CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521570425 - The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720–1800
Prasannan Parthasarathi
Excerpt
More information

Introduction

Low wages and a degraded status for laborers are undeniable features of contemporary South Asia. In the case of India, substantial numbers of workers are subject to endemic hunger and chronic insecurity as they receive incomes which are both uncertain and insufficient to meet their minimum needs for food, clothing and shelter. The position of laborers, be they industrial or agricultural, urban or rural, men or women, is further weakened by the fact that some 40 percent of the population live below the poverty line and supply for employers a vast "reserve army of unemployed."[1] The situation in Pakistan and Bangladesh is largely similar.

In the opinion of many historians, these conditions are not novel, but have characterized the subcontinent for several centuries. Support for this view may be found in the accounts of European visitors, who since the fifteenth century have described the working people of India as scantily clad, undernourished, poorly paid and subject to the capricious abuses of their political and economic superiors.[2] Historians have often too easily accepted the accounts of these visitors. W. H. Moreland, drawing upon these sources, concluded that in the sixteenth century "the masses lived on the same economic plane" as in the early twentieth century.[3] The opinions of European travelers inform Irfan Habib's magisterial account of the decline of the Mughal Empire, which he traced to peasant revolts in protest against endemic state oppression and consequent poverty.[4] And K. N. Chaudhuri has written of the poverty of weavers in eighteenth-century India, which, in his opinion, accounted for the competitiveness of Indian cloth exports.[5] Tapan Raychaudhuri, writing in the *Cambridge*

[1] For a portrait of conditions of work in contemporary India see Jan Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy* (Cambridge, 1996).
[2] For a survey of these descriptions see W. H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar* (London, 1920; repr. Delhi, 1990), pp. 265–70.
[3] Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 270.
[4] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (Bombay, 1963), chap. 9.
[5] K. N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 274.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521570425 - The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720–1800
Prasannan Parthasarathi
Excerpt
More information

Economic History of India, and Christopher Bayly have concurred with this view.[6]

Despite this apparent consensus, there is growing evidence, at the moment from eighteenth-century South India, that laborers have not always been impoverished. David Washbrook has argued recently that in the late eighteenth century "pariahs" possessed secure claims to incomes and were in a very strong position in the social and economic order. S. S. Sivakumar and Chitra Sivakumar have estimated that the real earnings from agricultural work for *adimai* or dependent cultivators in Chingleput were three times higher in 1795 than in 1976. I have shown that in the late eighteenth century wages in South India compared very favorably with those in Britain. Although contemporary poverty is undeniable, these contributions suggest that a low standard of living was not a long-standing feature of India, but emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[7]

I argue in this work that poverty and low wages were a product of colonial rule. Of course, the association between poverty and colonialism has a long legacy in India and is found in the writings of early nationalist critics of British rule. A very clear statement is contained in the classic work of Romesh Dutt, who traced a decline in standards of living to the nineteenth-century deindustrialization of the subcontinent and the narrowing of sources of wealth which followed:

> India in the eighteenth century was a great manufacturing as well as great agricultural country, and the products of the Indian loom supplied the markets of Asia and of Europe. It is, unfortunately, true that the East Indian Company and the British Parliament . . . discouraged Indian manufactures in the early years of British rule in order to encourage the rising manufactures of England . . . millions

[6] Tapan Raychaudhuri, "The Mid-Eighteenth-Century Background," in Dharma Kumar (ed.), *CEHI*, vol. II, *c. 1757–c. 1970* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 8; C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 37.

