence over more charitable impulses. The frontier districts were under the jurisdiction of the British Political Agent who took orders directly from the Government of India.⁷⁶ The absence of a critique of state control in sources related to these areas is jarring, especially when compared to the colonial fulminations regarding state control in the Valley proper. On the frontier, it was accepted as a plain matter of fact that *mujawaza* was the most expedient method of meeting the state's grain requirements. Sample this nugget from the British Agents correspondence:

the local produce is hardly sufficient for the local population, and prices of grain are consequently very high. In *such a country, where the state requires to collect supplies of grain it is probably better to collect it direct as land revenue than to levy the revenue in cash and buy the grain.*⁷⁷

Owing to the politically sensitive nature of the Kashmir valley, the colonial state was wary of any upheavals. This anxiety of the colonial state, in turn, offered considerable leverage to certain native groups. The indigenous elite, particularly in the context of this study, the controllers of grain were able to hang on to most of their power and privileges for the colonial state did not have the means to discipline them; relying as it did on the administrative machinery of the Dogra state.⁷⁸ Likewise, the 'clamor' of the population of

⁷⁶ *Note on the Ladakh Wazarat in the Jammu Province, 1904*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Emphasis added

⁷⁸ See chapter two.

Srinagar also factored significantly in colonial calculations. The re-thinking of control therefore has to be understood as the result of a privileging of imperial interest, and came also as a reaction to resistance by various groups of Kashmiris. I seek to develop this point through a discussion of the state requirements, followed by a roughly chronological narrative of the period 1880-1931, in which I trace the changes in the colonial approach to state control.

Grain was needed to feed the state troops, particularly the garrison located in Gilgit. Apart from extensive collections of grain in Gilgit itself, tens of thousands of *kharwars* of grain were carried to Gilgit from Kashmir usually by *begaaris*.⁷⁹ The question of supply to Gilgit carried significant weight, for the garrison was the first line of defense against real or imagined threats to the British Imperial possessions in India. Ladakh was an important depot for the Central Asian Trade. Large numbers of travelers passed through Ladakh and the state supplied them with food grain, fodder and fuel, in addition to making transport arrangements.⁸⁰ Various government departments such as the settlement and forest department also required grain for their employees.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Many of whom would perish for a lack of grain to eat, ironically, while carrying it on their backs. Discussed in many sources, See for example: Fixation of the Rates of Grain Supplied to the Commissariat Dept. in Gilgit District, File No. 66 of 1893, OER, JKA

⁸⁰ Residency Communication in Regard to the Expenses Incurred on the Cost and Carriage of Grains to Ladakh, File No.107 of 1899, Rev.Dept., JKA

⁸¹ Grant of Advance to the Revenue Department for the Purchase of *Shali* to Form a State Reserve and Papers Regarding Collection and Distribution of *Shali* in Kashmir Province, File No. 17 of 1918. NAI

In the progressive spirit of rolling back state involvement in matters related to grain, the Military and Commissariat Departments were asked to 'make their own arrangements.' These 'arrangements' consisted of purchasing:

grain from villagers who should keep enough *shali* for seed and for their family consumption, sufficient till the next harvest, *and should not refuse* to sell the extra grain whenever required by the state through the Civil or Military officers...the price should be paid to them there and then...however they will not in any case get more than Rs. 3 *chillikis* a *kharwar*. In case of non-obedience of this rule, the guilty person will be liable to punishment up to three months imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 50⁸²

Under this rule the Military and Commissariat departments could have a free run in the countryside, for there were no clear limits fixed for the quantity that could be collected.

The state needed to maintain subsidized food supplies to the city, compelled as it was by the threat of 'popular clamor' from vocal *Srinagris*. On more than one occasion it was acknowledged that had it not been for the insistent demands of the city the state supplies of grain would have been discontinued.⁸³ Moreover, disturbances in Srinagar particularly and Kashmir in general were seen as a serious threat to imperial authority.⁸⁴ The security of the empire, in a sense, then depended on its ability to control and supply grain.

⁸² Correspondence Regarding Kashmir Affairs, For. Dept., Extl. A, October 1892, 149-160, NAI

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, August 1903, nos. 94-101, NAI

The frontier districts of Ladakh and Gilgit were nominally included in the Jammu and Kashmir provinces respectively. Gilgit was explicitly under the command of the British Political Agent.⁸⁵ The Commissariat Department was an important presence in the tehsils of Ladakh, Skardu and Kargil.⁸⁶ In these areas then, the colonial state had a stronger presence than it did in the valley of Kashmir.

The frontier districts were areas with harsh climate and agriculture was poor and precarious. The pressure on cultivable land in these areas was much greater than in the Kashmir valley. In some regions, the amount of locally produced grain was often insufficient for feeding the local population.⁸⁷ The settlement officer of Ladakh reported in 1897 that production in Ladakh fell 32000 *maunds* short of the amount required for consumption by the local population.⁸⁸ Large quantities of grain were imported from Skardu, Kargil and Kashmir to meet the shortfall. Skardu was itself not a self-supporting tract and imported 'considerable quantities' of grain from Kashmir. The proportion of state share collected in kind in these areas was higher than in the valley. Gilgit paid two thirds of its land revenue in kind; the acquisition of purchase grain was over and above this.⁸⁹ The entire land revenue of Ladakh was assessed in kind and supplies of revenue grain were supplemented by *khush kharid* and *hukm-i-kharid*, or forced sales.⁹⁰ In addition to grain, revenue

⁸⁵ *Assessment Report of the Gilgit Tehsil with Notes and Orders Passes Thereon*, 1902

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Observation in assessment reports relating to the frontier districts, see: *Assessment Report of Gilgit Tehsil*, 1902

⁸⁸ *Note on the Ladakh Wazarat in the Jammu Province*, 1897,

⁸⁹ Revenue in Kind in the Haramosh Illaqa, 44/S-1/5 of 1901, Rev. Dept., JKA

⁹⁰ *Note on the Ladakh Wazarat in the Jammu province*, 1897

was collected in fuel and fodder for they were also scarce commodities on the frontier. Commutation rates were always slow, usually a fraction of the market price. The value of the grain collected by state was much higher than the credit allowed to cultivators.⁹¹

It was openly acknowledged that the state demand for revenue grain ate into the cultivators' reserve for food and seed. The settlement officer of Ladakh noted, 'the zamindars usually supplement their grain food very largely with vegetables, milk, butter-milk etc and can manage to live on a...small grain ration.'⁹² The settlement officer of Gilgit reported that, 'a greater part of the population is driven to live on cheaper grains and dried fruits, as they have to dispose of their dearer grains for payment of revenue... fruit is largely consumed by the people, as grain is scarce for food and seed.'⁹³ He also admitted that had it not been for the demands of the heavy Transport and Supply department, the produce of Gilgit would have been sufficient for local requirements.

Cultivators were forced to take advances for seed from the state and monasteries at high rates of interest, and found themselves perpetually in debt.⁹⁴ The settlement officer of Skardu reported, 'Many villagers have said if the Darbar will discontinue collection in grain we shall have plenty for our families, enough for seed and enough for supplies to travelers...We shall

⁹¹ Revenue in Kind in the Haramosh Illaqa, 44/S-1/5 of 1901, Rev. Dept., JKA

⁹² The term *zamindars* in Kashmir meant cultivators, and *not* landlords, unlike elsewhere in India. *Note on Kind Revenue in Tehsil Ladakh, 1891*

⁹³ *Assessment Report of Gilgit Tehsil, 1902*

⁹⁴ Note on the Ladakh Wazarat in the Jammu Province, 1902. These were Buddhist monasteries.

want no *musaida* grain'⁹⁵ It is widely recorded in available sources that cultivators were forced to import grain dear and surrender it cheap to the state.⁹⁶ The control of grain by the state had manifestly detrimental consequences of which the colonial authorities were aware. The colonial authorities were therefore fully aware of the manifestly detrimental consequences of the state's control of grain.

State control sunk itself deep in these areas. In Ladakh, for instance, 'the chief consideration... [was] the supply of grain to meet the demands of the merchants at Leh. The grain trade...(was) practically monopolized by the state, the greater part if not all, of the surplus grain of the country being taken by the Darbar as revenue or on payment.'⁹⁷ In Gilgit, 'the supply and transport department [was] the only grain dealer.' At the first settlements in the 1880s, the kind revenue demand in both Ladakh and Gilgit was actually increased.⁹⁸

The economies in these districts were such that they could scarcely afford to surrender revenue as grain, and yet without the pretence of scruple, the colonial state advocated the collection of substantial revenues in kind, despite clear evidence of hardship caused to cultivators. Given that these were areas where the colonial state wielded considerably more influence, should not

⁹⁵ *Note on the Assessment Report of the Skardu Tehsil or Balistan*, 1898

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Note on the Ladakh Wazarat in the Jammu Province, Library Section*, 1898

⁹⁸ Fixation of the Rates of Grain Supplied to the Commissariat Department in Gilgit District, File no. 66 of 1893, OER, JKA

these areas have set the example in dismantling the regime of state control and emancipating the cultivators from exacting demands for revenue grain?

When the settlement first came in place in 1880, the Lawrence asked that the state instead of relying on the state granaries being replenished by *mujawaza* and instead procure grain from the 'open' market. In subsequent years prices skyrocketed, rendering it an unprofitable proposition. The cheapest and surest mode of collecting grain to meet state requirements was the collection of revenue grain or *khush khārid* and *hukm-i-kharid*.⁹⁹

...

The assessment of *Khalsa* lands in the valley began in the early 1880s under Walter Lawrence, and by 1890, seven out of thirteen tehsils in the Kashmir valley had been assessed. 1892 saw a severe crisis of grain supply, and it was around this time that the drive towards an all cash assessment was put on hold. Lawrence, on the insistence of the Darbar, had fixed a demand of one third of the revenue in kind and two third in cash in these assessed *tehsils*. Henvey, writing in 1880 had anticipated the termination of the control regime in a matter of three years.¹⁰⁰ However, Lawrence, as we saw above, had been forced to accept that instead of being abolished all at once, *mujawaza* and the state granaries would have to be gradually phased out. Since there was no private trade capable of supplying the city, state supplies would have to be

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Henvey was hopeful that, 'the settlement and end of control over grain trade should be accomplished in three years...' See Notes by Mr. Henvey on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec E, March 1883, Nos. 83-85, NAI

continued for some time, till a private trade had 'sprung up to take its place'.¹⁰¹

The famine of 1877 had come to represent the nadir of princely misrule, colonial complicity in the same. The Government of India had been castigated in the press and in missionary accounts for not 'ameliorating' the condition of the 'unhappy' residents of the 'happy valley'.¹⁰² In fact, the matter had become so controversial, that the Famine Commission 'keen on embodying the memorandum on the Kashmir famine in their report' were denied access to the said document on account of the 'the question being so largely a political one'.¹⁰³ Seeing as how the colonial intervention in Kashmir was made precisely in the name of justice and good governance, the need for colonial administration to compare favorably was a particularly urgent one. The chronic scarcity of food grains, particularly in the city, occupied official attention for the better part of the century. With the *Sher Singhi* famine fresh in official memory, the colonial establishment would not have been prepared to risk a 'shock' to the food supply of the city.

The rice crop in 1891 was abundant and there seemed to be no cause for concern. The revenue in the eight tehsils was yet to be assessed, and the Governor ordered collections entirely in cash. Despite Lawrence's orders to the contrary, reportedly unwilling cultivators were forced to make payments

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Sharma, *Documentation on Kashmir*, p. 67

¹⁰³ Note by Mr. Fanshawe on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Sec. E, Pros. March 1883, No 81-82, NAI

in cash; the actions of the governor were attributed to a 'desire to discredit the settlement.'¹⁰⁴ The grain collected fell far short of what Lawrence had estimated, and the officials in spite of Lawrence's efforts embezzled much of the grain.

While the account books claimed a state reserve of Rs. 6 lakhs worth of grain, only 50,000 to 60,000 *kharwars* came to the city on the state's account.¹⁰⁵ A fire in the same year destroyed the larger part of even this meager reserve. With the state reserve so depleted, the price of *shali* rose steeply; traders reportedly sold it at five times the state rate of Rs 1-14 per *kharwar* of *shali*.¹⁰⁶ A cholera epidemic swept the city claiming over 500 lives in a day.¹⁰⁷ The sordid picture was completed by 'the heavy demands for food for the Gilgit garrison', the consequent demand for impressed *begaaris*, and the bitter cold of the Kashmiri winter.¹⁰⁸

Against this background, the population of Srinagar lost no time 'clamoring' for grain at state rates and 'widespread discontent' was reported from all quarters of the city.¹⁰⁹ The population, wrote the newly appointed Resident, was 'on the brink of starvation' and a discontinuation of state supplies was bound to cause distress and even rebellion in Srinagar.¹¹⁰ To his superiors, the

¹⁰⁴ Correspondence Regarding Kashmir, For. Dept., Extl. A, October 1892, 149-160, NAI

¹⁰⁵ Note by Lawrence on the Mujawaza of 1892 and the supply of grain to the poorer inhabitants of Srinagar, For. Dept, Extl. A, November 1892, Nos. 209-222

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ *Report on the Scarcity of Grain in Kashmir 1892-93.*

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Supply of *Shali* or Un-husked Rice to the Inhabitants of Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, February 1892, Nos. 98-109, NAI

¹¹⁰ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir* p. 441

Resident wrote that some control, 'no matter how repugnant' was necessary to avert a 'famine like situation'.

Government had attempted to increase the state rate in an effort to decrease sales, but the order had to be cancelled due to protest in the city. The Resident wrote a memorandum rate to be reduced from 1-8 to Rs. 1-4.

A telegram was dashed off the Foreign Secretary, Calcutta. Dated the 4th of January 1892, by a lawyer named Salam Khan, on behalf of the 'INHABITANTS OF SRINAGAR'

price of un-husked rice fixed by previous emperors raised by council and distribution among people conditional. Please see that this order is revised otherwise ruining country.

The Deputy Secretary to the Government of India to the Resident

see that all practicable and reasonable measures are taken to mitigate whatever inconvenience or suffering maybe inevitable until such time as the Agency of the state is replaced or supplemented by private enterprise

The Secretary to the Government of India wrote back, reminding him that his suggestion amounted to a 'complete subversion of the principles on which the settlement is founded', but did not overrule any measures that he, the 'man on the spot' deemed necessary.¹¹¹ At the request of the Resident, Lawrence

¹¹¹ Supply of *Shali* or Un-husked Rice to the Inhabitants of Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, February 1892, Nos. 98-109, NAI

took active part in the circulation of whatever grain the state did possess, even though he did not particularly like the idea.¹¹²

Lawrence, like many of his peers convinced as they were of the virtues of the free trade, had believed that state control would die a natural death at the invisible hand of the market.¹¹³ The crisis of 1892 by his own admission surprised and alarmed not just him but Residency establishment as well. The revenue member of the State Council succinctly summed up all the considerations:

The complaints of the poor are well founded, they have not enough means to purchase grain sufficient for one month or two months consumption neither can they afford to buy grain at bazaar rates *nor obtain grain freely from the market as in Punjab or India*. In every case the poorer classes of the city stand in need of help from the present government.¹¹⁴

The 'troublesome *shali* business' was here to stay for sometime to come; Henvey's three-year timeframe had been far too ambitious.¹¹⁵ Matters were further complicated when cultivators in the assessed tehsils announced their intention of paying their revenue entirely in cash, exercising the option offered to them by the settlement.¹¹⁶ The low commutation rates had the *intended* effect of discouraging payments in kind, except that the state itself was not prepared to deal with the consequences of an all cash demand.

¹¹² Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir* p. 442

¹¹³ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p 321.

¹¹⁴ Correspondence Regarding Kashmir, For. Dept., Extl. A. October 1892, 149-160, NAI

¹¹⁵ Notes by Mr. Henvey on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec E. March 1883, Nos. 83-85, NAI

¹¹⁶ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 320

The events of 1892 witnessed a fundamental shift in the political economy of grain control and circulation in Kashmir. The prices rose sharply in these years, beginning a steep upward trend in food prices that continued till the Great Depression. While scarcity and high prices of food grains were not previously unknown, hereafter they became endemic. Instead of alternate cycles of high prices and scarcity, the city and indeed the whole valley was witness to a fairly secular rise in prices on the one hand and persistence of scarcity on the other. It was a development that took the colonial authorities by surprise: as the Settlement Commissioner Kaye wrote, 'the extraordinary rise in the price of grain...has quite baffled the administration'¹¹⁷. As discussed below, it is likely that the imposition of a significant cash demand led to large scale borrowing by cultivators and mortgage of crops in advance.

¹¹⁸ While the state had no significant reserve of grain, moneylenders had managed to 'corner most of the harvest' of 1891-92. Hoarding by these dealers was believed to have resulted in acute scarcity.¹¹⁹

The events of 1892 impressed firmly on the colonial mind the difficulties involved in operationalizing the abolition of state control. The city population would not stand for it, and 'official' interests were arrayed firmly against it. In the years that followed, state supplies were acquired through methods that retained the essential characteristics of pre-colonial policy that had been so

¹¹⁷ Floods in Kashmir. Damage Done in Srinagar and Other Places, For. Dept., Intl. B. September 1903. Nos. 130-133, NAI

¹¹⁸ See chapter two.

¹¹⁹ This 'ring of grain dealers' is discussed in several documents, and also examined in some detail in chapter two: See Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, August 1903, Nos. 94-101, NAI. See also, section two of chapter two

savagely criticized: the acquisition from an unwilling peasantry of a significant part of the state's share in grain, at rates below those prevailing in the market. State control over the circulation of grain remained significant throughout this period and in fact at some points went above and beyond the traditional system of control. For the most part, the practice of *mujawaza* was widely prevalent, without actually becoming a matter of explicit policy. This state of 'non-policy as policy' remained till 1921, when the 're-imposition' of control was formally announced.

The colonial critique of grain control, as we saw above, seemed all set to offer a new beginning for the Kashmiris, with cash revenues and free trade leading the charge against oppression and corruption of all forms. But when faced with a complex series of challenges on the ground, the colonial officials were forced to grapple with the incompatibility of policy and the reality. On the one hand, they launched into this passionate critique of control almost as an article of faith and on the other, had to cope with a native reality that simply refused to make itself amenable to their neat *laissez faire* designs. How were colonial administrators to come to terms with this anomaly?

A public admission that the charge against oppression and corruption had been halted was not an option, for that would have undermined the colonial state's claim to a superior status vis-à-vis the 'rapacious' native government. The resolution to this predicament was found in the '*Shali Scheme*', essentially *mujawaza* by another name, a phenomenon that was to have a prolific career in the decades to come. Aptly described by the Viceroy as, 'tinkering

measures- generously described in these notes as palliatives'¹²⁰ Some aspects of collection and distribution of grain were tinkered with, only superficially. For example, instead of revenue officials collecting grain, 'state agents', often just the officials themselves, were sent out to procure grain. One such innovation was, ironically, called *khush kharid* or 'voluntary purchase'. These were purchases made over and above the state share collected in kind.¹²¹

Officials of all hues, colonial as well as *darbari*, agreed that the primary reason for the high prices and scarcity was the profiteering of unscrupulous grain dealers; an opinion confirmed by a detailed enquiry by the revenue member in 1903.¹²² The *waddar/galladar* became the primary adversary of the state in its battle to acquire a reserve of grain. To be able to 'discipline' the grain dealers, the state needed a large enough reserve to be a significant player in the market. As was becoming evident, the only way that the state could acquire that grain at the rates it was offering was through forcible acquisition.

Even as the state locked horns with the *waddars* in the years to come, the city population renewed its 'clamour'. In what came to be known as the '*Shali* Agitation' of 1901, 4000 people collected at the Palace demanding an audience with high officials. The 'mob' consisted mostly of 'coolies and laboring classes', protesting against the scarcity of food.¹²³ Just days later, a crowd of 200 'booed, hissed and stoned' as the revenue member and Governor left their

¹²⁰ Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A. August 1903, Nos. 94-101, NAI

¹²¹ Rates and Arrears of *Mujawaza Shali*, File No. 5/PP.-138 of 1919, OER, JKA

¹²² Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A. August 1903, nos. 94-101, NAI

¹²³ *Shali* Agitation, File No. 567-H/*Shali*-5, OER, JKA

offices.¹²⁴ The scarcity of 1901 was reminiscent in its severity of the crisis of 1892. Prices in Srinagar rose to Rs.4 to Rs 4-8 per *kharwar*.