[7] David Washbrook, "Land and Labour in Late Eighteenth-Century South India: The Golden Age of the Pariah?," in Peter Robb (ed.), *Dalit Movements and the Meanings of Labour in India* (Delhi, 1993); S. S. Sivakumar and Chitra Sivakumar, *Peasants and Nabobs* (Delhi, 1993), p. 14; Prasannan Parthasarathi, "Rethinking Wages and Competitiveness in the Eighteenth Century: Britain and South India," *Past and Present*, no. 158 (1998). There is also evidence that the nutrition and well-being of South Indian laborers declined in the second half of the nineteenth century. See Lance Brannan, John McDonald and Ralph Schlomowitz, "Trends in the Economic Well-Being of South Indians under British Rule: The Anthropometric Evidence," *Explorations in Economic History*, 31 (1994). These findings also have implications for the Subaltern Studies project. The focus of the Subaltern historians has largely been on the colonial period. However, it is likely that the self-understanding of subaltern groups was very different in the pre-colonial period, given the vastly different social, political and economic conditions. Thus appeals to factors such as primordialism are insufficient to explain the actions of subaltern classes. Rather the evolution of subaltern consciousness must be analyzed in close relation to social, political and economic circumstances.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521570425 - The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720–1800
Prasannan Parthasarathi
Excerpt
More information

of Indian artisans lost their earnings; the population of India lost one great source of their wealth.[8]

According to Dutt, as a consequence of deindustrialization there was an increased dependence upon agriculture, which also came under severe pressures with British rule, chiefly because of the high level of taxation. In our own times Amiya Bagchi is an eloquent proponent of these views.[9]

Nationalist writers have always had their interlocutors. For many decades they came from the ranks of supporters of British rule in India. Agreeing with nationalist analysts, these writers saw British rule as a fundamental break with the pre-colonial past, but they wrote favorably of that rule. Morris D. Morris, who is typical of this position, saw colonialism, and the "westernization" and "modernization" it initiated, as inaugurating a new era of prosperity in India. The British, in this interpretation, brought peace, order and the rule of law which laid the foundations for nineteenth-century growth.[10]

More recently, as a consequence of new scholarship on eighteenth-century South Asia, nationalist interpretations of colonialism and its impact have come under fresh attack. Prior to this work of revision, the eighteenth century was widely considered to be a period of chaos, anarchy and decline. Historians of Mughal India subscribed to this view, as anarchy was seen as a natural consequence of the decline of empire.[11] For imperialist historians, the narrative of eighteenth-century chaos justified the imposition of British rule. Recent scholarship has rejected both these views and recast the eighteenth century as a period of great dynamism and change. It was a time of commercial expansion, with the establishment of market centers and growth in the use of money.[12] It was also a period of profound political change. States in South Asia were transforming themselves to adjust to the new commercial environment. Attempts were made to develop bureaucracies and to rationalize systems of revenue collection.[13] According to Burton Stein, these were responses to the new military demands of the period, most importantly the rise of standing

[8] Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of India*, vol. I, *Under Early British Rule*, 2nd edn. (2 vols., London, 1906; repr. Delhi, 1990), pp. vi–vii.
[9] For a concise statement, see Amiya Bagchi, *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 78–82. Also see Amiya Bagchi, "De-industrialization in India in the Nineteenth Century: Some Theoretical Implications," *Journal of Development Studies*, 12 (1976), pp. 135–64.
[10] Morris D. Morris, "Towards a Reinterpretation of Nineteenth-Century Indian Economic History," *Journal of Economic History*, 23 (1963), pp. 606–18.
[11] An eloquent statement may be found in Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 351.
[12] C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of European Expansion, 1770–1870* (Cambridge, 1983); Frank Perlin, "Proto-Industrialization and Pre-Colonial South Asia," *Past and Present*, no. 98 (1983), pp. 30–95.
[13] Frank Perlin, "State Formation Reconsidered", *MAS*, 19 (1985), pp. 415–80.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521570425 - The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720–1800
Prasannan Parthasarathi
Excerpt
More information

armies, which placed greater fiscal pressures on states in the subcontinent.[14] In Northern India the combination of expanding commerce and changing states led to the rise of a new "middle class" of merchants, bankers and literate groups who stood between the state and agrarian society.[15] From these revisions of the eighteenth century the origins and nature of colonialism themselves have been reinterpreted.