The Maharaja, perhaps sensing an opportune moment, advocated a full-fledged restoration of *mujawaza* system.¹²⁵ The Resident, Colvin, curtly stated that it was, '*...impossible to revert to the system*' only to propose a '*Shali Scheme*'. State aid was to be extended to 'two or...three influential dealers...bound to maintain a reserve sufficient for the requirements...of the poorer classes of the city population.'¹²⁶ The state would supply these shops with 'revenue collections in kind', supplemented by *khush kharid* by officials who would acquire grain through 'persuasion without pressure'. The grain was to be sold at rates prescribed by the state. These measures, prescribed by the Resident to 'appease the popular clamour', met with the approval of the Political Secretary to the Government of India.

However, the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, who took a special interest in the frontiers and also in streamlining the colonial bureaucracy, had no patience for this bureaucratic sophistry. Upset with what was obviously a thinly veiled recommendation of *mujawaza*, he felt the Residents proposals were:

A number of tinkering measures...contain the seeds of dangerous reaction...now everyone knows...that there will be pressure and pressure of an illicit and mischievous character...people will see in the appearance of these *zaildars* and their 'persuasion without pressure' (a contradiction in terms) a revival of the *old bad practice which I thought*

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, August 1903, nos. 94-101, NAI

¹²⁶ Ibid.

that we had killed for ever... Mr. Colvin proposes to revert to the old abolished reserve system, and here again he exhibits the same childlike confidence. The grain 'will not be taken by force from the *zamindars*.' Oh no! It will be purchased at current rates by 'state dealers'. Well we know what that means: a state reserve means state pressure to start with and state swindling afterwards.¹²⁷

In defense of the Resident's proposals the Secretary wrote to the Viceroy, patiently explaining the specificity of the matter:

I share your Excellency's doubts, but so much depends upon the action of the man on the spot that I was unwilling to pour cold water on all of Mr. Colvin's proposals. *He might have thrown up the sponge in despair, and then we might have had riots in Srinagar and a complete disorganization of central authority, which is not too strong at any time in Srinagar has a very insufficient backing of force...* If the Srinagris see that he does not know what to do, they will certainly resort to their ordinary practice of howling round the palace and the Maharaja who will hasten to give way. I had to deal with a huge popular clamour last spring...¹²⁸

The Secretary's reply contains a revealing admission of the political significance of the question of grain supply to the city. Evidently, there was a serious turnaround in the rhetoric surrounding state control over grain. Acknowledged as a necessary evil, the state control over grain was to remain, 'so long as Kashmir [remained] isolated from the world.' Further, '...no one that I met disputed that the present system was forced upon the Darbar as the only alternative to starvation in Srinagar.'¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Ibid. Emphasis in original

¹²⁸ Ibid. Emphasis added

¹²⁹ Measures Adopted by the Kashmir Darbar for Affording Relief to the Poorer Classes in Srinagar. For. Dept., Intl. A, March 1905, Nos.110-113

In 1903 a 'very severe flood...surpassing all records' caused significant damage to the rice crop. Traders reportedly sold grain at a profit of 400-500% and prices rose above the high...they had touched in 1902.¹³⁰ In November, there was a riot in the offing, but the authorities received intelligence in advance and the 'ring leaders' were arrested.¹³¹ In this year, the state reverted officially to the collection of *mujawaza* in some *tehsils*.¹³²

In the year 1904-05, assessments in some *tehsils* were due for revision. The question of where the state's supply was going to come from now appeared to be a most pressing concern once again. The Resident suggested two alternatives: the appointment of state agents authorized to 'buy' grain from cultivators or the reversion to *mujawaza* in *tehsils* where the assessment had not been declared. When the matter was placed for consideration before the Government of India, it shot down the proposal of state agents and opted *instead* for collection revenue grain.¹³³

The collection in kind, which had essentially never ceased, now came to be accepted as beneficial to the state. In the words of the Foreign Secretary;

the state is loosing [sic] from the point of view that it might sell the grain it realizes as revenue at a higher rate than it does, but it is gaining in so far as it realizes...a part of its revenue in grain which represents at present market prices a much higher value than the cash

¹³⁰ Floods in Kashmir, Damage done in Srinagar and Other Places, For. Dept, Intl. B, September 1903, Nos. 130-133, NAI

¹³¹ Notes by Resident in Kashmir on the Main Features of the Administration of the J and K State During the Past Four Years (1901-1905), For. Dept, Sec. I, May 1905, Nos. 19-20, NAI

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Measures Adopted by the Kashmir Darbar for Affording Relief to the Poorer Classes in Srinagar, For. Dept., Intl. A, March 1905, Nos.110-113, NAI

assessment...*there is nothing wrong in principle in the realizing of a portion of the land revenue in grain...*¹³⁴

The Resident echoed his sentiments. '(A)t present', he wrote, 'the rice is being taken from the *zamindars* at the rate of Rs. 2-8 per *kharwar*, and even that is considerably below the market rate. The state therefore makes a large profit by receiving revenue in kind.'¹³⁵ As for the question of relief during particularly severe periods of scarcity, it was decided that the current system of collection in kind and sale at cheap rates was more beneficial to the state than collection of revenue in cash and gratuitous relief.¹³⁶

During the First World War, the impact of outside market forces sent prices sky-rocketing. The price of *shali* rose sharply in 1919, and 1920-22 saw a steep jump in prices and a severe scarcity of essential commodities. The Resident noted in despair, 'During the previous *shali* trouble in 1919 the worst anticipated was that the price might go up to 6 or 7 rupees a *kharwar*. At the time, things were prosperity itself compared with what they have become now...'¹³⁷ By the beginning of 1921, the rates at which grain was selling were declared 'famine rates' by the Resident.¹³⁸ The Director of Civil Supplies, Punjab a Mr. Townsend was sent in by the Government of India to investigate the causes of this scarcity and recommend measures to prevent a recurrence. He reiterated early critiques of *mujawaza* and advocated a complete

¹³⁴Notes by Resident in Kashmir on the Main Features of the Administration of the J and K State During the Past Four Years (1901-1905), For. Dept, Sec. I, May 1905, Nos. 19-20, NAI

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Measures Adopted by the Kashmir Darbar for Affording Relief to the Poorer Classes in Srinagar, For. Dept., Intl. A, March 1905, Nos. 110-113, NAI

¹³⁷ Kashmir Reform Scheme for Placing the Administration of the State on a Broader Basis and Making it more Responsive to the Opinion and Needs of the People, For. and Pol. Dept., Sec. I, November 1921, No. 34-43, NAI

¹³⁸ *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Intl.-I, May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI

unfettering of the grain market, the abolition of price regulation as well as the state reserve.¹³⁹

The suggestion was lauded as progressive but discreetly set aside, for by now the Residency establishment knew better. The ceiling price on the sale of *shali* remained, as did the state reserve.¹⁴⁰ Contrary to Townsend's proposals, the net of control was in fact *widened*. The scale of operations in the city was increased. During the grain crisis of 1892 out of the state granaries, 'the poor and only the poor were supplied.'¹⁴¹ From 1921 onwards the co-operative department took upon itself the task of supplying the entire population of the city of Srinagar as well as the towns of Sopore, Baramulla and Anantnag.¹⁴² The state had previously not attempted to directly control prices at which private parties sold their grain, in the war years however, maximum rates were fixed for nearly all foodstuffs.¹⁴³ Commandeering of stocks, unheard of before, was freely resorted to in these years, though usually with no success attending the venture.¹⁴⁴ Under the pre-colonial regime of control, the export of *shali* was banned in times of scarcity, whereas after the colonial intervention the ban was in place almost all year round and extended to cover more agricultural commodities: maize, wheat, barley, oil seeds and potatoes.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ His Highnesses Proclamation Regarding Sale of *Shali* on Prices Fixed Therefore, File No. 123 of 1921, NAI

¹⁴¹ Correspondence Regarding Kashmir, For. Dept., Extl. A, October, 1892, 149-160, NAI

¹⁴² *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Intl.-I, May 1920, Nos. 192-195, NAI

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ His Highnesses Proclamation Regarding Sale of *Shali* on Prices Fixed Therefore, File No. 123 of 1921, OER, JKA

An 'influential' committee constituted in 1921 to advise on the *shali* matters found that prices were 'abnormally high' and that scarcity was not temporary. Profiteering was identified as the main cause. It observed that the 'necessity of state intervention [was] beyond doubt'.¹⁴⁶ The committee recommended that 'every revenue payer should provide for the sale to licensed grain dealers form [sic] the next *kharif* harvest an amount of grain equivalent to 1/3 of the total annual land revenue calculated at the prices assumed at settlement.' This affirmation of the indispensability of state control was a far cry from the previously outright condemnation of the same.

The Viceroy, by now convinced of the 'necessity' of state intervention, suggested the establishment of co-operative stores.¹⁴⁷ The connection between agricultural credit and food supply had been sufficiently understood by now: a major chunk of the valley's food grain produce was cornered by powerful private interests through various modes of control, particularly repayment of debts. These players were able to successfully manipulate the market.¹⁴⁸ The State Co-operative department was established in 1921, to procure *shali* for the city and the state's requirements. In addition to the grain delivered as revenue, cultivators were required to surrender their surplus grain to the co-operative societies and in turn the societies would take steps to liquidate their debts. The co-operative societies would also extend credit to cultivators and

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Intl.-I, May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI

¹⁴⁸ Chapter two discusses the various modes of controlling grain

accept grain in repayment of debts, quite like the *waddar*.¹⁴⁹ The co-op stores endeavor to supply the city met with very limited success as the 'progress on voluntary acquisition of grain was very slow.'¹⁵⁰ Commission agents employed by the societies 'took every opportunity to fleece the cultivators' and when the 'complaints of their excesses grew steadily louder...they were finally abolished.' The Resident concluded that the 'acquisition by means of co-operative enterprise had turned out to be a failure.'¹⁵¹

During the war, in many countries of the world opposition to state control mellowed and state initiatives came to be seen as necessary to maintain war supplies. These years were arguably the worst period of scarcity witnessed in the city of Srinagar, prices of *shali* were much higher than anywhere in the valley and soaring between Rs. 18/- and 24/-. A damning article in the Civil and Military Gazette described Kashmir as:

a signal example of the fatuity and folly of the indiscriminate application in war time of academic theories of free trade...if in England, a democratic and highly organized country, most careful food control has been necessitated it is surely much more necessary to recognize this principle in India, with its teeming masses.¹⁵²

Pandit Gopinath, editor of the *akhbar-i-am*, the oldest vernacular paper in the Punjab sent a telegram to the Viceroy, no less. He wrote:

'Condition of Kashmir people most miserable acute distress
indescribable prices of staples food rice awfully raised selling at two

¹⁴⁹ See chapter two

¹⁵⁰ *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Intl.-I, May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

seers a rupee which is unbearable people can't afford mostly living on vegetable pitiable condition *wails of people renting the sky drastic measures against scandalous profiteering imperative otherwise great calamity.*¹⁵³

Around the same time, the Resident anxiously informed the Political Secretary that a group of Kashmir pundits had sought an appointment with him to discuss the prices of *shali*. They had communicated that if the matter was not attended to soon, they would submit anonymous petitions to the viceroy for 'early interference in the matter.'¹⁵⁴

As the failure of co-operative societies became evident, the Maharaja dashed off a note to the Viceroy. Arguing that all *shali* Schemes had failed to place the state in command of a large enough reserve, he stated plainly that the only answer to the ring of profiteering dealers was a complete state monopoly:

I propose the control of the whole *shali* produce of the valley on simplest possible lines...it will be monopolizing a trade which has made hundreds of grain dealers exceedingly rich. The object of the state, of course, is not to be mercenary...¹⁵⁵

The 'entire *shali* produce' was to be 'purchased' from cultivators and the grain thus acquired was to be sold at wholesale depots to private licensed retail vendors, who would in turn sell to the public. The maharaja anticipated that 'the first measure [would] no doubt offer some difficulty', and though 'the system [would] need to use compulsion to get cultivators to sell grain...after a

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

while they [would] sell willing for there [would] be no where else [sic] they [could] sell their crop.' The Viceroy, ironically, found himself 'entirely in agreement with the Maharaja', expressing the view that 'it [was] *desirable for the state to exercise complete control over the whole shali produce of the valley.*'¹⁵⁶

The import of food grain into the city by all private individuals was declared illegal in the hope that this would facilitate the procurement of grain in the countryside by the co-operative department. *Only the Co-operative stores were permitted to sell shali and maize in the city.* The co-operative stores were given power to acquire grain even from cultivators and landholders who did not voluntarily become part of the village sale societies. All landholders were required to proactively declare the stocks they possessed in excess of a year's requirement of *shali* for their own use, and all such surplus was to be sold to the co-operative societies. While the talk of controlling the entire produce of the valley seems to have been rhetorical, there is no doubt that state control over the circulation of grain came to be regarded as a natural and legitimate course of action. The new regime of control was, I argue, more cumbersome than the one it replaced. In addition to keeping state control more or less intact, it created conditions that made cultivators more susceptible to other forms of control as well. Essentially, the imposition of a cash demand pushed

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

the cultivators to borrow without freeing them from the burden of payments in grain.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

The colonial interest in the Kashmir state was primarily borne out of a desire to manage the volatile frontier and secure the British Empire from threat. The Dogra Darbar, the colonial state alleged, was running amuck on the frontier and needed disciplining. In the interest of empire, an intervention was planned and the miserable plight of the cultivators formed a convenient alibi. It was, however, one thing to hatch a plot but quite another to implement it.

The colonial critique was built around a condemnation of the excessive control of the state over agricultural enterprise in general and the circulation of grain in particular. The state presence in this sector was to be withdrawn, allowing the cultivator greater autonomy and laying the foundation for prosperity. Ironically, after the initial vitriol against the 'twin pillars of reaction' the colonial state ultimately reconciled to them. In the course of the chapter I have argued that this reconciliation was facilitated as well as forced by a combination of factors.

Opposition to the change came predominantly from two quarters: food consumers in the city and the revenue bureaucracy. With the steep rise in

¹⁵⁷ For a detailed discussion on the questions of credit, access to markets and the autonomy of cultivators see Chapter Three. See also, the section on *waddars* in Chapter Two

grain prices, and the cornering of massive supplies by a handful of people, the state's own requirements could not be conveniently met without taking recourse to state control. In the changed circumstances, it was control and not its end that served the interests of the state. The approach and attitude towards control was accordingly revised. A study of the critique of control and the processes that led to its revision casts much light on the colonial state, indigenous state structures and the nature of the interaction. This could have significant implications for the otherwise meager critical historiography on the region.

The colonial fiction of the British as delivering the oppressed cultivators from the despotism of the Dogras has crept into and firmly embedded itself in existing historiography on the region. A slightly more critical reading tends to see the British as neutral arbitrators between the Darbar and the people. Empires do not have principled positions. In this chapter I have shown that the colonial intervention in Kashmir was motivated primarily by political expediency. The 'charitable' attitude towards the cultivators of Kashmir did not last very long. A decade into the settlement the cultivators, far from being 'free', found themselves subject to control, arguably worse than in pre-colonial times. The initial concessions to cultivators were a necessity out of which the colonial state made a virtue; the control of a scarce and exceptionally mobile labor force required delicate handling.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Discussed in the third section of chapter three

Chapter Two

Controlling Grain: Land, Capital and Official Power

The previous Chapter looked at various aspect of state control over grain. It discussed the colonial critique of control and the fate of the attempt to de-control the circulation of grain. The 'popular clamour' by agitated city dwellers threatened to flare up into a serious challenge to authority in Srinagar. The question of scarcity, then, had very serious political implications. The marked proclivity of the colonial state to look for scapegoats resulted in various native groups being blamed in turn. In the run up to the settlement, it was believed that the corrupt revenue bureaucracy was to be blamed.¹⁵⁹ Subsequent to the settlement, the accusing finger was pointed at 'profiteering' moneylenders doubling up as grain dealers.¹⁶⁰ There was a measure of truth in both propositions. However, to get to the root of the matter, a far more thorough understanding of the dynamics of the production and circulation of grain is required.

I seek to focus on the dynamics of the circulation of grain in this chapter. To ensure steady food supply to the city population, and to meet its own requirements, collections of *mujawaza* combined with large scale forced

¹⁵⁹ See: Correspondence, For. and Pol., A Pol E, September 1882, No.253-265A, NAI; Mr. Henvey's Report on the Condition of Kashmir and the Reforms Required in the Administration, For. Dept., Sec E, January 1883, Nos. 239-240, NAI

¹⁶⁰ Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar. For. Dept., Extl. A, August 1903, Nos. 94-101, NAI

purchases of grain seemed to be the only way the state could lay its hands on sufficient grain.¹⁶¹ Starting with the grain crisis of 1891-1892, authorities began to report serious difficulty in procuring grain.¹⁶² Even the numerous *shali* schemes that authorized agents of the state to compel cultivators to sell grain met little success in procuring grain and the collections were always short of anticipations.¹⁶³ In 1892 for instance, authorities reported a good harvest. Evidently, someone else was controlling the grain, and controlling it tightly enough to seriously hamper collections by the state. Where was the grain going? Why wasn't it flooding the markets as Wingate and Lawrence had predicted?

The year 1918 saw a serious shortage of supply of food to the city. A beleaguered Resident wrote that the scarcity was, 'not creditable of easy explanation after last years' bumper rice harvest.'¹⁶⁴ The Director of Civil Supplies of Punjab, a Mr. Townsend was called in to advise on the matter. His 'enquiries' led him to reiterate a position that other visiting officials before him had taken, that the *zamindars* were responsible for the scarcity.¹⁶⁵ Thanks to the high prices, cultivators were able to meet revenue obligations by selling only a small portion of their grain and 'hoarding' the rest. He bewailed that the state had, 'fallen back upon...oppressive measures...as the collection of

¹⁶¹ See chapter one.

¹⁶² Collection of Mujawaza in Kashmir, Arrangements for the Supply of *Shali* to the Residents of Srinagar, File No.17 of 1891, OER, JKA

¹⁶³ See: *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Intl.-I, May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI; Note by Honorable Mr. Townsend on the Economic Situation in Kashmir, File no. 3/*Shali* -6 of 1919, OER, JKA; Notes and Miscellaneous Papers on *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, File No 153/ of 1921, OER, JKA

¹⁶⁴ Grant of Advance to the Revenue Dept. for the Purchase of *Shali* to Form a State Reserve and Papers Regarding Collection and Distribution of *Shali* in Kashmir province, File No. 17 of 1918, Revenue Dept., JKA

¹⁶⁵ Note by Honorable Mr. Townsend on the Economic Situation in Kashmir. File No. 3/*Shali* -6 of 1919, OER, JKA. The nature of these 'enquiries' is not clear.

revenue in kind without any legal sanction...' and that this was, 'a breach of faith by the state with the cultivators.'¹⁶⁶ This was however to be blamed on the cultivators themselves, for 'Kashmiris are a family and the cultivators are morally duty bound to provide for the non-cultivators, when the greedy *zamindars* omit to do their part, the state must intervene.'¹⁶⁷

The colonial officials stationed in Kashmir, conversant as they were with the modalities of grain circulation in the valley, disagreed with Townsend. To them, his, 'point sounds queer...if the *zamindar* is well off and can easily pay the land revenue...why should he at all be in debt to *waddar* and may have to take loans on his *shali* from him?'¹⁶⁸ The Settlement Commissioner also found himself in disagreement with the opinion of Townsend. In a clear involvement cultivators had little control over their grain, the Settlement Commissioner wrote:

in order to tackle this question properly the snares and network of *waddar* and the hold he exercises on *zamindars* should be carefully examined and watched...He is the person who to a greater extent is a *contributory* cause to maintain the abnormal rise in prices of *shali*...he gives all sorts of self-interested and exaggerated reports and explanations. I would suggest that *zamindars* be left alone and it is the *waddar*, *numberdar* and the big land holder who should be handled to improve the situation.¹⁶⁹

The imposition of a cash demand on a 'cash starved' peasantry saw in effect led to creation of a heavily indebted peasantry. Cultivators were compelled to

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Notes and Miscellaneous Papers on *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, File No 153/ of 1921. OER, JKA

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

surrender their grain to moneylenders called *waddars* at rates that worked out to be far below market prices.¹⁷⁰ Thus a large part of the food grains produced passed into the hands of those who were in a position to advance capital.¹⁷¹ Vast areas of land were under the control of privileged tenure holders. Despite the efforts of the settlement department the collection of revenue grain by these land controllers could neither be completely disallowed in principle, nor stopped in practice.¹⁷² *Jagirdars* were assigned additional lands to compensate the loss in revenue caused by the settlement, thus concentrating more arable land in their hands. The grant of *chaks* picked up pace and *chakdars* and came to control huge areas of arable land. The result was a concentration of arable land in fewer hands.

The separation between these various modes of control is of course only an analytical separation. In reality they did not appear as discreet as they have been made to seem for the sake of analysis. Often one individual would exercise control over grain deploying more than one mode; the *chakdars* were often *waddars*, the *waddars* were *galladars*, *chakdars* were, more often than not, officials of the state. Moreover, the exercise of more than one mode of control would also change them. A *chakdar* who was likely an official of the state, and a *waddar* as well, would have been more effective as a controller.

¹⁷⁰ *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Intl.-I, May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI

¹⁷¹ Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, August 1903, Nos. 94-101, NAI; Supply of *Shali* or Un-husked Rice to the Inhabitants of Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, February 1892, Nos. 98-109, NAI; His Highnesses Proclamation Regarding Sale of *Shali* on Prices Fixed Therefore, File No. 123 of 1921, OER, JKA

¹⁷² Statements Received by the Glancy Commission on Behalf of the *Jagirdars*, File No. 18/31 of 1931, Pol. Dept., JKA

The colonial state envisaged Kashmir as a land of abundance ruined by pilfering intermediaries. The effort of the settlement was to sweep away these intermediaries and build a direct relationship between the state and cultivators.¹⁷³ The impact of the settlement needs careful consideration. One must avoid the twin dangers of reading too much or too little into it. Certain crucial changes did indeed come about as a result of the settlement. The state share of produce was decreased from 50% of gross produce to between 25-30% of gross produce.¹⁷⁴ A cash demand of up to 2/3 of the state share was declared, though in practice it varied with time and place. The collection of *mujawaza* was limited to food staples and more valuable crops such as cotton were no longer accepted causing a loss to cultivators.¹⁷⁵ Attempts were made to prevent 'illegal' exaction by revenue officials and land controllers.

I identify three modes of control over circulation of grain and then elaborate on their implications. The first section looks at how control over land translated into control over grain. The second section discusses how control of capital afforded control over grain. The third section deals with access to offices of the state, particularly the revenue department, as a source of control over grain. At another level, this chapter also grapples with the question of the native elites' negotiation with colonialism. The settlement attempted to end revenue collection in kind and also to redefine land rights. It is through

¹⁷³ Walter. R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*; Supply of *Shali* or Un-husked Rice to the Inhabitants of Srinagar, For. Dept., Exl. A, February 1892, Nos. 98-109, NAI

¹⁷⁴ Compiled from various assessment reports: *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Muzaffarabad*, 1899; *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Karnah*, 1901; *Assessment Report of the Anantnag Tehsil of the Anantnag District*, 1922

¹⁷⁵ *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Lal Phak*; 1890

an exploration of the response of the 'native' elites' to these initiatives that I seek to map their negotiations with colonialism.

These measures however lost much of their edge in implementation. As discussed in the previous chapter, the collection of *mujawaza* by the state continued in excess of the 1/3 of total revenue fixed at settlement. 'Illegal' exactions by officials and land controllers did not cease, though it is possible the opportunities for such exactions decreased. The associated program of ending state control over grain and markets was never carried out, and the access of cultivators to markets remained seriously restricted even as a drive to commercialize agriculture was enthusiastically inaugurated.

While these continuities are striking, we must not lose sight of the changes that did take place with the settlement of land revenue. The cash demand, even if partial had far reaching consequences for the cultivators and for those who were in a position to advance money. The decrease in demand and the regularization of the bureaucracy did place limits on the exercise of power by land controllers and state officials, but the overall control over cultivators was tightened. Under the settlement the state was named the 'proprietor' of all wasteland cultivable and otherwise, and came to exercise a stronger and wider control over land.

As a corrective, however, one must add that everything that happened after the settlement did not necessarily happen because of it. The forest settlement was a process whereby the state sought to extend and maximize its control

over not just the revenue derived from forests but also its political and territorial control over land in general. The result of forest demarcation was that a ceiling limit was placed on the amount of land available for cultivation, which had serious implications for the production of food grains. The forest settlement was no doubt related to the land revenue settlement, but the two were distinct processes. Similarly, the grant of *chaks* was a process separate from the settlement, and in fact in some ways at odds with it. To understand the scarcity of and control over grain in this period, these developments also have to be taken into account.

Land as Control

In pre-colonial as well as colonial times, large areas of land producing food grain were alienated by the state to individuals and institutions of various descriptions. Under the pre-colonial revenue administration nearly all revenue on assigned lands was collected in grain. This translated into control over a substantial portion of the valley's supply of food grains.

At Gulab Singh's accession to the throne of Kashmir, all privileged tenures were those granted by previous regimes, mostly the Lahore Darbar. Most landholders were *jagirdars*, required to either pay a portion of the land revenue to the state or provided *sowars* or soldiers.¹⁷⁶ *Muafi* or revenue free

¹⁷⁶ History of *Jagirdars* and *Guzarkhars*, Revenue Dept., File No. 3/450 of 1908, JKA

grants of land were less common.¹⁷⁷ *Jagirdars* and *muafidars* were autonomous in the administration of their lands; they would fix the revenue demand as well as various taxes and *rasums*. The enjoyment of their grants was not interfered with as long as they fulfilled their obligations and remained loyal to the state.¹⁷⁸

Soon after his accession, Gulab Singh set about assembling a landed elite that owed their grants and loyalties to him. Some new *jagirs* were granted on the same terms as those specified above. The project of cultivating a landed elite, however, really picked up pace with the large-scale grant of *chaks*. Areas of uncultivated arable land, varying from 50 to 500 acres or even more, were granted almost entirely high and middle ranking officials of the state. These landholders came to be known *chakdars*.¹⁷⁹

His successor gave service grants to Rajputs from Jammu called *Thakkar* or *Mian* Rajputs, for he wanted a 'body of his own people in Kashmir in the event of any disturbances.'¹⁸⁰ 61 villages, to begin with, were given as *jagirs* to *Thakkar Rajputs* who were willing to settle in Kashmir. Another type of grants started by the Dogra ruling house was the Dharmarth grant, made to religious scholars and sages or to shrines. Additionally, Gulab Singh established in the 1850s a department for the observance of the Hindu religion, the Dharmarth department. Like other Dharmarth grants, the grants

¹⁷⁷ Most *Muafidars* were entitled to draw cash maintenance allowances from the treasury. See: *ibid*

¹⁷⁸ D.C. Sharma, *Kashmir Under the Sikhs*, New Delhi, 1987

¹⁷⁹ See chapter three for more on *chakdars*

¹⁸⁰ *Assessment Report of Mian Jagir Villages in the Kashmir Valley*, 1901

made to this department were made in perpetuity, held revenue free and it was completely autonomous in the revenue administration of grants in its possession.¹⁸¹

A significant portion of arable land in Kashmir was alienated to privileged tenure holders. Gulab Singh when he first set eyes on the Kashmir valley is said to have remarked that, '...one part was mountain, one part was under water, while the remaining third was in the hands of *jagirdars*.'¹⁸² In tehsils of Uri, for instance, nearly all the cultivated land was alienated in *jagir*.¹⁸³ In Muzaffarabad Tehsil 5/6 of all cultivated land was under *jagirs*, *muafis* and *chaks*.¹⁸⁴ In the Karnah Tehsil more than 57% of the total revenue assessed was alienated.¹⁸⁵

As for the rest of the valley, alienated revenue out of total revenue assessed under the settlement was easily over 20%. These figures are negatively biased for the revenue figures were assessed in kind and converted to cash at the low state rates; effectively control over 20% revenue meant control over a proportionally larger part of the harvest. This estimate excludes the thousands of acres of *shali* producing lands held by members of the royal family. In addition to this, revenue assignments worth 19,38,185 rupees were excluded from settlement operations.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, the settlement

¹⁸¹ See Mridu Rai for a discussion of the colonial sleight of hand whereby Dogra legitimacy to rule Kashmir was derived from them being pious Hindus, therefore the importance of the Dharmarth Department. See also: Realization of Revenue in Kind by the Dharmarth Department, File No 5/S.A.84/II of 1908, General Dept., JKA

¹⁸² Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 201

¹⁸³ *Assessment Report and Report on Assessments of Land Revenue, Tehsil Uri, District Muzaffarabad, 1898*

¹⁸⁴ *Preliminary Report of Settlement Operations in the Muzaffarabad District in Kashmir, 1898*

¹⁸⁵ Settlement operations in Kashmir, 54/S- 1/34 of 1902, Revenue Dept., JKA

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

commissioner noted that due to a lack of reliable accounts, these figures were certainly erring on the lower side. It would, therefore, not be incorrect to assume that land controllers controlled a significant area of arable land and, as a result, food grains as well.

The repercussions of the *Sher Singhi* famine of 1877 were felt throughout the agrarian sector. While the impact of this 'awful visitation' was obviously felt more by the humble cultivators, the land controllers did not escape unscathed. Where an already scarce labor force was decimated further by the famine land, for those who depended on others to cultivate it, would have been a cumbersome asset. This would have made it more difficult to generate an income from land, and therefore led to a serious devaluation of land. Heavy mortality led to sharp decrease in cultivated land.¹⁸⁷ The sense of an abundance of land would have been tragically heightened. Lawrence writing even ten years after the famine wrote,

it cannot be too often repeated that...the ordinary *assami* has no pride of status. I have reported cases in this *tehsil* where a village has sold its *assami* rights for sums of Rs 50 and 53. On asking the villagers why they parted with their rights and their children's birthright for so inadequate a sum, they replied that by selling their village to a *pandit* they escaped from *begaar*, and they added that the rights of an *assami* conveyed with them no privileges.¹⁸⁸

The years after the famine were evidently a time of much distress, dislocation and disorganization. It is entirely likely that the question of exclusive rights to

¹⁸⁷ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 213

¹⁸⁸ *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Lal Phak*, 1890

land was not a burning one at the time. This is the reality that British administrators encountered and took as the basis of their generalizations about pre-colonial Kashmir. This reality however, had other aspects of which these authorities failed to take note.

On the eve of the settlement then, the controllers of land were a loosely defined group, whose fortunes probably took a turn for the worse after the famine of 1877-78. Probably supported by the *darbar*, privileged tenure holders managed to stave off the advances of the settlement establishment for about a decade. In the early 1890s, however, the assessment of *jagir* and *muafi* holdings began.¹⁸⁹

As on khalsa lands, the revenue demand was fixed at a maximum of 30% of gross revenue, which represented a significantly smaller share than the traditional $\frac{1}{2}$ of gross produce under the *batai* system or the assessment of standing crops. The collection of revenue grain by anyone but the state was forbidden altogether.¹⁹⁰ Various *rasums* and taxes, which land controllers had previously charged at will, were either done away with or understood as included in the fixed revenue demand. The officials responsible for the revenue administration of these estates were to be salaried employees of the state and not agents of the grantees themselves. These officials were to collect the revenue, maintain accounts and handover to the tenure holder what was

¹⁸⁹ *Assessment Report of Jagir Villages*, 1901

¹⁹⁰ Collection of *Mujawaza* by *Jagirdars*, *Chakdars*, etc. File No 589/Rev-8 of 1882, Revenue Dept., JKA. See also: *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Lal Phak*, 1890; *Assessment Report of the Baramulla Tehsil*, 1891; Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*

his/her share. Whereas previously land controllers might have enjoyed some exclusive rights, the rules of the settlement attempted to cut them down to simply receivers of revenue.¹⁹¹

This attempted transformation of the role of land controllers was, however, not entirely successful. *Jagirdars* and *muafidars* continued to collect revenue through the *batai* system, which meant effectively that they collected in excess of demand fixed by the state and collected in kind.¹⁹² The collection of 'illegal' taxes did not cease, even these usually being collected in grain. Despite orders to the contrary, then, collection of revenue grain also continued. That being said, however, there is little doubt that income from land revenue decreased as a result of the settlement. *Jagirdars* frequently blamed 'changes in the land revenue system' having caused them a 'great loss in income as well as in position and prestige.'¹⁹³

This appears to mark the beginning of a transition whose implications were to become clearer as time passed. While the more powerful *jagirdars* managed to induce the state to grant them additional lands to compensate for the loss of income, for the majority of them, the settlement probably saw a reduction in their income and prestige. Throughout this period, the rates at which the state acquired grain were always much below market price. As grain prices showed a steep upwards trend, the margins became more and more lucrative.

¹⁹¹ The question of land rights is discussed in some detail in the Chapter three.

¹⁹² Representations Regarding their Grievances Presented to the Glancy Commission on Behalf of the Muslims of Srinagar, File no. 1/234 of 1931, General Dept., JKA

¹⁹³ Statements Received by the Glancy Commission on Behalf of the *Jagirdars*, File no 18/31 of 1931, Pol. Dept., JKA

Trading in grain trade became an especially profitable venture for land controllers, for they could and did coerce grain from cultivators at even lower rates, albeit 'illegally'. In light of the revenue income from land having decreased, the importance of the grain trade in converting control over land into money income, increased manifold. Understandably therefore, land controllers coveted the privilege of collecting revenue in grain. The injunction against collection of *mujawaza* by land controllers threatened to end their privileged access to a commodity with very lucrative margins. This was one privilege that they were not going to give up easily.

There were instances of 'organized opposition' to the settlement on the part of land controllers. The settlement department was flooded with petitions from individual land controllers claiming exemption from the settlement rules and the privilege of *mujawaza*. For example, the Raja of Togh (in the district of Gilgit) appealed to the settlement commissioner, 'I have...many obligations of chiefship and many *poojas* I must conduct...please allow me to collect in kind annas 2 per rupees of *jagir* revenue.'¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Dewans Jwala Sahai and Kirpa Ram petitioned, 'that in accordance with previous custom, the system of collection of rents in kinds be upheld and continued.'¹⁹⁵ Petitioners in both cases mentioned here were allowed to collect a portion of the revenue due to them in kind. The better placed among the land controllers were able to obtain orders allowing them to collect grain. At the same time, even land

¹⁹⁴ Permission Asked for by the Raja of Togh to Collect the Revenue in Kind, Rev 46/S.A/66 of 1904, Rev. Dept., JKA

¹⁹⁵ Petition of Dewan Lachman Das Against the Introduction of Cash Assessment in his *Jagir* Villages and *Chaks*, File no.2 of 1896, OER, JKA

controllers who were denied the privilege of collecting *mujawaza* legally, were able to collect grain in spite of orders to the contrary.¹⁹⁶

Legally, all land controllers were to collect revenue partly in cash and partly in kind, the proportion in kind varying in proportion to the leverage they enjoyed or the pressure they could bring to bear on the settlement establishment. Generally speaking, old and powerful *jagirdars* such as the family of *Dewans* were allowed to collect revenue in kind subject to a maximum of 1/2 to 2/3 of the total revenue demand. For example, The Raja of Togh, the former ruler of an area in Gilgit was allowed to receive 2/3 of the revenue due to him in kind.¹⁹⁷ *Thakkar Rajputs*, due to their proximity to the royal family were legally allowed to continue collection in kind at rates lower than the state. They were expected to collect at least half of their revenue in cash, and for the loss that this represented they were granted additional *jagirs*.¹⁹⁸ *Jagirs* held by religious persons or attached to shrines were allowed to collect revenue grain up to 2/3 of the total revenue assigned to them.¹⁹⁹ The Dharmarth department for its political, cultural and ideological importance to the legitimacy and stability of the state was allowed to collect as much revenue in kind as was required for its purposes.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Representations Regarding their Grievances Presented to the Glancy Commission on Behalf of the Muslims of Srinagar, File no. 1/234 of 1931, General Dept., JKA

¹⁹⁷ Permission Asked for by the Raja of Togh to Collect the Revenue in Kind, Rev 46/S.A/66 of 1904, Revenue Dept., JKA

¹⁹⁸ *Assessment Report of the Mian Jagir Villages*, 1901. See also: Grievances Submitted by *Maliyars* to the Glancy Commission, File No 48/8 of 1931, Pol. Dept., JKA

¹⁹⁹ Settlement Department Correspondence, Rev 7/s- 1/6 of 1902, Revenue Dept., JKA

²⁰⁰ Realization of Revenue in Kind by the Dharmarth Department., File No 5/S.A.84/II of 1908, General Dept., JKA

Interestingly, *chakdars*, unlike other land controllers, were entered in settlement records as *assami* and not merely receivers of revenue. On other assigned lands the *assami* right would be vested with the cultivators of the land. The cultivators on *chakdars'* estates were tenants of the *chakdar*. This entitled the *chakdars* to collect all their revenue in grain. For this reason the status of *chakdar* was eagerly sought after. In a striking example of this, descendants of Dewan Jwala Sahai arguably the most prestigious landed family in the province petitioned the state council requesting the less prestigious title of *chakdar*. The State council concluded that the lands in question were clearly intended as a *jagir* grant and therefore only a part of the revenue could be collected in kind.²⁰¹

The *ghalla batai* system of collecting revenue continued to be in vogue among land controllers, meaning that despite the shocks of the settlement they continued to control appreciable quantities of grain. This is no surprise considering the implementation of the injunctions of the state depended on a revenue bureaucracy that itself had wide interests in both land as well as grain. Evidence from petitions written by harassed cultivators suggests strongly that the collection of revenue in kind continued to be the dominant practice in most *jagirs*, especially the estates of powerful *jagirdars*. *Zamindars* from one tehsil complained, '...grain is taken by *jagirdars* instead to coin...we were hoping for better days and that we will be in good conditions like other

²⁰¹ Petition of Dewan Lachman Das Against the Introduction of Cash Assessment in his *Jagir* Villages and *Chaks*, File No.2 of 1896, OER, JKA

inhabitants of *jagirs* where they pay coin instead of grain.²⁰² Yet another petition stated, 'all *jagirdars* continue *ghalla batai*...divide produce as they please.'²⁰³ On the land of *muafidars* as well, revenue was collected in kind in spite of state dictates to the contrary. Official documents alleged often that *chakdars*, like *waddars*, were interested in inflated rates, 'for they can procure *shali* cheap and sell it dear...'²⁰⁴ The state would routinely try to buy up the share of *chakdars* and other big landholders, expecting them to supply more than 1,20,000 kharwars of *shali*.²⁰⁵ Sometimes a single estate holder could be expected to supply tens of thousands of kharwars of *shali*.²⁰⁶ This can be taken a very rough guide to the amount of grain controlled by big landholders. However, attempts to actually collect the grain proved consistently to be singularly unsuccessful.²⁰⁷

The combined effect of the enclosure of the forests and grant of large estates as *chaks* was that, perhaps for the first time in the history of Kashmir, there was no land that was not tightly patrolled and controlled by the state. Unlike their forefathers/mothers, cultivators in 20th century Kashmir could no longer exclaim '*tul zet ti chal*' (literally, grab your rag and let's go!).

²⁰² Statements Received by the Glancy Commission on Behalf of the *Jagirdars*, File No. 18/31 of 1931, Pol. Dept., JKA

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Note by Honorable Mr. Townsend on the Economic Situation in Kashmir, File No. 3/*Shali* -6 of 1919, OER, JKA

²⁰⁵ Rates and Arrears of *Mujawaza Shali*, File No. 5/P- 138 of 1919, OER, JKA

²⁰⁶ Grant of Advance to the Revenue Dept. for the Purchase of *Shali* to Form a State Reserve and Papers Regarding Collection and Distribution of *Shali* in Kashmir Province, File No 17 of 1918, OER, JKA

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

As discussed in the first chapter, these years also saw a revision of the colonial position on control of grain in Kashmir. In light of this, we need also to keep in mind that the grant to land controllers of privilege of collecting *mujawaza* was not entirely due to the successful resistance of land controllers only. The state having reconsidered its position on *mujawaza*, would certainly have contributed to the flexibility with which this question was handled. To sum up then, in this period saw an increasing concentration of the control over arable land in fewer hands. As a consequence, there was a concentration of control over grain in relatively fewer hands. This concentration of control in the hands of large and powerful operators had significant implications for the circulation and movement of grain. Some of these implications have been discussed in some detail below, in the third chapter.