Colonial rule, according to the revisionists, was not an abrupt break with late pre-colonial India, but in many respects was shaped by that past. First, the dynamism of pre-colonial commerce and economic activity shaped and limited colonial transformation and rule. In other words, Indian society was not formless clay that the British could mold as they wished, but possessed its own centers of power and trajectories of change. These not infrequently led, in Christopher Bayly's words, to the "frustration of Europe."[16] Second, many policies of the early colonial state were not revolutionary, but have been identified as continuations of pre-colonial practices. The canonical example comes from South India and is that of the Mysore state under the rule of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. The Mysore state's attempts to command a larger share of resources within its territories by settling revenue demands directly with the cultivators themselves were the inspiration, according to Burton Stein, for the English East India Company's *ryotwari* system. Other Mysorean policies, such as the elimination of the *poligars*, who stood between the ruler and the agrarian producer, were also replicated by the Company.[17] Finally, colonial rule, according to the revisionists, was not solely a product of British actions and activities, but was established with the aid and assistance of Indians. In particular, Indian bankers and merchants lent financial support to the English East India Company, which was critical for the expansion of its political power.[18] To sum up, according to the revisionists, colonial rule was in several respects a continuity with the pre-colonial order and was not, contrary to both nationalist and imperialist accounts, a profound break with that past.

[14] Burton Stein, "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered," *MAS*, 19 (1985), pp. 387–413.
[15] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*.
[16] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, p. 253. The power of late pre-colonial Indian society is also reflected in the vitality into the nineteenth century of many eighteenth-century commercial relations. See David Ludden, "Agrarian Commercialism in Eighteenth Century South India: Evidence from the 1823 Tirunelveli Census," *IESHR*, 25 (1988), pp. 493–519.
[17] Stein, "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered."
[18] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, chap. 6; Bayly, *Indian Society*, chap. 2; Lakshmi Subramanian, *Indigenous Capital and Imperial Expansion* (Delhi, 1996). Eugene Irschick's dialogical approach to colonial culture is consistent with these emphases on indigenous roots to colonialism. See his *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India, 1795–1895* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994).

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521570425 - The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720–1800
Prasannan Parthasarathi
Excerpt
More information

As should be evident, these recent contributions to the history of eighteenth-century South Asia have focused largely on the state, commerce and finance. Far less is known about laborers, the framework of production and the conditions of work. From these perspectives, which are those explored in this work, the rise of colonial rule in South India appears far less continuous with the pre-colonial past. In its policies towards laborers the colonial state reveals its European antecedents as colonial authorities drew not upon the customs of South Indian statecraft but upon English practices. As a consequence, under colonial rule laborers in South India came under immense disciplinary authority and in the process came to lose the economic and political power that they had possessed prior to British rule. This decline in the status and position of laborers, although largely unknown and unexplored,[19] led to a decline in wages and living standards from the late eighteenth century. Therefore, poverty in South Asia did not originate with deindustrialization, as an earlier stream of writings argued, but with the profound political reordering which accompanied British rule.

These conclusions have been reached from a study of weavers in eighteenth-century South India, who were the first to feel the disciplinary weight of the colonial state. South India in the eighteenth century was one of the leading manufacturing regions in the world and the cotton textiles of the region were famous worldwide.[20] Merchants in West Africa demanded them in exchange for slaves, the spice marts of Southeast Asia had an enormous appetite for them, and the consumers of Europe created a ''calico craze'' from the moment they were introduced on a large scale in the late seventeenth century. Well into the eighteenth century cotton textiles were the main point of contact between the English East India Company and South Indians. With the Company's ascendance to political power, this point of contact came increasingly to be focused upon weavers as the English sought to reduce the prices of the textiles. And it