Capital as Control

The system of *wadh* was one whereby cultivators would borrow in cash or kind from lenders called *waddars*. The debts were almost always repaid in kind after the harvest. This was tantamount to the sale of crops in advance. The rates of interest were so high; the *waddar* was ensured control over a significant chunk of the debtors harvest in advance.²⁰⁸ The imposition of a cash demand on a cash-starved peasantry led to large-scale borrowing. The

²⁰⁸ Discussed in several Settlement Reports: *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Muzaffarabad*, 1899; *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Karnah*, 1901; *Assessment Report of the Anantnag Tehsil of the Anantnag District*, 1922

stars of the *waddars* shone bright, as the new situation worked out to be more propitious for their activities.

Lawrence had, on the eve of the settlement, dismissed *waddars* as insignificant figures, describing them as 'men of small means.'²⁰⁹ The Assessment Report of the Lal Phak tehsil told of people, 'who carry on the business of petty shopkeepers...and *occasionally* make advances to cultivators on the security of crop', emphasizing the small scale of their operations.²¹⁰ Cognizant of the cultivators' minimal access to markets, it was perhaps expected by Lawrence and his superiors that the former would arrange cash by taking loans. In fact, a note on the Assessment Report of the Lal Phak Tehsil noted that, 'an assessment in cash is not yet possible owing to the *absence* of the *buniya*.'²¹¹ This particular official certainly overstated the case, for it is not as if money lending was unknown in Kashmir. Rather this maybe taken as indicating the marginal importance of suppliers of capital in a low-money economy. Cultivators paid all their dues to the state in kind and exchange was primarily by barter. With a cash demand, the cultivators' need for money would certainly have sharply increased.

The system of *wadh* was intimately connected to the grain trade. *Waddars* were known to double up as *galladars* or grain dealers, and the two terms *galladar* and *waddar* were used interchangeably. These people, it was believed were

²⁰⁹ As in the case of land controllers, usurers would have certainly been affected by the famine. Many debts would have to have been written off as irrecoverable. It is certainly possible that the *waddars* that Lawrence encountered were particularly emaciated due to the famine. Nevertheless, the general argument stands.

²¹⁰ *Assessment Report of the Lal Phak Tehsil*, 1890

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

able to exert significant control over the market on account of the large stocks they possessed. While the state supplied the smaller towns with 75,000 *kharwars* of *shali* annually, a single *galladar* could be in possession of as much as 30,000 *kharwars* of *shali*.²¹²

As per the official narrative, these large operators had formed a tight ring and worked together to restrict supplies and force prices upwards.²¹³ Once a situation of scarcity had been created, they sold small quantities at 'inflated' rates. Given that grain was acquired at the *wadh* rate, which was much less than market prices, the margins in the trade were handsome indeed. In the mid 1900s, *shali* procured at Rs.1-10/*kharwar*, believed by the revenue department to be the *wadh* rate, could be sold in the city at Rs. 4 to Rs. 5 per *kharwar*. Making allowances for storage and transport expense, there is no doubt that the grain trade was very lucrative. The Settlement Commissioner noted in dismay the rise of the, '...waddar...who now controls the produce of the country and screws his profit not only from the cultivator in valuable grain, but to a still larger extent, from the poor in Srinagar in exorbitant prices.'²¹⁴

The officials designing the settlement had taken special care to make land revenue payments in kind disadvantageous, in the hope that cultivators would be 'encouraged' to market their grain and pay land revenue in cash

²¹² Grant of Advance to the Revenue Dept. for the Purchase of *Shali* to Form a State Reserve and Papers Regarding Collection and Distribution of *Shali* in Kashmir Province, File No 17 of 1918, OER, JKA

²¹³ Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, August 1903, Nos. 94-101, NAI

²¹⁴ *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Intl.-I, May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI

instead.²¹⁵ The drive towards an all cash assessment was not, however, pursued in right earnest.²¹⁶ The result was a deeply contradictory revenue regime, which made payments in kind extremely un-remunerative and actually forced cultivators to surrender grain. The drive to commercialize agriculture and monetize the agrarian economy in Kashmir was thus undermined from the very beginning by, among other things, the policies of the colonial state itself.

The cultivators were required to pay cash revenues, but were not allowed sufficiently direct access to markets so as to sell their produce. The policies of the state itself impeded the development of a 'free market' in grain, a necessary precondition for the successful commercialization of agriculture. The only recourse left to cultivators was to borrow cash to meet their obligations to the state. As a result, most of the cultivators' grain was divided between the state and those who advanced money to cultivators.

In 1891-92 the land revenue in the tehsils that were yet to be assessed, was collected mostly in cash. This had two important implications; one that the state's reserve of grain was depleted and two, an entry point was created for the *waddar*. The cash demand would have most likely led to cultivators borrowing from *waddars* and essentially selling their crops in advance. Cash payments were enforced in the seven assessed tehsils as well, in spite of Lawrence's orders to the contrary. Darbari officials, allegedly, did so to

²¹⁵ Measures Adopted by the Kashmir Darbar for Affording Relief to the Poorer Classes in Srinagar. For. Dept., Intl. A. March 1905, Nos. 110, NAI

²¹⁶ See chapter one.

'discredit the settlement' for it was known that most were not in a position to pay full cash revenues. The *waddars* would have been able to acquire greater control over a large part of the 1891-92 harvests. It is no accident that in these years, the prices of food started to rise and continued to escalate till the great depression. It is perhaps at this historical juncture that the *waddar* lodged himself between the cultivators and the state.

Table-1

Land revenue collections in cash and kind in the Kashmir province:

Year	Value or revenue taken in kind	Value of revenue taken in cash
1862	16,93,077	9,62,057
1871	29,44,844	14,96,741
1880-81	9,87,000	5,56,000
1881-82	10,48,000	5,60,000
1882-83	8,84,000	5,99,000
1883-84	8,57,000	4,67,000
1884-85	14,05,000	5,55,000

1885-86	9,27,000	3,90,000
1886-87	9,45,000	5,61,000
1887-88	10,00,000	6,35,000
1888-89	10,04,000	5,69,000
1889-90	13,78,326	10,29,131
1890-91	12,70,882	8,76,363
1891-92	6,02,748	15,59,533
1892-93	9,50,921	14,35,377
1893-94	6,00,000	N.A.

Source: Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*

In 1891-92, the cash revenues collected were absolutely as well as proportionately higher than any year since the inauguration of the new settlement of land revenue. Presumably most of these revenue were paid with loans from *waddars*. As discussed in chapter one, the depleted state reserve and the profiteering by *galladars* led to a severe shortage of grain in the city. Consequently, we see in 1892-93, the portion of revenue collected in kind increased appreciably.

Prior to the settlement, the cultivators' access to markets was clearly insignificant. All surplus grain was reportedly usurped, and all markets captured between the state and the controllers of grain. The situation did not fundamentally change after the settlement. State control over markets was never completely rolled back. The largest markets for grain were the city of Srinagar and the towns of Baramulla, Sopore and Anantnag, in that order.²¹⁷ The state throughout this period retained a strong interest in the trade in these areas, supplying part or all of the grain required. In fact, with the opening of the co-operative stores, private import of food grains into the city and towns was banned altogether to facilitate the collection of grain by co-operative stores in the countryside.²¹⁸ While larger operators managed to bribe their way through the customs, the measure virtually made it impossible for *zamindars* to access the city markets.

Settlement reports written as late as the 1920s lamented the absence of market places in all but a few *tehsils* and most grain was transported to Srinagar and the towns.²¹⁹ In remote villages, cultivators were forced to sell their produce to traders at lower rates for they lacked the means to transport grain to the markets themselves.²²⁰ However, one fundamental shift that characterized the post-settlement period was the implementation of a cash demand. In later

²¹⁷ This aspect is discussed in many official documents. see especially: *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Muzaffarabad, 1899*; *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Karnah, 1901*; *Assessment Report of the Anantnag Tehsil of the Anantnag District, 1922*

²¹⁸ *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Intl.-I. May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI

²¹⁹ This is a fact discussed in nearly all the settlement reports in the period. see especially: *Assessment Report of the Anantnag Tehsil of the Anantnag District, 1922*; *Assessment Report of the Gurez Illaqa, 1924*; *Assessment Report of the Muzaffarabad Tehsil of the Muzaffarabad District, 1936*

²²⁰ *Assessment Report of the Handwara Tehsil of the Northern Wazarat of the Kashmir Valley, 1922*

years, a member of the state council explained thus the rise of the *waddar/galladar* in the following way,

the altered conditions...brought into existence a limited class of people called *galladars*, who took to trade in *shali* and other food stuffs and the system of *wadh*, or payment in advance for surplus *shali*...and the rate at which the *wad* for *shali* was made began with Re 1/- and rose to Rs.1/8-, and that latter rate remained stationery for a number of years. The *galladars* who brought the *shali* to the town and stored it derived considerable profit from the *wadh* system, and sold *shali* in town at the rate of 2/8/- and rice at Rs. 4 or Rs. 5 and even more in later years.²²¹

To understand the extent of indebtedness of the cultivator is in effect, to appreciate control exercised by *waddars* over grain. The settlement commissioner Talbot noted that 1/3 of all *zamindars* were in debt, whereas his predecessor, Kaye had found them '...practically free of debts...'²²² By 1889, the time the first settlement came up for revision, it was widely believed that the vast majority of cultivators were in debt and the produce of their fields in the 'clutches' of *waddars*.²²³ In 1901, unusually high prices in Anantnag were described by the Settlement Commissioner as, 'difficult to explain unless one assumes that most of the grain has been hypothecated for debt.'²²⁴ Talbot wrote, 'I am assured by a man in the trade that *zamindars* occasionally sell

²²¹ His Highnesses Proclamation Regarding Sale of *Shali* on Prices Fixed Therefore, File No 123 of 1921, OER, JKA

²²² *Assessment Report of Sripratapsinghpura Tehsil of the Northern Wazarat of the Kashmir Valley*, 1920

²²³ *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Intl.-1, May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI

²²⁴ Settlement Operations in Kashmir, 54/S- 1/34 of 1902, Revenue Dept., JKA

their crop five years in advance', the scale of prices being lower for each year.²²⁵

A door-to-door survey conducted under the charge of the Revenue Member of State Council in a hundred 'typical' villages, revealed that 60% of all families were in debt and unable to bring any of their produce to the market.²²⁶ Talbot upheld this statement and believed that this figure could be generalized to the whole valley of Kashmir.²²⁷ Enquiries from the Kulgam *tehsil* broadly confirmed the assessment that 60% of the peasantry was in debt.²²⁸ 3/5 of the cultivators in Sri Pratapsinghpura were believed to be 'affected by *wadh*', and unable to bring their grain to the market.²²⁹ In Handawara 1/3 of the grain was believed to be controlled by the *waddar*. In the Anantnag Tehsil alone, settlement authorities reported 11,55,153 rupees worth of unsecured debt.²³⁰ Unsecured debts in the Muzaffarabad tehsil amounted to Rs. 12,26,219.²³¹ It was admitted, '...without hesitation that most of the *zamindars* are in debt.'²³²

The official narrative as well as policy measures focuses entirely on the 'ring' of *galladars*. It was believed that they supplied all of the demand of the city and towns over and above the state supplies, and also had a strong hold over

²²⁵ *Shali Scheme in Kashmir*, For. and Pol. Dept., Intl.-I, May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI

²²⁶ *Assessment Report of Sripratapsinghpura Tehsil of the Northern Wazarat of the Kashmir Valley*, 1920

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Assessment report of the Kulgam tehsil of the Anantnag District*, 1922

²²⁹ *Assessment Report of Sripratapsinghpura Tehsil of the Northern Wazarat of the Kashmir Valley*, 1920

²³⁰ *Assessment Report of the Anantnag tehsil of the Anantnag District*, 1922

²³¹ *Assessment Report of the Muzaffarabad Tehsil of the Muzaffarabad District*, 1936

²³² *Assessment report of the Anantnag tehsil of the Anantnag District*, 1922

the trade in the rest of the valley.²³³ These powerful operators, however, constituted only the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Policy debates with their bias for 'organized' markets and big firms tend to ignore the domain of smaller operators. While the term *waddar* was correctly used to denote money lending/trading activities, it in fact connoted a bewildering assortment of smaller individuals and transactions. With rapidly growing profit margins, it seems that anyone who had grain to spare and the means to store and transport it, could and did trade in grain.

On one end of the spectrum stood the big *galladars*, controlling large amounts of grain; often making advances in respect of tens of thousands of *kharwars* of *shali* in a single *tehsil* in a single season.²³⁴ In 1902, they were believed to have hoarded 50,000 *kharwars* of *shali* on the *ghats* of Kulgam and Anantnag alone.²³⁵ Their operations often spread over more than one *tehsil*. *Galladars* combined two modes of acquiring grain, as repayment of debts and also made spot purchases of grain. The following is a sample entry from the account books of a *galladar* examined by the Revenue Member:

Table II

Sample Entries in the Account Book of a *Galladar*

Name of tehsil	Purchased on	Purchased on	Total (in

²³³ Memo on Present Crisis in Food Control, File No. 64/ F.C.- 2/1937, General Dept., JKA

²³⁴ Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, August 1903, nos. 94-101, NAI

²³⁵ Ibid.

	payment advance	in ready payment	(<i>kharwars</i>)
Kulgam	15066 Kh	7533 Kh	22600
Anantnag	18266 Kh	9133 Kh	27400

Source: *Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, Foreign Department, External A, August 1903, nos. 94-101, NAI*

In addition to the big players, money was also lent on *wadh* by an interesting assortment of people. *Gallabans*, people who reared and traded in pack animals (known to the colonial state as 'pony-men'), also made advances to cultivators. They transported grain to the city on ponies. *Hanjis*, or 'boatmen' also advanced cash on *wadh*. They would transport and store grain on their boats, the grain being usually sold at *ghats*.²³⁶ *Hanjis* were known to keep account books as well. The scale of their operations was modest but significant; some boats could handle between 200-400 *maunds* at a time.²³⁷ For both *Hanjis* and *Gallabans* the enterprise of trading in grain was bolstered no doubt by their access to means of transport. Even after the construction of cart roads connecting Kashmir with the Punjab, waterways and caravans of pack animals continued to be important for the intra-province movement of goods. Petty officials of the state were known to lend money to cultivators in and

²³⁶ *Assessment Report of the Handawara Tehsil of the northern Wazarat of the Kashmir Valley, 1922*

²³⁷ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p 340

around the city and towns.²³⁸ There are also a few scattered references to some 'well to do' *zamindars* trading in grain as well as advancing money to their poorer counterparts.²³⁹

*Khatri*s and *Khojas*, Hindu and Muslim trading communities from Punjab, had for long operated in Kashmir. They traveled extensively throughout the countryside bartering grain for *ghee*, blankets etc. Some would themselves retail the grain thus acquired while others would further sell it to bigger merchants.²⁴⁰ In the Sri Pratapsinghpura tehsil, *Khojas* were known to advance money on the *wadh* system with very high interest rates.²⁴¹ For the most part *Khojas* were referred to as 'petty traders' but for some, the settlement officer had the following to say,

many *Khojas* started their trade 20 years ago with a capital of 100-200 rupees only and amassed wealth amounting to 10,000-80,000 rupees, after defraying the expenses of decent living.²⁴²

An intriguing example of the diversity encapsulated by the term *waddar* was found in the tehsil of Karnah. Villagers were required by a decree of the Darbar to supply the soldiers with grain at the state rates, i.e. Rs. 1-14. The *sipahis* often did not consume the entire amount of grain thus procured. Instead they sold it back to villagers made grain advances to cultivators on interest. The settlement officer wrote, 'the fort *sipahis* are the *banias* of the *tehsil* and the people are generally in debt to them...many of the *sipahis* are worth

²³⁸ *Assessment Report of the Mir Bahri of the Dal lake Villages with Notes*, 1898

²³⁹ *Assessment Report of the Anantnag Tehsil of the Anantnag District*, 1992

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Assessment Report of Sripratapsinghpura Tehsil of the Northern Wazarat of the Kashmir Valley*, 1920

²⁴² *Ibid.*

Rs.500 or 600.²⁴³ Presumably these small fortunes were accumulated through *wadh*.

The widespread indebtedness of cultivators had adverse consequences for the state treasury. The revision of settlements was an occasion for the demand to be revised, and usually increased. The method of calculating gross produce of each cultivators was to multiply the total estimated yield of their field by the lowest prices obtainable by them for the their produce. The figure thus arrived at was taken as the basis of calculating revenue demand; usually 25-30% of this was claimed at the first settlement as the state's share. Interestingly, both Lawrence and Wingate stated that 'market prices' did not exist in Kashmir.²⁴⁴ While this is not to be taken to mean that there was no exchange in Kashmir, it certainly suggests that there was no formal market places where transactions took place and where prices could be daily recorded and entered into state records. The prices fixed by Lawrence at first settlement were, admittedly, just a close approximation of what was believed to be the going price for *shali*. In later years, it was widely believed that exchange of grain other than the advance sale of grain by *wadh* was insignificant.

The question of what to assume as prices for the calculation of revenue demand was a conundrum for settlement authorities. Ultimately the calculations were based on a figure only marginally higher than the *wadh*

²⁴³ *Assessment Report and Report on Assessments of Land Revenue, Tehsil Uri, District Muzaffarabad, 1898.*

²⁴⁴ Lawrence, *Valley of Kashmir*, p 215

rates, for it could not be denied that most cultivators disposed off their grain at *wadh* rates.²⁴⁵ This caused a loss to the state, as acknowledged by settlement officials, 'had it not been for such ruinous indebtedness...the enhancement on revenue demand could have been more full.'²⁴⁶ The officials got down to a particularly sharp castigation of the activities of the *waddars* when they were understood to interfere with a cultivator's capacity to pay revenue. It is a matter of fact that the policy of the settlement, of gradually increasing the comparatively low revenue demand first fixed was defeated by *waddars*. While enhancements in revenue demand were indeed taken, they were not as high as the state might have liked.²⁴⁷

While the prices of agricultural produce rose steeply in this period, cultivators did not benefit much for most of them continued to surrender grain at *wadh* rates. However, what took the state by surprise were not the rising fortunes of the usurers, for as noted above the '*buniya*' was expected to supply the cultivators with cash. Probably, they were surprised by the extent of control usurers came to exercise over grain and the way in which it militated against the interests of the state. As the above discussion suggests, the importance of capital as a source of control over grain in particular increased in this period. The reasons are to be found in the response to the introduction of a cash demand in an economy subject to state control and marked by the absence of a 'free' market.

²⁴⁵ *Assessment Report of Sripratapsinghpura Tehsil of the Northern Wazarat of the Kashmir Valley, 1920*

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Official Power

'Wazir tsalih, Kashir bali'

When the Wazir goes, Kashmir will Heal –Kashmiri proverb

-Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*

In this section the attempt is to understand the mode of control predicated on access to offices of the state, especially in the administration of land revenue. In pre-colonial Kashmir, the officials of the state appear to have been the pre-eminent controllers of grain. Indeed, access to offices of the state was arguably the most important source of power and prestige in the Kashmir valley.²⁴⁸ Lawrence wrote about the bureaucracy, 'it was a powerful ring of iron, inside which the village taxpayer lay fascinated, and if he were wise, silent.'²⁴⁹ These officials were seen as a parasitic class of intermediaries, 'systematically defrauding' both the cultivators and the state.²⁵⁰ They were often accused of acquiring grain by 'illegal' means and 'speculating' in it. The reigning in of official power was thus fundamental to the settlement envisioned by Lawrence.

Before we proceed, a word of caution is in order. The truly heartrending accounts of the famine by missionaries and officials of the Government of

²⁴⁸ Chitrallekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir*, New Delhi, 2004

²⁴⁹ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp 404

²⁵⁰ Notes Mr. Henvey on the Famine in Kashmir, For. Dept., Sec. E, March 1883, Nos. 83-85, NAI

India were written at a time when an intervention was being contemplated in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. The only ground on which the colonial state could 'legitimately' intervene was to prevent or stop maladministration by the princely ruler.²⁵¹ The suffering of the Kashmiris at the hands of the Darbar and its officials was painstakingly catalogued. For the merits of colonial governance to emerge in sharp contrast to native governance, the rapacity and incapacity of the latter had to be accentuated. That is why one must be wary of taking literally the proclamations of Henvey for example. There is no reason to suppose that the people of Kashmir did not have strategies of survival

The power of revenue officials was predicated on the discretion they had over matters that directly impinged on the welfare of cultivators. The revenue demand of a village was fixed by the *tehsildar* and its division over individual holdings was left to the *lambardar* or village headman. It was up to them to decide what proportion of revenue was to be collected in '*kimti*' crops such as cotton and pulse and what proportion in low prices food staples.²⁵² *Lambardars* were charged with the responsibility of arranging *begaaris* from their villages and this formed a 'steady source of peculation' for cultivators were willing to pay bribes to be exempted from *begaar*.²⁵³ Officials often claimed free provisions from cultivators. Lawrence notes, '...whatever the

²⁵¹ See chapter one.

²⁵² Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p 410

²⁵³ *Ibid.* p 411

Tehsildar wants, food, horses, ponies, cattle, or clothes, he can get them for free.²⁵⁴

The limits of official power had never been systematically laid down; there was no clear definition of who was an official of the state and who was not. Anyone who had influence over a village could claim the post of *lamabardar*, and abrogate to himself the right to collect revenue on behalf of the state.²⁵⁵ It was fairly common for the *tehsildar* to have 'assistants' who were not recognized by the state, but 'lived entirely off the villagers'.²⁵⁶ An exasperated Lawrence complained bitterly of the, 'numbers of *superfluous* officials who hovered around the carcass of the revenue...'²⁵⁷ One village, reportedly had a five tehsildar with, all brothers, while the state recognized only *one*.²⁵⁸ The tehsil of Lal Phak had 60 *patwaris*, each in charge of one *patwari* circle though 'no-one was quite clear what exactly their circle was'.²⁵⁹

There was no regular system of accounts in use and any amount of embezzlement could be covered up or simply entered as arrears against cultivators. No receipts were ever given to cultivators in respect of payment of revenue.²⁶⁰ Under pre-colonial arrangements, there were no accounts and the officials were required only to supply a 'zabani jama-o-kharch' or an oral

²⁵⁴ Correspondence. Lawrence to Colonel Nisbet, Resident in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Extl. A, May 1890, Nos. 34-37, NAI

²⁵⁵ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p 230

²⁵⁶ Ibid. pp. 7

²⁵⁷ Ibid. pp. 7, Emphasis added

²⁵⁸ Correspondence. Lawrence to Colonel Nisbet, Resident in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Extl. A, May 1890, Nos. 34-37, NAI

²⁵⁹ *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Lal Phak*, 1890

²⁶⁰ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 401

report of what was collected and what was spent.²⁶¹ The village accountant, or patwari was believed to keep

three editions of this statement of holding, one for himself, which maybe supposed to near the truth, one for the tehsildar, and another for the villagers, the two latter being prepared with a view to convincing each side of the excellent bargain he has secured.²⁶²

Grain could be reportedly embezzled from state reserves without much difficulty, and tracks were easy to cover in the confusing accounts. It was not uncommon for the state to possess a handsome reserve of grain on paper, while the granaries were 'practically empty'.²⁶³ A committee constituted to supervise relief during the famine of 1877 noted, 'official returns of food stocks were false; and that in reality the granaries contained supplies which were kept back by officials for ulterior objects. The belief was justified by later events...'.²⁶⁴ Under mounting 'pressure from English members' of the committee, 'the governor of Srinagar, Dewan Badrinath, produced some 20,000 kharwars of rice, which he said he had hoarded reportedly under the heading of seed.' This 'impudent fraud' went unpunished, igniting suspicions of the complicity of other high officials and even the Maharaja himself.²⁶⁵

From a financial point of view, the revenue administration in general and *mujawaza* in particular, nearly pushed the Kashmir treasury to a state of

²⁶¹ Jia Lal Kilam Jalali. *The Economy of Food Grains in Kashmir*, Srinagar, 1922

²⁶² Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*. p. 400

²⁶³ Ibid. pp 221; Collection of Mujawaza in Kashmir, Arrangements for the Supply of *Shali* to the Residents of Srinagar. File No.17 of 1891.OER. JKA

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Note by Mr. R Lawrence on the Mujawaza of the year 1892 and the Supply of Grain to the Poorer Inhabitants of Srinagar. For. Dept., Extl. A, November 1892. Nos. 157-158, NAI

insolvency. With cash revenues from the shawl industry and taxes on the city having all but dried up, the financial basis of the state was precarious indeed. In this situation, the state's interests lay in cash revenues and not *mujawaza*. The persistence of these policies in spite of this points to a strong interest, other than that of the state as a consolidated governing body, in their continuation, pre-eminently by revenue officials. Henvey documented in great detail the, 'many ways in which the grain monopoly is turned to private advantage...'²⁶⁶An elaborate example of the average fraud is reproduced below

an official charged with collection of grain was ordered to collect a certain amount of grain and send it to Sopore where his son was the *zaildar*. The *zaildar* would deposit the money value in rupees in the treasury at Rs.3 for example, and send the grain back to his father. They would then sell the grain at thrice the rate his son paid for it. The treasury would show no signs of embezzlement and there would be no witness to it except the depopulation of Sopore...²⁶⁷

The missing grain, in the absence of supervision or audit, would not be noticed for sometime. When it was noticed, officials could simply claim that the estimated had been exaggerated to being with, or that cultivators had defaulted on payments.²⁶⁸

As keen as Lawrence and the Residency establishment were to undercut the power of officials there were many problems. The Resident wrote to his superiors that Lawrence's interventions were compromised by the fact that he

²⁶⁶ Notes by Mr. Henvey on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec E, March 1883, Nos. 83-85

²⁶⁷ Mr. Henvey's Revised Note on Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec E, March 1883, Nos. 86

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

was, 'a British official whose services have been temporarily lent to the state, and whose instructions are in practice disregarded by the district officials, in whose eyes they possess no weight.'²⁶⁹ The native officials had an edged 'in...their local knowledge and their intimate acquaintances with the conditions of the city...their fellow subjects and the state'²⁷⁰ Lawrence reported several occasions where officials had used their influence to disrupt the work of settlement. For example, the *lambardars* of the Kargil district 'agitated' against the settlement, for among other things, it required them to pay full revenue on lands they had hitherto held revenue free.²⁷¹ Cultivators attending Lawrence's village meetings were reportedly threatened that, 'the settlement officer will be gone in a year or so, and then you will see who is *Hakim*.'²⁷² Evident in these threats was the confidence that comes from a bureaucracy aware of its own sense of permanence. Yet the implementation of the settlement had to rely on these very people. Lawrence wrote:

In a poor country like Kashmir the administration must be carried on through an indigenous agency. The Kashmir state cannot afford a full staff of Punjabi officials, and in any case *it would be undesirable and most unpopular to turn the Pandits adrift*.²⁷³

And so it came to be that with the exception of Lawrence and a hand full of Punjabi surveyors, the majority of officials, 'on whom the revenue administration chiefly depends...(were) all men of the old officialdom of

²⁶⁹ Kashmir Affairs, For. Dept., Sec. E, June 1892, 36-46, NAI

²⁷⁰ Kashmir Affairs, For. Dept., Extl. A, October 1892, 149-160, NAI

²⁷¹ Agitation by *Lambardars* of Kargil Against New Jama, 38/S-1/68 of 1902, Revenue Department, JKA

²⁷² *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Lal Phak*, 1890

²⁷³ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p 434. Emphasis added

Kashmir.²⁷⁴ Knowing full that he could not count on the good will of the official classes, he was particularly keen on 'rationalizing' the bureaucracy. However, the need for them to be 'trained, supervised and strictly disciplined' was strongly emphasized by Lawrence.²⁷⁵

The clear delineation of bureaucratic roles and the establishment of clear chains of command were crucial. The boundaries of access to official power were tightened in the process of sifting from this horde the 'legitimate' employee of the state. A 'proper' system of accounts was put in place with the intention of having reliable records and thereby imposing a measure of accountability and culpability.²⁷⁶

Certain adjustments made by the Settlement in the revenue and immediately dented the exercise of official power in private interest. To begin with, the land held by *lambardars*, *patwaris*, *tehsildars* etc were no longer held revenue free, but had to pay revenue at the same rates as the rest of their village.²⁷⁷ The distribution of demand over individual holdings was done by the Settlement Department at the time of settlement itself and was no longer up to the local officials.²⁷⁸ The proportion to be collected in cash and kind was also fixed at settlement.²⁷⁹ Cultivators were entitled to receipts for any payments made. The setting up of revenue courts meant that unlike before,

²⁷⁴ Ibid. p 7

²⁷⁵ Correspondence, Lawrence to Colonel Nisbet, Resident in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Extl. A, May 1890, Nos. 34-37, NAI

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Kashmir Affairs, For. Dept, Sec. E, August 1889, Nos. 162-203, NAI

²⁷⁸ *Assessment Report of the Baramulla Tehsil*, 1891

²⁷⁹ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.203

disputes were to be settled by revenue courts and not the very official whose decision was being disputed.²⁸⁰ Illegal exactions of grain by officials continued, but perhaps less than before.

The above discussion suggests that revenue officials were the primary controllers of grain prior to the settlement. In the crisis of 1892, however, it was *galladars* who were held responsible for 'profiteering' and not the official classes. How are we to understand this change? Was it just that the colonial state found a new whipping boy? Or was this change in emphasis the result of an actual change in the dynamics of control?

As for all categories, that of the official is also not a homogenous one. The petty officials such as the watchmen, those who weighed the grain etc; while they did wield what little power they had to private advantage and to the detriment of cultivators, they could never hope to have as much influence as a *lambaradar* or a *tehsildar*. For instance, Lawrence wrote to the resident complaining that next to officials corruption, the administration was characterized by a 'lack of dignity attending office' and that villagers 'show but little respect to minor officials.'²⁸¹ As argued previously, the locations of individuals placed differently within a category would influence how they negotiated with changed circumstances.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Correspondence, Lawrence to Colonel Nisbet, Resident in Kashmir, For. and Pol. Dept., Extl. A, May 1890, Nos. 296, NAI

Some won, some lost. A particular section of the official classes were the recipients of land grants that significantly enhanced their power and prestige and allowed them to control vast areas of land and thereby large quantities of grain. In this endeavor they were heartily backed by the Darbar.²⁸² Despite their best efforts the British had on their hands an official class, which was only nominally and not effectively at their command. This class continued to offer myriad forms of resistance to the policy moves of the colonial state if the former judged it to be in their own interests to do so. As a group, the upper ranks of officials emerged stronger with more basis for their power.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, in their operational form, the modes of control discussed above saw a significant overlap. State officials were often powerful landholders at the helm of estates producing considerable amounts of grain. Often, the landholders were also moneylender as well as grain dealers. The terms *waddar* and *galladars* were used almost interchangeably in official records. For example, scarcity was blamed on 'grain dealers, who gave advances to cultivators'²⁸³ Further, it was found that there existed 'a class of people called *galladars*, who took to *trade in food stuffs and the system of wad*'²⁸⁴ Cultivators would 'sell their crops in advance to big landholders', indicating

²⁸² See chapter three

²⁸³ Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, For. Dept., Extl. A, August 1903, nos. 94-101

²⁸⁴ Ibid. Emphasis added

payment in respect of a loan.²⁸⁵ Village headmen were often grain dealers themselves.²⁸⁶ A note by a visiting British official stated rather succinctly:

Waddar in majority of cases is nobody else but the *zaildar*, or a rich landholder of the village itself...he is the person who chiefly corners the grain. He is the person who to a greater extent is a contributory cause to maintain the abnormal rise in prices of *shali*...it is the *zaildar*, *numberdar* and the big landholder who should be handled to improve the situation.

A particularly long and revealing petition from the residents of Srinagar alleged that those charged with checking the rise of prices, were themselves people who benefited from it. Named in the petition were members of the state council, and revenue officials of various ranks who were also big landholders. Many *galladars* were also named. The petition stated:

In Anantnag²⁸⁷...there are many so great wealthy *galladars* who have got lacks of *kharwars* of *shali* and also in Islamabad there are some *galladars* who together never care anyone's orders whoever he may be because the mentioned *jagirdars* members (officials) back up them...the said *jagirdars* have lacks of *kharwars* in stores... they have...*shali* bought at the rate of Rs 1/8- and so if they would sell the same at even treble rates they had no loss at all, But alas! The public is staring at the same *kharwar* of *shali* sold at the rate of 20 rupees now since yesterday... we have hope that you will pass orders...to collect and supply the *shali* to the public. By doing so lack of *kharwars* of *shali* could be collected... if

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Pre-eminent *shali* producing Tehsil of the Valley, 60% of the cultivated area was under *shali*. See: *Assessment Report of the Anantnag Tehsil of the Anantnag District, 1922*

arrangements are not made we have no hope for our lives...starve to death.²⁸⁸

Further, the petition named several high-ranking officials including Diwan Bhishan Das the Chief Member of the State council, Ruga Nath Singh the Superintendent of the State Stables and three *zaildars* as well. The petition clearly alleges some form of complicity on the part of 'authorized members' or officials of the state who were also land controllers:

that some members of Kashmir who could very easily stop that famine as they were authorized members, are themselves *jagirdars*...*they are more afraid than ordinary chakdars that the rates may go down*...²⁸⁹

A petition from the resident of a Sopore similarly, complained that named *chakdars* had hoarded grain were selling it at 'inflated' rates. Petitions from residents of Baramulla, Muzaffarabad and Kulgam also made similar allegations.²⁹⁰

The attempts by the state to reserve control over grain to itself, or to at least regulate the manner in which controllers sold their grain met opposition from many of them. Such measures were

mercilessly countered by the Darbar many members of which were not at all dismayed at the prospect of enhanced returns from their *jagirs* and *chaks* arising from high prices of grain...the opportunities for making money in grain, at the expense of the urban population have not been overlooked by landowners, *chakdars*, *lambardars* and I suspect

²⁸⁸ His Highnesses Proclamation Regarding Sale of *Shali* on Prices Fixed Therefore, File No. 123 of 1921, OER, JKA

²⁸⁹ Correspondence Regarding *Shali* Arrangements in Kashmir, File No. 28/F-138 of 1918, OER, JKA

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

also by sub-ordinate officials, I need not say more.²⁹¹

In addition to retailing grain in the city, towns and countryside in Kashmir, grain controllers found a profitable outlet for their grain in the 'illegal' but lucrative export trade. Grain had been exported from Kashmir to Punjab at least since the years of the *Sher Singhi* famine.²⁹² With the opening of the Jhelum valley road, which could support wheeled traffic for most of the year, the cost of transporting bulky commodities such as grain came down significantly.²⁹³ The prices of food grain in Punjab being significantly higher, the profit margin on grain collected at *wadh* rates was significant.²⁹⁴ Given the ban on export trade, and the scale of its operation, it was no surprise that it was by far the monopoly of big players who operated on a large scale and had friends in high places. It was generally believed that,

the wealthy financiers of Maharaj Gunj having business connections in Punjab and ostensibly no concerns with the grain trade financed the grain dealers and exporters and indirectly or surreptitiously shared the profit from their transactions...²⁹⁵

The need for grains in frontier districts was met primarily through the collection of revenue in kind. Over and above this, cultivators were compelled to sell grain to the state. Despite this, large quantities of grain had to be sent up from the Kashmir valley, for the purpose of feeding the Gilgit garrison and

²⁹¹ Note of Honorable Mr. Townsend on the Economic Situation in Kashmir, File no, 3/*Shali*-6 of 1919, OER, JKA

²⁹² Mr. Henvey's Revised Note on the Famine in Kashmir, For. and Pol., Sec E, March 1883, Nos. 86, NAI

²⁹³ Revised Settlement Operations in Kashmir, For. Dept., August 1902, Nos. 91-92, NAI

²⁹⁴ Prohibition on the Export of Wheat Maize Barley and Pulses from the Kashmir Valley, File No. 36/F-177 of 1918, OER, JKA

²⁹⁵ Notes and Miscellaneous Papers on *Shali* Scheme on Kashmir, File No. 153 of 1921, NAI

the travelers on the Treaty Road.²⁹⁶ The state reserve was called upon to supply grain from its *mujawaza* collections in the Valley. In addition to the above, the Commissariat Department would float tenders, inviting private parties to supply grain. In 1903 tenders were invited for 40,000 *maunds* of *shali* and about 10,000 *maunds* of 'other food grains' and tenders were allowed for *at least* 4000 *maunds*. The only people who could supply this grain were large grain controllers of various descriptions; for only they would possess such large quantities of readily disposable grain.²⁹⁷

...

The story of the negotiations of a native elite with colonialism is often told as a linear story of the rise and fall of one group or the other. Rise and fall stories are deeply problematic on several counts. One obvious problem is the lack of a detailed explanation of social classes, which is crucial for the groups designated by these terms were not homogenous. For all the descriptive and analytical value these categories have, they need to be nuanced. The coherence of a category does not mean the homogeneity of those that it describes and attempts to understand. Even as we speak of changing *modes* of control, differently placed individuals within larger controlling groups responded differently to changed circumstances. Some found themselves set aside, while others negotiated more successfully with colonial/Dogra authority and the state machinery through which it was exercised.

²⁹⁶ Fixation of the Rates of Grain Supplied to the Commissariat Dept. in Gilgit District, File no. 66 of 1893, OER, JKA

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

There were on the one hand big officials who embezzled tens of thousands of *kharwars* of *shali* from the state granaries on the other hand there were the petty officials who wrenched a few extra *kharwars* of *shali* from poor cultivators.²⁹⁸ While the many of the petty officials lost their jobs and thus most of their power over cultivator, the more important officials continued to wield authority over the *zamindars*. Many of them would have seen an enhancement in their power and prestige with *chaks* being granted to them.

There were *jagirdars* such as the heirs of Dewan Jwala Sahai, who had possessions in nearly every tahsil in the valley and then there were 'poor' *jagirdars* whose grants were much smaller.²⁹⁹ Many smaller land controllers suffered losses in income and prestige, whereas bigger players were able to negotiate better terms. Many wrested from the state the right of collect revenue in kind, and in any case nearly all land controllers collected grain revenue whether or not the state recognized their right to do so. The Dewans were able to secure proprietary control over their vast holdings when the state would not admit of the proprietary right vesting in any one but itself. Similarly, for every *waddar/galladar* who manage to amass a massive fortune, there were numerous *khojas, khattris, hanjis* and *gallabans* operating on a smaller scale with far less capital.

The temptation to find a native elite disciplined and downsized by colonial might is a strong one indeed, for it is simple and compatible with the

²⁹⁹ Statements Received by the Glancy Commission on Behalf of the *Jagirdars*, File No. 18/31 of 1931, Pol. Dept., JKA

ideological proclivities of nationalist historiography; and that is perhaps the reason it must be resisted. In my work I find for example that the power of the upper echelons of land controllers and state officials just did not undergo any wholesale reduction or transformation. Similarly, while the moneylender's fortunes grew manifold with the imposition of a cash demand on cultivators, he had not been created by the settlement. Controllers of grain saw as much continuity and even enhancement in their positions, influence and power relative to the state and the cultivators. Often where something was lost, it was also compensated for; *jagirdars* who were not allowed to collect revenue grain often had their grants extended to make up for the loss. State officials, for whom embezzlement of state grain became more difficult, came to acquire large grants in land and then speculated in the produce of those lands.

The developments above discussed had clearer consequences for the *zamindars* of the valley. In the 1880s and before, roughly prior to the settlement, Kashmir was characterized by an abundance of cultivable land and a sparse population. Vast expanses of land were not tightly controlled by the state and a mobile peasantry took refuge in these uncultivated tracts, usually forests and mountainsides. The pre-colonial mode of controlling labor was obviously proving to be unsuccessful, what with shrinking cultivated area and a dwindling land revenue. The challenge before the settlement in particular and the colonial intervention in general was then, essentially to establish a more effective control over labor as well as other factors of

production, and thereby ensure the exercise of a more effective social control by the state in a sensitive frontier territory.