[19] There have been signs in previous studies that the British applied coercion, especially against weavers, but the novelty of British practices has not been apparent as very little is known about the situation of weavers prior to British rule. See for instance D. B. Mitra, *The Cotton Weavers of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1978); Hameeda Hossain, *The Company Weavers of Bengal* (Delhi, 1988); S. Arasaratnam, ''Trade and Political Dominion in South India, 1750–1790: Changing British–Indian Relationships,'' *MAS*, 13 (1979), pp. 19–40 and ''Weavers, Merchants and Company: The Handloom Industry in Southeastern India 1750–90,'' *IESHR*, 17 (1980), pp. 257–81. David Washbrook has pointed to some profound changes with the coming of British rule, but at the same time wants to insist on continuity with the pre-colonial order on the terrain of the logic of capitalism. See his ''Progress and Problems: South Asian Economic and Social History *c.* 1720–1860,'' *MAS*, 22 (1988), pp. 57–96.

[20] According to estimates, in 1750 South Asia as a whole accounted for 25 percent of the world's manufactures. See Paul Bairoch, ''International Industrialization Levels from 1750 to 1980,'' *Journal of European Economic History*, 11 (1982), p. 296.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521570425 - The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720–1800
Prasannan Parthasarathi
Excerpt
More information

was for this reason that weavers were the first to bear the brunt of British power.

Weaving in pre-colonial India, and the trade and production of cotton cloth, cannot be studied in isolation from agriculture, however. The cotton itself was a product of agriculture and much of the textile manufacturing work – from the cleaning and preparation of the cotton to the spinning of the yarn – was done by agriculturalists. Finally, the competitiveness of South Indian textiles on world markets, as I have shown elsewhere, rested upon the enormous productivity of South Indian agriculture.[21] I argue in this work that the productivity of South Indian agriculture derived from the economic and political power of laborers. In pre-colonial South India, conceptions of the moral order which kings were to create and uphold set stringent limits on the use of force and coercion against laborers, in particular against their freedom to migrate. In the absence of methods by which labor could be disciplined, investment came to be enormously important for attracting and spatially fixing laborers. Agricultural improvement made it possible for political authorities and agrarian elites to satisfy producer demands for high and secure incomes. The end result was great dynamism in agriculture and a highly productive agricultural production regime. The Company, and later colonial state, did not share this moral universe. Under British rule state power was used to fix laborers and a powerful incentive for investment in late pre-colonial South India came to be eliminated. The result was stagnation in agriculture. Therefore, colonialism in South India had devastating consequences not only for the standard of living of laborers but also for the dynamism of the economy as a whole.[22]

Although this work takes issue with the revisionist claim for continuity from pre-colonial to colonial India, it finds renewed evidence for the other central revisionist contribution, that of indigenous sources for colonialism. From the perspective of laborers, the indigenous sources of support for British power broaden considerably to include merchants and dominant classes in agriculture. Cloth merchants and *mirasidars* were among the first to grasp the novelty of the Company state and to seek it out to discipline weavers and agrarian producers. This interlocking of colonial authority and dominant Indian groups may explain the resilience of colonialism in India.

[21] The price of grain, at this time the primary source of calories for laborers throughout the world, was twice as expensive in Britain as in South India. As a consequence, although real wages may have been higher in South India than in Britain, money wages were far lower. Thus cloth prices were far lower than in Europe. See Parthasarathi, "Rethinking Wages and Competitiveness," *Past and Present*.

[22] This account may be contrasted with the conventional focus on the drain, which is central to nationalist accounts, as the culprit.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521570425 - The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720–1800
Prasannan Parthasarathi
Excerpt
More information

The term South India has been used in several ways in historical scholarship. In its broadest usage, it has been employed to refer to the whole of peninsular India.[23] A more limited definition is used in this study and it corresponds closely to that of Burton Stein.[24] South India as defined here refers to peninsular India south of the Raichur Doab on the west and Ganjam on the east. (Modern Kerala has been excluded on the grounds that it had no cotton cultivation and little textile production to speak of.) Strictly speaking, the region is southeastern India, but for the sake of simplicity, it will be referred to as South India.