The forest department came to control vast areas of land. The 'forests and mountainsides'³⁰⁰ were declared the absolute property of the state, and cultivators of lands that came to be demarcated as forests were expropriated. The grant of large areas of cultivable lands to *chakdars* and the clear preference shown to them over cultivators led to the concentration of arable land in fewer hands. These developments placed definite limits on the extension of cultivation. This coupled with an increasing population resulted in significantly altered relations surrounding land, with a more ample labor force and less land available for cultivation. Similarly, we have seen in this chapter how the altered circumstances led to a more intensified control over *zamindars* by the *waddars* as a function of their control over capital. The cumulative effect of these developments was that the working population of Kashmir was subjected to a more rigorous control by the state as well as by private interests.

³⁰⁰ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p 23

Chapter Three

The Consequences of Control

For the purpose of this chapter I use the term control to indicate not just the state control over grain, but to the broad attempt of the colonial state as well as the Darbar, to establish control over the landscape and people of Kashmir. In the following pages I examine the means of controlling land and labor. I discuss the settlements of land and forest revenue and the grants of *chaks* as representing an intensification of control over land and enabling as a consequence, intensification of control over labor as well. These processes are understood as interacting with state control over grain and markets and the possibilities of mapping these consequences are opened up.

The first chapter outlined the broad contours of the colonial critique of state control over grain, as well as the changes it underwent as a result of pressures and exigencies of various kinds. The second chapter attempted to map the ways in which different modes of control and controllers of grain jostled with the colonial agenda and the re-figurations that they underwent in response to it. In this chapter I propose to trace the consequences of these processes. The probable implications of control for the production and circulation of grain are discussed at some length. At another level the chapter also grappled with

questions of control over land and labor and the changing approaches towards them.

The agricultural economy of Kashmir was, under the technological conditions of the time, a mono-crop economy. At the first settlement, *shali* was the most important crop in that it occupied the largest cultivated area. It was the food grain of choice for most inhabitants of the Kashmir valley. Lawrence went to the extent of suggesting that all lands worth cultivating were devoted to *shali* cultivation.³⁰¹ In *The Valley of Kashmir* he described in great detail the painstaking efforts that cultivators would devote to their rice fields, allegedly neglecting all other crops. The reasons for this were not far to seek; the climate of Kashmir was best suited to wet rice cultivation and rice had the highest yield per acre of any crop, even on poorer lands.³⁰² These facts are also supported by evidence from several settlement reports written in the decades that followed.

In the drier or *kandi* areas, inhabited mostly by the pastoralist community of the Gujjars, the preferred crop was maize. The Gujjars consumed the grain and the stalks were used as fodder.³⁰³ The cultivation of 'coarser' grains was limited; barley for the most part was harvested while still green and used for fodder. Wheat was cultivated to a small extent.³⁰⁴ In the frontier area, china,

³⁰¹ Walter R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp 14

³⁰² J.L.K. Jalali, *The Economy of Food Grain in Kashmir*. pp24

³⁰³ *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Muzaffarabad of the Muzaffarabad District*, 1936,

³⁰⁴ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp 14

grain and amaranth were produced to some extent. Pulses, cotton and oilseeds occupied a negligible area in most tehsils. Tobacco was grown in some areas, and the entire crop was locally consumed. A wide variety of vegetables was cultivated on lands in an around the city and on small garden plots in the villages. Clearly, *shali* and maize were the most important crops, in that order.³⁰⁵

The first section of this chapter examines the repercussions of this regime for the production of food grains, arguing that the demands placed on cultivators of food grains in general and *shali* in particular contributed to a contraction of land under food grains. The second section builds on a point I made in the concluding section of the second chapter. Having previously argued that re-figurations in the control over land and capital facilitated the centralization of control over grain, in this section I discuss the implications for its circulation. In the last section the evolution of the regime of control over labor and land is traced, and correspondingly shifting priorities of the state with respect to both are examined.

Control and Production

I now discuss some of the possible ways in which the policies of control may have reacted on the production of food grains. On the one hand, I make an attempt to understand the ways in which control might have affected the

cultivators' production decisions. Reconstructed on the basis of limited evidence, this would yet allow a tentative investigation of the concerns and motivations of the cultivators themselves. On the other hand, I examine the impact of land use policies of the Raj and Darbar on land availability and therefore cultivation. The state maintained that the shortage of food grains was not on account of a deficiency in production, instead attributing it entirely to the devious manipulations of grain controllers.

Prior to the settlement, *mujawaza* was collected in all agricultural commodities. The commutation rates for crops '*kimti*' or valuable crops such as cotton, pulses and oilseeds were twice as much as their market price.³⁰⁶ The commutation rates for food grains were only about half the prevailing market rates. The high rates for *kimti* crops were presumably to encourage their cultivation. These crops however occupied a minuscule portion of the cropped area in the valley and were grown mostly for local consumption.³⁰⁷ Given the strong state control over grain, it maybe possible that cultivating food grain was the only way that cultivators could ensure grain supplies for their families.

In these high rates, cultivators found a way of compensating the loss for the large amounts of grain taken from them at un-remunerative rates. They

³⁰⁶ The Economy of Food Grain in Kashmir, pp 42

³⁰⁷ Based on reading of assessment reports, See: *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Muzaffarabad, 1899*; *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Karnah, 1901*; *Assessment Report of the Anantnag Tehsil of the Anantnag District, 1922*

would buy cotton, pulses and oilseeds from merchants and bribe officials into accepting these in payments of the mujawaza demanded of them.³⁰⁸ The Lal Phak tehsil, one of the largest tehsils in the valley and the first to be assessed, paid most of its revenue in cotton and oilseed whereas the tehsil produced predominantly rice and maize and small quantities of wheat.³⁰⁹ This is one of the ways that we know of in which cultivators subverted the revenue regime. Lawrence, judging this as contrary to the interests of the state, proposed a change:

in the present system of collection which even if the existing revenue demand remains as present, will in some villages make that demand considerably heavier than it has been hitherto.³¹⁰

The remedy suggested was the discontinuation of the collection of the *kimti* crops as mujawaza. The value of grain being calculated at low prices resulted, in many cases, in an, 'increase of 40% on the revenue paid by the cultivators'.³¹¹ No longer able to buy the opportunity to pay in *kimti* crops, cultivators would have been hard pressed.

The commutation rate for *shali* was raised only marginally, from just over a rupee to two rupees per kharwar of *shali*. Land revenue was to be paid one-third in kind and two-thirds in cash. Lawrence retained these low rates apprehending that a higher commutation right might have encouraged

³⁰⁸ *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Lal Phak, 1890*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ *Collection of Mujawaza in Kashmir, Arrangements for the Supply of Shali to the Residents of Srinagar, File No.17 of 1891, NAI*

³¹¹ *Measures Adopted by the Kashmir Darbar for Affording Relief to the Poorer Classes in Srinagar. Foreign Department, Internal A, March 1905, Nos.110-113, NAI*

payments in kind.³¹² The critique of control was still razor sharp at this point. The effort therefore was to move towards collecting revenue entirely in cash. The collection of *mujawaza* was to be temporary and limited to a third of the total revenue demanded. The apparent quantitative decrease of state control did not mean a qualitative decrease. As discussed in the first chapter, the acquisition of grain from cultivators continued and was often in excess of the legally mandated 1/3. Over and above this, cultivators were bound to deliver food grains under a variety of *shali* schemes. In the war years, when the scarcity of grain was arguably at its worst, cultivators were required to proactively declare their stocks of grain and surrender to the state 'all grain in excess of their own requirements for a year'.³¹³ Depending on the perceived requirements in a particular year, the state demand for grain would vary, maintaining an element of the uncertainty of revenue demand that cultivators had complained so bitterly about to Lawrence.³¹⁴

The cultivators also had to deal with control exercised by forces other than the state. The imposition of the cash demand made them more vulnerable to the perils of *wadh* for the 'open market' in grain remained as elusive after the British intervention as it had been before. They would have to part with a substantial portion of their harvest in repayment of loans incurred to pay the cash revenue. This disabled them from controlling most of the grain that

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, Foreign and Political Department, Internal-I, May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI

³¹⁴ They complained that the state had never been '*ek lafz*' or 'one word' with them. See Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p 25

remained in their possession after state dues were collected. Land controllers continued to collect at least a portion of their revenue in kind, whether with the sanction of the state or in spite of it.³¹⁵ The control that officials exercised over grain continued to bear on cultivators. Jia Lal Kilam Jalali, a former revenue member of the State Council, writing in the years of the First World War, recalled that villagers compelled to pay in '*shali* and maize... suffered for it would leave them little or even nothing to live upon'³¹⁶

My sources, unfortunately, do not permit a quantitative comparison of the relative amounts of grain that were taken from cultivators before and after the colonial intervention respectively. However, the above discussion can still prove instructive in some ways. One, that cultivators were divested of a large part of their grain. Two, the change introduced by Lawrence effectively meant that only lands growing *shali* or maize were subject to demands for *mujawaza*. Moreover, since these were the two food grains stocked and sold by the state granaries, the control of the state over the markets for these crops was the strongest. As discussed in chapter one, the war years saw a tightening of state control over markets.³¹⁷ The cumulative effect was that cultivators reaped no benefit from the high price prevailing, for they were compelled to supply grain to the state and for a lack of access to markets, to the *waddar* as well.

³¹⁵ See chapter two

³¹⁶ J.L.K. Jalali. *The Economy of Food Grains in Kashmir*, p. 42

³¹⁷ See chapter two

On the contrary, lands growing crops other than *shali* and maize were not subject to demands in kind. The market for these crops was not controlled by the state. Though this does not necessarily mean that cultivators growing crops other than *shali* and maize were free from other forms of control, it certainly suggests the possibility that they were in this respect relatively better off. They were spared the dreaded mujawaza and were less likely to incur debts. Relatively speaking, *shali* and maize invited more demands from the state and from other controlling groups. On the whole, there were strong disincentives attached to the cultivation of *shali* and maize, the most consumed food crops.

The revenue member of State Council wrote a note in 1903, at the instance of the Council perturbed by the crisis of 1901. Enquiring into the reasons for scarcity, the note predictably found the waddars guilty of hoarding grain. On the question of production, he concluded that while there was no, 'appreciable surplus', there was enough grain to 'make both ends meet.'³¹⁸ This was a position frequently articulated by colonial as well as darbari officials when confronted with the question of production. The arguments selected to prove the sufficiency of production made simplistic and often patronizing assumptions. A note on the subject had the following to say:

people may not have been able to afford the three or four meals a day to which they are accustomed, but there were no reports of people

³¹⁸ Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, Foreign Department, Extl. A, August 1903, Nos. 94-101, NAI

dying from want or scarcity of grain...therefore it can easily be assumed that the production is enough for at least consumption.³¹⁹

Evidently, the colonial state's idea of how much people should eat was very different from that of the people themselves. The monthly allowance per head by the state granaries had been reduced from 8 *traks*, to 4 *traks*, and by 1917 had been reduced further to 3 *traks*.³²⁰ Relying on the 'food pinching habits of the zamindars', the state was wont to claim that 'enough' grain was being produced.³²¹ This was a dubious claim. Fragmented evidence is available that the area under oilseeds and orchards increased as the expense of the area under food grains.

In the note discussed above, the revenue member supplied an interesting bit of information to which he paid little attention. The area under food crops in general and *shali* in particular in the year 1903, had registered a sharp fall when compared with the corresponding figures for 1899. The area under *shali* decreased by over 4%.³²² The total area under food crops had fallen by over 6%.³²³ Simultaneously, an increase was reported in the area under linseed, for

³¹⁹ Notes and Miscellaneous Papers on *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, File no 153/ of 1921, OER, JKA

³²⁰ Papers Relating to *Shali* Arrangements in Srinagar, File no. 216/24-7 of 1927, General Department, JKA

³²¹ Frequently claimed in many documents on the subject. See: Collection of *Mujawaza* in Kashmir, Arrangements for the Supply of *Shali* to the Residents of Srinagar, File No.17 of 1891, OER, JKA; Provisional Abolition of the *Mujawaza* System in Kashmir and the Substitution of Cash Assessments for *Kind* as Regular Assessments, File No 72 of 1899, OER, JKA, Miscellaneous Reports on *Shali* from Home Minister and Revenue Minister etc, File No 4/Sh-4 of 1919, OER, JKA

³²² The area in acres under *Shali* for the year 1899 was recorded at 2,41,838 and by 1903 the area under *Shali* had fallen to 2,32,743 acres, a decline of 10,617 acres or more than 4%. See: Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, Foreign Department, External A, August 1903, nos. 94-101, NAI

³²³ The area declined from 5,02,998 acres in 1899 to 469291 acres in 1903, See: Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar, Foreign Department, External A, August 1903, Nos. 94-101

which a lucrative export market had developed by this time. The area under linseed increased by over 28%.³²⁴

The revenue member noted that 'the increase in area under linseed had come at the expense of area under food grains'.³²⁵ Further he reported that, 'many second class *shali* fields' had been dedicated to the cultivation of linseed.³²⁶

The Settlement Commissioner report that, 'Due to the rise in prices of fruit and they...are more lucrative...the area under *shali* and wheat cultivation is decreasing and under fruit is increasing...'³²⁷ A series of 'Detailed Reports on High Prices in *shali*' discussed the many possible reasons for the scarcity of grain that pervaded the Kashmir province between 1880-1930. The explanations offered were the usual condemnations of the *waddars* and the *galladars*. However, towards the end a note referred, only in passing to the question of supply of food grains. It stated that there was a distinct possibility that, '*zamindars* will quit rice and take to maize and fruit instead...then the Darbar cannot acquire rice at any price to feed the city dwellers.'³²⁸ Illustrating the connection between state control and production, the note by the revenue member stressed that it was, 'very important to restore confidence in rice growers that their rice crop will not be taken from them.'³²⁹

³²⁴ The area under linseed increased from 85544 acres in 1901 and 109598 in 1902, registering a total increase of 28.12 % in just a year. See: Note on the Cultivation of Linseed in Kashmir, File No/74 of 1902, OER, JKA

³²⁵ Scarcity and High Prices in Srinagar. Foreign Department, External A, August 1903, Nos. 94-101, NAI

³²⁶ Ibid. See also: Note on the Cultivation of Linseed in Kashmir, File no/74 of 1902, OER, JKA

³²⁷ Notes and Miscellaneous Papers on *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, File No 153/ of 1921, Political Department, JKA

³²⁸ Detailed Reports on the High Prices of *Shali*. File No 1620/209-M of 1922, Political Department, JKA

³²⁹ Ibid.

By the 1920s, there was a marked shortage in supply. Jalali reports, 'if *shali* alone be taken into account, there is an insufficiency of supply even at the reduced ration per head in vogue at present...this is not accounting for the large quantities of rice that, leaves the valley.'³³⁰ The ration allowed by the state granaries was 3 traks. Jalali estimated that the average amount of *shali* produce per capita was 2.5 *kharwars*. If one was to account for the 'large amounts' of *shali* exported, the availability for consumption would be even less. While there is no clear data available on the pre-capita availability of *shali* in the pre-colonial period, that 8 *kharwars* of *shali* per person per year was considered a full allowance by the state is instructive.³³¹ This figure of 8 *kharwars* would indicate a more plentiful supply of *shali*, for it is unlikely that the state would fix an allowance that did not correspond at least roughly to the supply. Similarly, it is unlikely that the state would fix a particularly generous allowance. This lends further support to the conjecture that there may have been a decline in the per capita availability of food grain in general and rice in particular.

The evidence permits a somewhat sketchy, but significant, consideration of the implications of control. Moreover, it allows us to cast reasonable doubt on the claims of the state regarding the sufficiency, or otherwise of production. It is possible to conclude on the basis of the above discussion that under the impact of state control and associated policies and actions, the cultivation of

³³⁰ J.L.K. Jalali, *The Economy of Food Grain in Kashmir*, pp 43

³³¹ Issue of Notifications Regarding Sale of *ShaliShaliShaliShali* in Kashmir, File No.16 of 1918, OER, JKA

food grain came to be burdened with many disadvantages, leading to a decline in food grain production. Contrary to the logic of the state then, there was more to the chronic scarcity of grain than the treachery of the *waddars*, *galladars*, and *chakdars*. Undoubtedly, these controllers of grain were no friends of the fellow Kashmiris, but the state cannot be absolved of a measure of responsibility.

Circulation and Control

In the second chapter, I have examined the historical process whereby the more powerful among controllers of capital and land came to acquire a stronger control over the grain produced in Kashmir; landholders by collecting grain as revenue and usurers by claiming grain in repayment of debts. The large-scale grant of land to *chakdars* and extension of grants made to compensate *jagirdars* for loss of revenue due to the settlement ensured the control of more land in fewer hands. The imposition of a cash demand and the corresponding spurt in borrowing allowed an intensification of control over grain by the controllers of capital.³³²

³³² See section on *waddars* in Chapter Two

As discussed above, there was a considerable overlap between these modes of control, and often, powerful individuals would exercise more than one mode at the same time. Given that the grain trade was the best way of converting grain into cash, it follows that controllers of grain would also double up as grain traders. I propose to argue in this section that this centralization of control facilitated the movement of grains in a way that was detrimental to the food stocks of Kashmir. Firstly, despite bans on the export of foodstuffs from the province, large quantities of grain were carried from Kashmir. I argue that the scale of these operations was such that bigger players could better partake of its lucrative prospects. Secondly, the controllers of grain found a profitable outlet for their grain in the Transport and Supply Department, responsible for the unsatiable demand for grain in the frontier districts.

The export of grain from Kashmir into the Punjab was a not a new phenomenon. Writing after the *Sher Singhi* famine, Henvey reported that, 'in the period ending March 1879, when the food stocks in Kashmir were at their lowest, the *export* of grain and pulses to Punjab *increased* while the *import* of the same *decreased*.'³³³ He noted that officials of the state acquired grain by 'illegal' means and in addition to selling it in the valley at enhanced prices; they exported to famine stricken Punjab where prices were much higher.³³⁴ The Jhelum Valley cart road was the first road connecting Kashmir to the

³³³ Mr. Henvey's Revised Note on the Famine in Kashmir, Foreign and Political, Sec E, March 1883, Nos. 86, NAI

³³⁴ Ibid.

mainland that could support the carriage of wheeled traffic. Fully operational in 1897, it lowered the transport costs significantly, which had previously been prohibitive.³³⁵ In the litany of woes of colonial authorities, the export trade figured prominently, for the state was singularly unsuccessful in preventing it.³³⁶ Mere speculation that there might be a famine in Punjab was known to affect the market in Kashmir.³³⁷ The export of *shali*, wheat, maize, barley and ghee would increase sharply when the prices in Punjab rose, contributing to the rise of prices in Kashmir as well.³³⁸

The correlation between prices in Punjab and scarcity in the valley can be amply demonstrated with examples. Places from where export was the easiest were usually also places where prices would rule the highest. Prices in the tehsil of Muzaffarabad in 1907 were especially high, higher than the rest of the valley and it was believed that this was a consequence of large quantities of grain, especially maize, being exported. It was reportedly 'difficult to find maize even when one was willing to pay for it'.³³⁹ Officials repeatedly lamented that 'high prices in the Punjab were also believed to have led to substantial smuggling of rice from Kashmir.'³⁴⁰ Acute scarcity in the war years was attributed by the Maharaja, among other things, to the 'clandestine

³³⁵ Settlement Operations in Kashmir, 54/S- 1/34 of 1902, Revenue Department, JKA

³³⁶ Illegal Export of Food Grain From Kashmir Province, File No 31/165- of 1907, OER, JKA

³³⁷ Settlement Operations in Kashmir, 54/S- 1/34 of 1902, Revenue Department, JKA

³³⁸ Illegal Export of Food Grain From Kashmir Province, File No 31/165- of 1907, OER, JKA

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, Foreign and Political Department, internal-I, May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI

export (of grain) on a large scale...³⁴¹ By the middle of 1917, attributed to the movement of grain to Punjab, 'acute and general distress was evident...*shali* could scarcely be purchased at all. The crop reports were good yet there was no grain to be had.'³⁴² The Superintendent of Police wrote to revenue minister about the, 'illicit export of rice' and the difficulty of preventing it.³⁴³ A revealing letter written to the Government Of India by an employee of the state hospital, is worth quoting in its entirety: ³⁴⁴

Dear Mister (Private Secretary to the Viceroy),
excellent rice harvest. Prices up and rising although the new crop was gathered in a month ago. Everyone (in the bazaar that is) knows how it all went last year and no one likes to say... (Last year was a particularly bad one eh?). It is pretended that new arrangements have been made.

I am quite sure it will make no difference to the exporters who are protected (and organized) by those in power here. Meantime, the people starve. We have had influenza and cholera, and now small pox in the city.

I can get more information, but it is not my business. Why cannot an independent person come and see? *The road is open till January and they can't get it all away before that- tho' it is going out fast.*

Yours sincerely Dr. K Vaughan ³⁴⁵

Kate Vaughan, addressing the Viceroy no less, must have caused considerable embarrassment to British officials posted in Kashmir. The Secretary of State wrote to the Resident enquiring about the truth of the allegations. The

³⁴¹ HH Proclamation Regarding Sale of *Shali* on Prices Fixed Therefore, File no. 123 of 1921, OER, JKA

³⁴² Notes and Miscellaneous Papers on *Shali* Scheme on Kashmir, File No 153 of 1921, OER, JKA

³⁴³ Correspondence on *Shali* Arrangements in Kashmir. File No. 28/F - 138 of 1918, O.E.R, JKA

³⁴⁴ Economic Situation in Kashmir During the Year 1919 Regarded in the Main, from the Position as Regards Rice, Foreign and Political Department, Internal B, may 1920. Nos.192-195, NAI

³⁴⁵ Economic Situation in Kashmir During the Year 1919 Regarded in the Main, from the Position as Regards Rice, Foreign and Political Department, Internal B, May 1920. Nos.192-195, NAI. Emphasis added.

Resident, apparently keen to keep it under wraps, wrote back accusing the doctor of having 'a disposition to be always against the government'.³⁴⁶ He reported that Vaughan had previously spoken to the First Assistant of the Resident about rice being exported 'with the connivance of high officials.' The Resident flatly denied her allegations stating that exports were banned and the ban strictly enforced. Nonetheless, admitting that 'smuggling' took place on a large scale, he wrote that, 'the best efforts are being made to prevent it.'³⁴⁷ While the Resident hotly contested Vaughn's claim that higher officials of the Darbar were complicit in the banned export trade, it is unlikely that such large-scale movement of grain could have taken place without the active 'connivance' or at least the passive support of officials.

We now attempt a rough estimate of the volume of this export trade. In the June-July of 1908, when the export ban was lifted, it was reported by the Darbar that in July alone more wheat, barley and maize had been exported than in whole of the previous year.³⁴⁸ Similarly in 1909, the export ban on maize was lifted for a few months; the customs department reported that 18% of the total average maize production of the valley had been exported.³⁴⁹ The 'illicit export of food grains' was frequently mentioned.³⁵⁰ The 'large quantities of rice and wheat...being exported to Punjab' were believed to be

³⁴⁶ Economic Situation in Kashmir During the Year 1919 Regarded in the Main, from the Position as Regards Rice, Foreign and Political Department, Internal B, May 1920. Nos. 192-195, NAI

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ban on the Export of Food Grains from the Kashmir Province, File no 31/165- of 1907, Old English Records

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ *Shali* Scheme in Kashmir, Foreign and Political Department, Internal-I, May 1920, Nos. 192-195 & June 1919, Nos. 31-33, NAI

responsible for high prices in 1915 as well.³⁵¹ In 1924, the revenue member reported that in the first six months of the year when the ban on exports was lifted, 1,00,000 kharwars of *shali* left the valley. This was a small portion of the total outturn, but it was expected that, 'with the development of a market for Kashmir grain in the Punjab the tendency to export will increase.'³⁵² In 1925, sudden increase in grain prices was attributed 'to a 'rise in prices in Punjab' and the removal of the embargo on the export of foodstuffs.'³⁵³

It was generally believed that, 'the wealthy financiers of Maharaj Gunj having business connections in Punjab and ostensibly no concerns with the grain trade financed the grain dealers and exporters and indirectly or surreptitiously shared the profit from their transactions...'³⁵⁴ This suggests that the key players in the export trade were big ones. While trade between Kashmir and Punjab was certainly not a monopoly of large operators, the export trade in grain seems to have been particularly suited to them. To make a profit off bulk goods, such as grain, the volume exported would have to be substantial. This presented the problem of transporting bulky quantities, and transport was not easy to arrange. The shortage of supply in the city was attributed also to a lack of means of transport sometimes. Moreover, these large quantities would have to pass many custom check posts and the border guards, which would be difficult without official protection.

³⁵¹ Temporary Discontinuance of the Export from the Kashmir State of Maize, Bajra and Wheat, Foreign and Political Department, Internal B, April 1915, nos. 896-898, NAI

³⁵² Prohibition Against the Private Import of *Shali* and Rice into Srinagar, General Department, File No 782/Sh-1 of 1924, JKA

³⁵³ *Shali* Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Notes and Miscellaneous Papers on *Shali* Scheme on Kashmir, File No 153 of 1921, OER, JKA

The collection of revenue in frontier districts was predominantly in kind, varying from 2/3rd to the entire revenue demand being collected in grain. Over and above this, grain was compulsorily bought up from cultivators. Despite this, large quantities of grain had to be sent up from the Kashmir valley, for the purpose of feeding the garrison at Gilgit and the travelers on the Treaty Road.³⁵⁵ The state granaries made up a part of the shortfall out of the *mujawaza* collected from cultivators in the valley. To make up the rest of the shortfall the Commissariat Department would float tenders, inviting private parties to supply grain.

In 1903, for example, tenders were invited for 40,000 *maunds* of *Shali* and about 10,000 *maunds* of other food grains (maize, barley). Tenders were allowed for half the amount or at least 4000 *maunds*, meaning that it was clear that the state expected the supply to come from larger *galladars* and *chakdars* for only they would possess such quantities of readily disposable grain. The rates that the government was willing to pay were economical only if grain had been procured at rates far below the market and state rates.³⁵⁶ Also, though little information was available about this, I found references to, 'the state granaries have undertaken the export of rice to British India; at present operations are confined to the supply of rice to the Northern Army,

³⁵⁵ Fixation of the Rates of Grain Supplied to the Commissariat Department in Gilgit District, File no. 66 of 1893, General Department, JKA

³⁵⁶ Issue of Notice for the Supply of Food Grains for State Military in Kashmir and Letter by Mr. Anderson in this Behalf, File no. 46 of 1903, OER, JKA

but it is likely that the scope of operations maybe extended.³⁵⁷ This, in the 1920s, when scarcity of food grain in Kashmir was reaching a crescendo.

The processes set in motion by various policies of the state combined to create a situation where the control over grain was concentrated in fewer hands. As the control over grain became more centralized, bigger players were in a position to determine its circulation. The result was a large-scale movement of grain out of Kashmir to the Punjab, resulting in an aggravation of scarcity.

Land, Labor and Control

I now explore the changing equations surrounding land and labor during this period. Pre-colonial Kashmir was characterized by an abundance of uncultivated land and a sparse population. The control of labor therefore would have been a more pressing concern than the control of land. In the years just before the intervention in Kashmir was executed, the agrarian sector seemed to be on the verge of collapse. The immediate interests of the Raj as well as the Darbar lay in the extension of cultivation, for land was the only significant source of revenue and there were no other uses to which it could profitably be put. This afforded the working classes of Kashmir considerable mobility. To evade excessive demands for land revenue and *begaar* cultivators would often flee their lands.³⁵⁸ The fugitives would either break up new land for

³⁵⁷ Prohibition Against the Private Import of *Shali* and Rice into Srinagar, General department, File No. 782/Sh-1 of 1924, JKA

³⁵⁸ A fact that seems to have frustrated many a colonial official, See: Walter R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir; Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Lal Phak*, Andrew Wingate, Preliminary Report on the Settlement of Land

cultivation or take refuge on the lands of land controllers, whose tenants were exempt from *begaar*. Some would leave for Punjab or settle in the city of Srinagar.³⁵⁹

For someone seeking to consolidate the land revenue of the Kashmir province, the key challenge then would have been to check the mobility of cultivators and thereby ensure the cultivation of land. I propose to argue that at the heart of the settlement of land revenue was the quest for a regime of control over labor that would be more effective than the pre-colonial arrangement. Instead of *compelling* people to cultivate land, the strategy of the settlement was to *induce* them to do so.

The working population of Kashmir was characterized by a high degree of mobility. To evade demands that they considered unfair peasants would abandon their lands and homesteads and break up new land for cultivation elsewhere. Made possible due to a low land-man ratio, this mobility had important implications for a number of other questions. It placed a check on the *zulm* of the revenue department in particular and the state in general in that cultivators were able to thwart the control of the state for a time. Due to the limits of state control over land, control over labor was relatively difficult to exercise. Once a cultivator had fled, whether to the estate of a *chakdar*, to

Revenue in the Kashmir province, Mr. Henvey's Report on the Condition of Kashmir and the Reforms Required in the Administration, Foreign Department, Sec E, January 1883, Nos. 239-240, NAI

³⁵⁹ Walter R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p 23; *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Lal Phak*, 1890; *Note on the Assessment Report of the Lal Phak Tehsil*, 1890

the neighboring village or to a new settlement, there was very little that could be done to induce or even coerce them to come back for he could simply 'scramble' further up the mountain slopes.³⁶⁰

The institution of *begaar* was one way in which successive regimes dealt with the scarcity of labor. Under the Dogra regime, all residents of the valley were subject to demands of forced labor by the state, with the exception of Hindus, Sikhs, Sayeds and privileged landholders. The state's demand for *begaar* included forced labor on public works such as roads and irrigation canals, carrying loads for officials' on tour. The most dreaded demand however, was impressments for carriage to Gilgit.³⁶¹ In addition to this, cultivators were subject to demands for *begaar* by officials, and it was not uncommon for them to get their lands cultivated by *begaaris*.³⁶² That the system of *rahdari* was in place speaks volumes. It meant essentially that no resident could cross the boundaries of the valley without the express permission of the Darbar. It is not difficult to imagine that this permission would have been difficult to acquire to all but the most influential. *Rahdari* seems to have been a response to the tendency of the working population to 'bolt' for the plains of Punjab.

Jalali, looking back on the years of the famine, stated that had it not been for the *rahdari* system, 'numbers would have left for the plains of Punjab and

³⁶⁰ *Assessment Report of the Lal Phak Tehsil*, 1890

³⁶¹ Revenue in Kind in the Haramosh Illaqa, File No 44/S-1/5 of 1901, Revenue Department, JKA

³⁶² Papers Relating to the Jagir Lands of the Raja of Matho and their Cultivation by *Begaar*, File no 225/A-20 of 1909, OER, JKA

never returned.³⁶³ Lawrence wrote of the thousands who 'sat waiting listlessly for death' for there were no means for their survival in Kashmir and they were not allowed to leave.³⁶⁴ In these years the borders were tightened in anticipation of the exodus. Troops were stationed 'to prevent the migration of the people... harrowing tales are told of...getting past the barrier by bribing the guardians of the passes.'³⁶⁵ Suggesting a large-scale migration, Henvey wrote that 'many thousands staggered over the passes'³⁶⁶

The Government of India suggested that the system of *rahdari* be 'dispensed with to facilitate the emigration of people who could find no means to stay on'³⁶⁷ By the end of 1878 the system was abolished, 'and the weak survivors tottered over the passes to the Punjab, many dying on the way.'³⁶⁸ One of the major problems faced at the time of the settlement surveys was the question of the numerous abandoned holdings that none came forward to claim as their own.³⁶⁹ These had been the holdings of cultivators who had died or fled.

The depopulation caused by the famine, on account of mortality and emigration was considerable; it was believed that no more than two fifths or one third of the population survived.³⁷⁰ Another cause of heavy mortality was

³⁶³ J.L.K Jalali, *The Economy of Food Grains in Kashmir*, p. 41

³⁶⁴ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 217

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.* pp 215

³⁶⁶ J.L.K Jalali, *The Economy of Food Grains in Kashmir*, p. 67

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 67

³⁶⁸ Lawrence, *Valley of Kashmir*, p.215

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 230

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.* See also: Mr. Henvey's Report on the Condition of Kashmir and the Reforms Required in the Administration, Foreign Department, Sec E. January 1883, Nos. 239-240, NAI

the cholera epidemics that usually followed in the wake of scarcity and famine. In 1892 10,000 people died in the cholera epidemic, even as mortality in villages had been underestimated.³⁷¹ Lawrence clearly stated the priorities of the Raj and its settlement thus: 'for proper cultivation the population is still far too small, and in the interests of the land revenue alone every effort should be made to remove causes which lead to such awful and lamentable mortality as occurred in the famine.'³⁷² Further, he said: 'There are higher considerations than those of land revenue which will doubtless move the state to put their house in order both in the matter of famine and of cholera.'³⁷³ Adding an interesting dimension, 'Kashmir requires a much larger agricultural population than it possesses at present, and self-interest and humanity alike demand that baby girls should be protected against smallpox.'³⁷⁴

Lawrence noted with some consternation that cultivators were averse to the improvement or extension of cultivation. They believed any sort of improvement to be an occasion for increased demands by the state and its corrupt officials.³⁷⁵ Cultivators would often destroy fruit trees growing on their lands for the trees were taxed and the fruit claimed as *rasum* by officials. Lawrence went to the extent of stating that 'choice' varieties of rice had fallen out of cultivation because they attracted too much attention from 'greedy'

³⁷¹ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 234

³⁷² *Ibid.* p. 218

³⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 219

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 227

³⁷⁵ *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Lal Phak*, 1890

officials.³⁷⁶ While it is easy to dismiss the reporting of these 'facts' as part of a project of demonizing oriental governance, it does suggest something about the state of affairs.

While one is wary of characterizing the pre-colonial revenue administration as a predatory one interested only in a short term maximization of revenue, what with a lack of access to sources other than those generated by the colonial state itself, some tentative generalizations can certainly be attempted. Lawrence paints a picture of darbari revenue officials gallivanting through the countryside and fixing erroneously high revenue demands in an effort to please the authorities in Srinagar, paying no attention to the actual revenue paying capacity of the villages. The revenue collections predictably fell short of the estimates. Lawrence discusses extensively in his initial writings the marked 'lack of interest' on the part of the cultivators in the valley, which he believed was natural, in the face of a predatory and wildly fluctuating revenue demand. It was these aspects of the revenue administration that were believed to have created a peasantry indifferent to agricultural improvement and an impoverished state. The effort of the settlement was, therefore, to give the peasantry an interest in the cultivation and in doing so to consolidate the states' single largest source of revenue.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

Lawrence found 'land (being) thrown up on the slightest provocation' and concluded that 'under these circumstances the only scheme of assessment possible is one of extreme leniency.'³⁷⁷ The land revenue demanded under the permanent settlement was therefore reduced. It was hoped that by the time that this first term expired the peasantry would have acquired a sufficient interest in the cultivation of their land and that the revenue could be enhanced when the settlement was revised.³⁷⁸

The desire to secure agriculture was evident also in the policy relating to the administration of wasteland. Under the settlement, applications for the cultivation of wasteland were generously entertained, cultivators applying for wasteland were allowed to break it up and enjoy it revenue free till the revision of settlement.³⁷⁹ Previously, however, cultivators could and did cultivate wasteland without prior permission from the state and enjoyed their newly broken up lands free of revenue until the state found them out and imposed a revenue demand. In deference to this custom the provision of having to apply for wasteland was subsequently removed.³⁸⁰ Nautor, or the breakup of new lands, was reported as taking place on a large scale in the initial years of the settlement. Lawrence reported with much satisfaction that he had personally approved the grant of 18,115 acres in the first few years of

³⁷⁷ Note on the Assessment Report of the Lal Tehsil, Foreign Department, External B, Jan 1894, NAI

³⁷⁸ Walter R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 9

³⁷⁹ Regarding the Assessment of the Kashmir Valley, File no 166/ E 44 of 1907, OER, JKA

³⁸⁰ Introduction of land Alienation Act and Public Representations in this Connection, File No. 81/H-79 of 1922, General Department, JKA

the settlement alone.³⁸¹ Also, Lawrence advocated that the 'greatest consideration be shown to the unhappy fugitives of 1878 who have returned, after the lapse of more than ten years to claim their ancestral holdings.'³⁸²

The only way of maximizing revenue, an explicit concern of the Darbar as well as the colonial authorities interceding in the matter, was the extension of cultivation. At a time when population was scarce and cultivation the only major source of revenue, the interests of the state were served best by the extension of cultivation. However, several factors led to the creation of a somewhat inverse situation. In the decades that followed the scenario changed considerably. The population of the valley had nearly doubled since the famine years. In the second chapter we discussed how different controlling groups and individuals placed in them negotiated with the changed circumstances in myriad ways. As a result of the forest settlements, the grant of *chaks* and a tighter control over wasteland, the political control exercised over land by the state and powerful interests increased significantly. Capital as a source of control became far more important.³⁸³ Exploring some of these issues in an interconnected fashion here, I propose to argue that the heightened control over land and capital enabled controllers to exercise more intensive control over labor, much to the detriment of the cultivators.