Stein has adopted this definition of South India on the basis of social, cultural and political features which came to be shared throughout the region. According to Stein:

> a portion of the southern peninsula may be demarcated on the basis of persistent and important interrelationships over most of the medieval period. In political, cultural, and social terms all of Tamil country and the southern parts of Karnataka and Andhra may be seen as bound together by the movement of peoples of all kinds – from Brahmans to the most vulnerable of landless folk – cult practices, and shifting patterns of overlordship. The outcome of these diverse interactions was a region which, while complex in language, some aspects of social structure, and cultural forms, was a uniformity which sets it off from other, physically contiguous territories.[25]

This sharing of cultural, social and political features continued into the eighteenth century. To them may be added others drawn from the manufacture of cotton textiles and the circumstances of the manufacturers.

South India, as defined here, encompassed the major weaving centers of peninsular India. These centers supplied local as well as export markets and weavers throughout the region produced very similar sorts of cloth. Although there would have been countless local variations, the many centuries of cultural and social interaction had created broad similarities of taste in the region. The standardization of production would have been even more striking in the case of cloth supplied to the European Companies. The bulk of the cloth demanded by the Companies, as well as European private traders, consisted of only a few varieties. The most important were calicoes of standard dimensions and counts. In the eighteenth century the sort of calico known as *longcloth* was manufactured in coastal villages from Ganjam, in the northeast, to Tinnevelly, at the southern tip of the subcontinent, a distance of some 800 miles. Many of

[23] See, for example, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India* (Delhi, 1966), chap. 2.
[24] Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi, 1980), chap. 2.
[25] Stein, *Peasant State*, p. 57.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521570425 - The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720–1800
Prasannan Parthasarathi
Excerpt
More information

these villages would also have been populated by the same weaving castes. In addition, throughout the region, weavers received advances from merchants for the financing of production and the contractual terms for these advances were broadly similar.

The interior districts were an integral part of this South Indian region because of their importance as the producing zones for cotton. As chapter 2 will show, the cotton utilized by weavers on the coast came from great distances in the interior of South India. Here were found districts whose ecological and political features led to specialization in the cultivation of cotton and the trade in this product became a crucial link between coastal and interior South India.

South India as defined here was also linked by the movement of textile manufacturers. There is a great deal of evidence that weavers, spinners and other textile specialists had a long history of movement and migration within the region. In the interior, weavers moved about freely between the Baramahal, Mysore and the Ceded Districts and this movement continued well into the eighteenth century. Another important axis of migration was from Andhra to the Tamil country, which may have been part of the larger southward migration of Telugu-speaking peoples which began in the late medieval period.[26]

[26] A striking feature of textile production in eighteenth-century South India was that the knowledge and skills of weavers declined as one moved from north to south. Some of the finest muslins in the world were produced in South India at this time and one of the major centers was Chicacole, close to the northern tip of the South Indian region defined here. By contrast, ordinary calico, a very mediocre quality cloth, was the finest cloth produced in Tinnevelly, at the southern end of the region. Centers of fine cloth manufacture were to be found in the Tamil country, but these were in areas settled by Telugu migrants. The most prominent of these lay in the environs of Kanchipuram and Arni in the northern Tamil country and the muslins manufactured in these places were reputed to rival those of Bengal. The weaving, however, was carried out by Telugu weavers and the spinning by Telugu-speaking *parayars* who used techniques virtually identical to those used in Chicacole. For a description of techniques in Arni see G. Bidie, *Catalogue of Articles of the Madras Presidency and Travancore Collected and Forwarded to the Calcutta International Exhibition of 1883* (Madras, 1883). For Chicacole see E. B. Havell, *Reports on the Arts and Industries of the Madras Presidency Submitted by Mr. E. B. Havell during Years 1885–88* (Madras, 1909), p. 25.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521570425 - The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720–1800
Prasannan Parthasarathi
Excerpt
More information

1 Weavers and merchants 1720–1760

It is no easy matter to reconstruct the relationship between weavers and merchants in the early eighteenth century.[1] Much of the material in the European Company records, the major source for the social and economic history of the period, deals largely with the Companies' external trade and their commercial activities in South India. However, the ninety years of documents, from 1670 to 1760, which comprise the English East India Company's Fort St. George and Fort St. David Consultations and upon which this chapter is based, also contain occasional glimpses of local social and economic life. Some of the most valuable insights are found during crises in cloth production. At these times the English interrogated their merchants to understand the reasons for the shortfalls in cloth production and delivery. On occasion, Company servants themselves ventured into the weaving villages. These moments are veritable gold mines for the historian.

In this chapter, the early eighteenth-century sources are supplemented wherever possible with material from later in the century. The later material is much more plentiful and far more detailed, but I have used such evidence carefully. It is not used to introduce new elements to the picture or argument and it is only drawn upon when it is consistent with evidence from the first half of the century. I have used it to fill out the picture – to give it flesh and blood, so to speak. The skeleton, however, has been constructed from early eighteenth-century material.

Much of the material on merchants and weavers in the English East India Company records pertains to weaving villages that supplied cloth to the Company at Madras and Fort St. David (near Pondicherry). This material, which was drawn from a large number of villages dispersed over a wide area of the Tamil country and eastern Andhra, indicates that the relations between merchants and weavers throughout the area were broadly similar. In addition, evidence from other parts of South India –

[1] This point has been made by Arasaratnam, "Weavers, Merchants and Company," p. 258.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521570425 - The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720–1800
Prasannan Parthasarathi
Excerpt
More information

dating from both the early and late eighteenth century – suggests that these relations were found widely.

The Weavers

Although in recent times South India has become famous for its silks, especially the lush, silk saris of Kanchipuram, these cloths are of recent origin and they began to be manufactured only in the nineteenth century. Before 1800 cotton and wool were the major fibers in South India, with cotton accounting for much of the total textile production. While cotton cloth was manufactured in many parts of South India, the production of woolens (in the form of blankets or cumblies) was concentrated in the cooler and higher elevations of the interior where herds of goat could be reared. This weaving was done largely by *kurumbars* who shepherded the goats, sheared the wool, prepared the yarn and wove the cloth.

The majority of cotton weavers in South India were professional weavers; that is, work at the loom represented their sole source of earnings. However, a small number of South Indians took up weaving in order to supplement earnings from other pursuits. This latter group was largely found in the dry or plains areas of South India and their small numbers suggest that they accounted for only a small fraction of total cloth production.[2] Many were primarily agriculturalists who followed weaving seasonally.[3] For them, weaving not only represented some additional income, but may have also provided some insurance to help weather bad times. As was also the case with spinning, weaving was work which could be taken up even in times of drought when work in agriculture was either unavailable or held out little prospect of success. Others who worked at the loom on occasion included barbers, *chucklers* (cobblers), *dhers* (tanners) and scavengers.[4]

These weavers, being of low skill, tended to produce coarser varieties of cloth. This production supplied the needs of the weaver and his family as well as outside customers who by and large tended to be located in the immediate vicinity of the weaver. Of these part-time or seasonal weavers, the majority worked their looms only upon receiving orders for cloth and

[2] In dry areas agriculture was rain-fed, and thus seasonal. This may be contrasted with wet areas where agriculture was based on river water and extensive irrigation systems. For a discussion of this distinction see David Ludden, *Peasant History in South India* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 20–1.

[3] Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar* (3 vols., London, 1807), vol. I, p. 218.

[4] Bellary District Records, 1804, vol. 398, pp. 191–8, TNA; "Sundry Information about Weaving in Dindigul Taluk, Measurements, and Nature of Dyeing," n.d., Mackenzie Collection, Shelf No. D-3014, Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras University.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org