³⁸¹ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 238

³⁸² *Ibid.* p. 215

³⁸³ See chapter two

The agricultural economy of Kashmir was a mono-crop economy. The nature of the soils was such that, beyond a point, more intensive cultivation of the soil to increase production was not possible. Instead, the only way to increase production sufficiently to meet the demands of a population rapidly recuperating from the toll of famine was the extension of the area under food grains.³⁸⁴

By the early 1920s, the attitudes to land had changed significantly. Land had now become a scarce and therefore valuable commodity. The incoming land revenue had stabilized, and while it continued to be the single largest source of revenue it was not, unlike the 1800s, the only significant source of revenue. Revenues from forests and grazing fees came to be very important. Many profitable non-agricultural uses for land existed. State officials and landholders were 'clamoring' for new grants and the extension of existing ones.³⁸⁵ Understandably, the question of wasteland was looked upon differently now. Various enterprises such as, horticulture, vineyards, hop cultivation, paper making, distilleries, food processing and so on, that required land were set up predominantly under the ownership of British entrepreneurs.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ Paper Relating to the Grant of Wasteland for Cultivation, General Department, File No- 390/H-129 of 1923, JKA

³⁸⁵ Statements Received by the Glancy Commission on Behalf of the *Jagirdars*, File No. 18/31 of 1931, Political Department, JKA

³⁸⁶ Correspondence Between the Office of the Glancy Commission and the Office of the Prime Minister, C.S./B.B/, File No. 15/29 of 1931, Political Department, JKA

A note on the matter opened by stating that the 'question of waste land is...one that embraces the whole revenue administration of the state'.³⁸⁷ The State Council suggested that wasteland be 'cut into rectangles...and given to the highest bidder...'.³⁸⁸ Importantly, bidding was not restricted to 'cultivating classes'. The settlement commissioner pointed out that this manner of dealing with wasteland was bound to favor bigger players, especially those who already possessed land. A petition from cultivators complained that the *nazrana* expected by the state on the grant of wasteland acted as a disincentive to more humble aspirants for wasteland, with the result that 'waste lands were absorbed by wealthy residents to the exclusion of poorer residents and *zamindars*'.³⁸⁹

The practice of free nautor by *zamindars*, once heartily encouraged, was to be discontinued. The logic was stated plainly enough, the best interest of the state no longer lay in encouraging cultivation, 'the difficulty being rather to prevent land from being cultivated when it is in the interests of the state...that it should remain uncultivated'.³⁹⁰ The military department required land to grant to soldiers. The forest department, in addition to the land demarcated as state forests needed land for fuel reserves to supply the city of Srinagar, troop, travelers etc. The revenue member added that the 'requirement of industries

³⁸⁷ Note of Committee on the Dispute Between the *Jagirdars* and *Zamindars*, File No 825 of 1925, General Department, JKA

³⁸⁸ Paper Relating to the Grant of Wasteland for Cultivation, General Department. File No- 390/H-129 of 1923, JKA

³⁸⁹ Note of Committee on the Dispute Between the *Jagirdars* and *Zamindars*, File No 825 of 1925, General Department, JKA

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

must also be considered...on which the prosperity of the valley depends.'³⁹¹ Lawrence had predicted many decades earlier that European capitalists, 'could do good to themselves and to the state if they settled in Kashmir and devoted capital and labor to the production of wine, hops, canned and dry fruits, vegetables and silk.'³⁹²

Anxious *jagirdars* and *chakdars* petitioned that state asking for their grants to be secured and extended.³⁹³ The Darbar was keen on patronizing the landed sections, while the British administrators rather emphasized the importance of catering to industries and maintaining a state reserve of land. A member of the State Council argued that extending grants to *chakdars* was beneficial to the state for *nazrana* was a source of revenue. He was curtly reminded that, 'it should be borne in mind that land is now the chief capital which the state possesses and should not be handled indiscriminately for the sake of a few thousand rupees a year.'³⁹⁴ For the Darbar however it was not a question of a few thousand rupees but a class of landholders loyal to it, and many of the landholders were in fact officials of the state.³⁹⁵ The grant of *chaks* continued unimpeded.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 10

³⁹³ Note of Committee on the Dispute Between the *Jagirdars* and *Zamindars*, File No 825 of 1925, General Department, JKA

³⁹⁴ Note of Committee on the Dispute Between the *Jagirdars* and *Zamindars*, File No 825 of 1925, General Department, JKA

³⁹⁵ See Chapter Two

The fact of the matter was that 'tens of thousands of acres of land' were made over to *chakdars*.³⁹⁶ In addition to this, *chakdars* were notorious for seizing land in excess of their grants. In one case, a high-ranking official of the state was accused of usurping a 'few hundred' acres more than his grants allowed him.³⁹⁷ Petitions from cultivators complained that *chakdars* got preference when grants of wasteland were being made, and this led to a shortage of land for a growing peasant population. Another petition put a recurrent complaint very succinctly; '*nautor* land broken by *zamindars* who have spent much labor, money and time over their improvements have been freely granted to influential...especially government officials as *chaks*.'³⁹⁸ Another petition stated that land usurped by *chakdars* in excess of their original grants were usually the lands of cultivators neighboring their estates.³⁹⁹ Yet another petition told of an instance where *chakdars* had used their influence to cut off the water supply of as many as nineteen villages, and 'then had portions of the land made over to themselves.'⁴⁰⁰ Making a clear connection between the increase in the population and changing equations surrounding land another petition stated:

The population of *zamindars* in yearly expanding and the prohibition against breaking of *nautor* is proving a serious handicap to the

³⁹⁶ Representations Regarding their Grievances Presented to the Glancy Commission on Behalf of the Muslims of Srinagar, File No. 1/h of 1931, General Department, JKA

³⁹⁷ Assessment of Jagir villages Kashmir valley, Rev 49/S.J.12 R of 1898, Revenue Department, JKA

³⁹⁸ Representations Regarding their Grievances Presented to the Glancy Commission on Behalf of the Muslims of Srinagar, File No. 1/h of 1931

³⁹⁹ Representations Regarding their Grievances Presented to the Glancy Commission on Behalf of the Muslims of Srinagar, File No. 1/h of 1931

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

zamindars...grants of *Chakuk* be stopped, those granted be resumed and distributed among cultivators...⁴⁰¹

Another program of control that militated against the interests of cultivators in particular, and the working masses of Kashmir in general was the demarcation of forests and the claim by the state to an absolute ownership right to them. In 1939, it was reported that the forest department controlled 37,35,268 acres of land whereas at first settlement the settlement department controlled just about a third of that area; i.e. 1,195,555 acres.⁴⁰²

Pre-colonial rulers controlled the use of forest in as much as certain products were government monopolies and that certain areas of the forests were reserved as hunting preserves for the use of the rulers and their retinue.⁴⁰³ In Kashmir the change in the shifting dynamics of control from pre-colonial to colonial regimes may be mapped through an intensification of state control over forest resources. State control over forestry now become more wide-ranging, and territorialized in that the area that constituted the forest was clearly, even if rather arbitrarily, defined and demarcated. Also, the cultivation of items found growing wild and designated 'minor forest produce', such as *kuth* root, was forbidden. Over the years, forests came to yield substantial revenues, second only to land revenue and with time came to form a larger and larger chunk of the state revenue. The control of the state

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Figure for land under settlement department from, *Valley of Kashmir*, p. 239; figure for land under forest department from *The Administration Report of the Forest Department* of 1921.

⁴⁰³ D.C. Sharma, *Kashmir under the Sikhs*, New Delhi, 1982

over forests signaled the emergence of a more intensive and territorialized authority.

Lawrence speaking hopefully about the extension of cultivation expected it to come about through cultivation of lands that, ironically, subsequently came to be demarcated as forests. He wrote,

Forests and the sides of mountains have been excluded (from the settlement), and the boundaries of villages have been determined by the limit of cultivation...it is quite possible that as the population increases the margin of cultivation will ascend the mountain sides, and already we have many applications for permission to break up land for cultivation in the forests and on mountain slopes, in tracts which lie beyond the village boundaries.⁴⁰⁴

The demarcation of forests put these lands out of reach for cultivators. A part of the land that came to be classified as forest had been already under cultivation. The forest department would apply to the settlement department for the expropriation of the cultivators of such lands, and the latter usually obliged.⁴⁰⁵ Not only did this imply that less land was available for extension of cultivation, it also meant that existing lands were taken out of cultivation.

As elsewhere, forests and the resources that were derived from them were crucial to the subsistence of agricultural communities in Kashmir. 'Forest' lands provided grazing grounds, timber for construction, wood for fuel and

⁴⁰⁴ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp 239

⁴⁰⁵ *Assessment Report of the Anantnag Tehsil of the Anantnag District of the Kashmir Province*, 1922

lighting, wild foods, medicinal plants and other forest produce. Cultivators were allowed to remove limited amounts of timber and fuel, but this required prior permission from the local forest department officials, which was a cumbersome process to say the least.⁴⁰⁶ These officials of the forest department extracted bribes from cultivators for items that they were legally allowed to remove. Cattle that wandered into the jurisdiction of the forest department was impounded and released after much difficulty on payment of a hefty fee.⁴⁰⁷

Numerous petitions record in vivid detail the complaints of cultivators against the forest department. The resentment against the forest department and its officials was palpable, apparently second only to the land revenue and food control departments. A common theme in the petitions is the demand that land be removed from the control of the forest department and given over for cultivation. For example, '*Rakh* and forest area many kindly be curtailed with a view to provide additional land for growing population of zamindars.'⁴⁰⁸ Another set of petitioners objected to the willow nursery operated by the forest department, stating that it was 'in the interest of capitalists only' and demanded that 'the land under...should be freed up and given to zamindars.'⁴⁰⁹ *Shikargahs* and *rakhs* were under the forest department,

⁴⁰⁶ Petition of Grievances Presented to the Glancy Commission by Kashmir Muslims other than those of Srinagar File no. 3/2 of 1931, General Department, JKA

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Representations Regarding their Grievances Presented to the Glancy Commission on Behalf of the Muslims of Srinagar, File No. 1/h of 1931, Political Department, JKA

⁴⁰⁹ Petition of Grievances presented to the Glancy commission by Kashmir Muslims other than those of Srinagar, File No. 3/2 of 1931, Political Department, JKA

and it was demanded also that, 'cultivable waste near forests...be granted to *zamindars*.'⁴¹⁰

Significantly, in these policy debates, the shrinking area under food grains did not appear to have been a significant concern, despite that fact that the years 1917-1922 had seen the worst scarcity of food grains in a decade.

Under the settlement, all cultivators were granted *assami* status, or the right to hereditary occupancy, conditional on the payment of dues to the state. The Darbar was declared the proprietor of all land. This was supposedly an existing right, only formalized by the settlement. There is however, fragmented but revealing evidence suggesting the existence of something akin to a proprietary right in land. The settlement process was must be understood the as not just a process of record but also of erasure of rights for its full impact to be understood.

We begin with an attempt to enquire into the nature of rights in land that existed prior to the settlement. To look for a proprietary right in land in pre-colonial societies is a knotty affair. On the one hand there is the fact that the notion of ownership right, as understood and discussed in my sources, was a concept unique to the British colonial mind. On the other hand, there is evidence that alienation of land, the defining feature of a proprietary right,

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

did take place. The problem maybe circumvented for the time being by posing a question in terms of the extent and nature of control exercised over land, outside of the framework of ownership or the lack of it.

In the Mir Bahri villages, suburbs of the city, the settlement officer rather found that, 'people buy and sell land...rights exercised are undoubtedly equal to ownership or proprietary right'.⁴¹¹ A list of transactions that had taken place in the past couple of years was provided to illustrate the tone and tenor of prices.⁴¹² In this area, city courts would often order the public auction of the lands of cultivators defaulting on revenue payments. The officer took this to mean that the land was the property of the cultivators and the fact that city courts issued orders for sale meant recognition of it by the state. Fearing the implications of this for the settlement he wrote, 'If the idea of state as owner is to be upheld all such sales must be stopped in the future.'⁴¹³ In the lands or floating gardens on the Dal Lake where vegetables were cultivated, sale and mortgage of land took place. In the city of Srinagar, it was widely acknowledged that sales and transfers of land did take place. In Sopore, 'residential lands' reportedly changed hands.⁴¹⁴

In the Muzaffarabad district, the settlement officer found that, 'transactions amounting to sale and mortgage of land' had taken place previously and

⁴¹¹ *Assessment Report of Mir Bahri of the Dal Lake Villages, with Notes*, 1898

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

were still in occurrence.⁴¹⁵ The report on the Muzaffarabad Tehsil of the Muzaffarabad District stated that of sale land did occur and that 'in the previous year alone... 2.93% of the total cultivated land in this tehsil has been alienated'. It was noted that the value as well as the price at which land was sold had increased.⁴¹⁶ In the town of Muzaffarabad, sale and mortgage of land was extant and forbidden only in 1920, before which 'many valuable lands changed hands several times...'⁴¹⁷ The settlement report on the Ladakh Wazarat stated that while sales in the country side were uncommon, 'the custom of sale exists in the town of Leh...and land sells for as much as Re.1 per *marla*', which was reportedly a high price.⁴¹⁸

Often poorer assami unable to cultivate land themselves, 'permanently made over their lands to their prosperous neighbors', in return for maintenance. 'Gifts' of land were made to *gunpas*, which were actually mortgaged lands being taken over in settlement of *jinsi* debts (debts taken in kind, usually grain). Similarly, significant amounts of land had fallen into the hands of wealthy merchants in transactions, observed by the settlement officer as tantamount to sale and mortgage.⁴¹⁹ A note on the assessment report discussed here acknowledged that hitherto, 'the proprietary right of the state in land has never been declared' but it was implied in the fact that the state had taken up land for plantations without paying compensation to the

⁴¹⁵ *Preliminary Report of Settlement Operations in the Muzaffarabad District in Kashmir*, 1898

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ *Assessment Report of the Muzaffarabad Tehsil of the Muzaffarabad District*, 1936

⁴¹⁸ *Note on the Ladakh Wazarat in the Jammu Province*, 1897

⁴¹⁹ *Assessment Report of the Ladakh Tehsil*, 1909

expropriated cultivators.⁴²⁰ This suggests an awareness of the fact that the state's claim to ownership of all land was not pre-existing, but was being constructed and retrospectively being asserted and justified.

In the Skardu Tehsil, it was found that, 'the custom of sale does exist in the khalsa tracts and seems increasing...only the poor sell...' In this tehsil, much of the best land had 'changed hands', most of it having been taken over by *rajas*, *wazirs*, and influential men or 'the land-grabbers of Baltistan.'⁴²¹ Land was mortgaged to shopkeepers as security against debts, failing repayment the lands would be alienated to them.⁴²² Remarking on the general state of things, an exasperated officer noted, 'The cultivators evidently consider that they are the proprietors of the soil and not the Darbar.'⁴²³ In the Siska district of Baltistan, held in Jagir it was reported that, 'land is sold and mortgaged without permission being applied for', referring presumably to the permission of the Jagirdar.⁴²⁴ One is aware that 'transfer' could also mean simply the transfer of rights of revenue management and not transfer of land itself. However, in the evidence discussed here, the latter is clearly specified.

The pattern of evidence suggests that sale and mortgage took place primarily in towns and cities, and in areas where the pressure on cultivated land was high: frontier areas where very little arable land was available and the

⁴²⁰ *Note on the Ladakh Wazarat in the Jammu Province, 1897*

⁴²¹ *Assessment Report of the Skardu Tehsil of Baltistan, 1901*

⁴²² *Ibid.*

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

Muzaffarabad District where the pressure of cultivated land was second only to the frontier districts.

Why then were the cultivators of Kashmir recorded as hereditary occupancy tenants and not proprietors? For one, this was an observation based on a narrow experience of a dramatically altered agrarian scene; an observation that was incorrectly generalized both temporally and spatially. The preliminary reports on settlement of the valley were written before the assessment of actual tehsils took place and were based on limited enquiries by colonial officials new to Kashmir. The Kashmir that they toured and investigated had just emerged from the most terrible famine in memory, and as discussed above, considerable dislocation may well have led to a disorganization and devaluation of rights in land. That having been said, it does not sufficiently explain the fact that the initial assertion was upheld even after evidence to the contrary became evident. One stated concern was the possibility that a peasantry not keen on cultivating land would readily alienate it. Lawrence wrote,

I do not feel that I yet possess sufficient knowledge of the Kashmiri agricultural classes to pronounce a decided opinion as to the extent which rights in land should be acknowledged, but the fatal case with which certain villages in the Lal Tehsil have been alienated, convinces me that for some years to come, the right to sell land ought to be most jealously restricted.⁴²⁵

⁴²⁵ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.

This above quote indicates a number of important things. There is a clear statement that the settlement took to itself the prerogative of admitting or not admitting right in land and took some time before fixing the 'extent' to which they were to be acknowledged. The stated logic behind withholding proprietary right in land was to prevent the alienation of land for cultivators appeared very keen to sell their lands, usually to big landholders to avoid demands for *begaar*.⁴²⁶ At another level, if the mobility of the agricultural population was to be limited and if they were to be 'attached' to land, one way of ensuring it was for the state to claim a superior right in land than that of the cultivators.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages we have attempted to trace the consequences of control for the production and circulation of grain. The last two sections open up the possibilities of grasping the evolution of a regime of control over time with respect to labor and land.

The settlement inaugurated with much fanfare the project of emancipating cultivators from state control. I have argued so far that the intended result apart, the cultivators found themselves caught between a persistent demand for *mujawaza* and a cash demand that pushed them into the ever eager arms of the *waddars*. The state far from relinquishing control over markets actually

⁴²⁶ *Assessment Report of the Tehsil of Lal Phak, 1890*

tightened it significantly, particularly so during the years of the First World War. Mechanisms of control reacted on the production and circulation of grain in ways that were detrimental to the food security of the Kashmir province. The land under forests becoming the exclusive property of the state and the large areas coming under *chaks* led to the agricultural frontier being frozen. The disincentives attached to the cultivation of food grains contributed to a decline in the area under food grains. The result was a decline in food grain availability. Adding to this the large-scale export of food grains, it is perhaps easier to comprehend the chronic scarcity of grain in the Kashmir province. The preceding discussions also allow us to understand the ways in which the policies of the colonial state itself also lead to the creation of situations of dearth.

Conclusion

There are several limitations evident in this dissertation. I hope, however, it has opened up some possibilities for future research. The present work has suffered due to a lack of sources and perhaps also some limitations in understanding. With respect to material, I eagerly look forward to having the resources and skills required to access vernacular sources. For the time being, I content myself with outlining lines of enquiry that I am keen to pursue and the many ways in which the analysis presented here can be further nuanced and fine tuned. I propose to discuss a few questions here that I could not satisfactorily answer in the present work.

For a narrative based almost entirely on British official sources, an obvious pitfall is that this has been compelled to look at the logic of the 'native', whether the Darbar or the 'people' through the eyes of the British. I would like to add to the theses in the first chapter a finer analysis of the logic of the Darbar so as to better comprehend the relationship it shared with the Raj and how the former perceived the latter. I have suspected on more than one occasion the perils of foisting on a pre-colonial state the assumption that it necessarily does have a coherent logic, or illogic as the British would have it. The uniquely powerful official class of Kashmir, with their propensity to act independently of the state of which they were the bone and sinew, suggests perhaps that the 'state' in Kashmir as a monolithic body existed only in the British official mind. In practice, as my enquiries have hinted, the idea of a

consolidated 'logic' of the Darbar is an elusive one. This would have crucial implications also for the formulations in the second chapter regarding the negotiations that took place between the paramount power and native power holders, seeing as how their negotiations were also mediated by the administrative structures and cultural and political resources of the Darbar.

Due to the reliance on sources generated by the state, despite one's best efforts to maintain criticality, this remains a work centered on understanding the state, and therefore the actors in that the colonial authorities chose to pay attention to. Therefore, the project of unearthing the agency of the local population is limited to the doings of native elites and the city population. There is very little I have been able to offer by way of information or insight about the rural population. With respect of grain specifically, there is very little about rural supply and consumption. The circulation of grain is discussed, as are the mechanisms that regulated it, but the agency whereby it was circulated remains a grey area: who were the people that carried the grain? What were the considerations other than prices and state control that influenced it? I look forward to access the records of the Transport and Supply Department, which would have provided crucial information regarding about these issues. As for the controllers of grain, I am particularly captivated by the waddars and their seemingly meteoric rise; what was the social origin of these people, how and why is it that some of them were able to turn British policies to the advantage and others remained by far as before?

In other words, what is peculiar to certain members of wider groups that enabled them to become 'bigger players'?

At another level, there is the lack of attention to political and cultural questions surrounding grain in particular and the rural world in general. The question of rights in land has been dealt with the last chapter as an illustration of the consequences of, broadly speaking, a regime of control. This has been in retrospect a somewhat presumptuous attempt to enter rural society through the paper trail left by colonialism. Not to undercut the importance of the insights offered, I am aware that the arguments are tentative at best. The question of rights in land, or for that matter rights in or to anything, would have had several dimensions over and above the legislative aspect. For instance, that *zamindar* in the context of Kashmir indicates a cultivator of land and not a controller of land speaks volumes. Following the term *zamindar* and its changing meanings over time and space would form an excellent entry point into debates regarding evolution of identities in Kashmir, among other things.

Another entry point in Kashmiri society and politics would be to write a narrative about grain specifically as food.⁴²⁷ What grains did *zamindars* consume? How and why did this change over time? It is fascinating how the program of state control over grain made food grains out of barley for instance, which were told by Lawrence, was previously grown as fodder. As a

⁴²⁷ For this idea, I am indebted to brief but illuminating conversations with a fellow student at CHS Gaganpreet Singh.

Kashmiri born and brought up in the 1980s, I have grown up with notions of barley, potatoes and maize as inferior foods forced upon us and as signs of evil days. The prospects of tracing the origins of these notions is tantalizing to say the least. On the question of food grains, certain arrears alluded to in my third chapter require considerable illumination. For instance, a discussion of the conditions of production and circulation of non-food crops and the changes in that sector is required to properly understand the implications of control for agricultural production.

A key point, which I have discussed in some detail, is the question of labor. Kashmir was unique when compared with the rest of the subcontinent in that the population was scarcely 'sufficient' to cultivate as much land as the Darbar or Raj would have liked. The control of labor would thus have been a far more pressing question than control of other factors of production. We have outlined in broad strokes the changing relations surrounding land in the third chapter and the associated questions of mobility. An obvious connection here is between the regime of controlling labor and the control of women's fertility. Lawrence appealing for the preservation of baby girls in the interest of land revenue, as discussed above, provides a slim but significant ground for speculation. I look forward to investigating questions of fertility, reproduction and the possibly shifting attitudes of the state to both.

In concluding the conclusion, I can only say that Kashmir's colonial encounter was fraught with contradictory pulls and pushes. Out of the many possible

levels of analysis I have looked at a few, and there is much that remains to be examined and understood.

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