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978-0-521-29770-7 - The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and
Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India

Eric Stokes

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LONDON NEW YORK NEW ROCHELLE

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521216845

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First published 1978

First paperback edition 1980

Re-issued in this digitally printed version 2007

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Stokes, Eric.

The peasant and the Raj.

(Cambridge South Asian studies; 23)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Land tenure – India – History. 2. Peasantry – India – History. 3. Peasant uprisings – India – History.

I. Title. II. Series.

HD875.S76 301.44'43'0954 77–77731

ISBN 978-0-521-21684-5 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-29770-7 paperback

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PREFACE

Most of the studies collected in this volume have already appeared in symposia or learned journals. Apart from the correction of the odd error and the addition of an occasional reference they have all been reproduced as they first appeared. Inevitably they exhibit some measure of intellectual progression. For example, the reader will observe that many of the studies of the 1857 uprising in the countryside were directed to criticising and amending Dr S. B. Chaudhuri's straightforward thesis that the rural areas rose as one man and that the principal cause was the loss of land rights to the urban moneylender and trader under the pressure of the British land revenue system. Instead my researches suggested that violence and rebellion were often fiercest and most protracted where land transfers were low and the hold of the moneylender weakest. Later studies acknowledge, however, that the mere transfer of proprietary title tells us little about its political, social and economic effects, which could vary enormously according to the strength and homogeneity of the political and lineage organisation of the peasantry. Similarly while in earlier essays the action of local communities was analysed (as it was by contemporary British officials) in terms of local caste subdivisions, there is increasing awareness that in the crisis of 1857 rural society did not abandon traditional political organisation structured along vertical cross-caste lines. Even among the Jats of the upper Ganges-Jumna Doab the *got* or maximal lineage was too dispersed to form a local territorial unit for political cooperation and action. Hence the importance of the local multicaste organisation of the *tappa* and *khap* as well as the still wider grouping of the *dharra* or faction. The Introduction seeks to put these matters in perspective.

I would like to express my acknowledgements to the editors and publishers of the following:

Cambridge University Press

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Paper 1: The Past and Present Society, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, England. This article first appeared in *Past and Present, a journal of historical studies*, no. 58 (February 1973).

Paper 2: First published in *Land Tenure and Peasant in South Asia*, ed. R. E. Frykenberg (Orient Longman 1977).

Paper 3: First published in *Modern Asian Studies*, 9, 4 (1975).

Paper 4: First published in *Indian Society and the Beginnings of Modernisation*, ed. C. H. Philips and Mary D. Wainwright, (School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1976).

Paper 5: The Past and Present Society, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, England. This article first appeared in *Past and Present, a journal of historical studies*, no. 48 (August 1970).

Paper 6: First published in *Bengal Past and Present* (Diamond Jubilee Number 1967).

Paper 7: First published in *The Historical Journal*, xii, 4 (1969).

Paper 8: First published in *Elites in South Asia*, ed. E. R. Leach and S. N. Mukherjee (Cambridge 1970).

Paper 9: First published in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, xii, 2 (1975).

Paper 10: First published in *Bengal Past and Present*, 95, 1, no. 180 (1976).

Paper 12: First published in *South Asia*, no. 6 (1976).

Although in this form of intellectual inquiry I have been often ploughing something of a lonely furrow I have benefited enormously from the general climate of debate created by colleagues and pupils, whom it would be invidious to single out but some of whom are cited during the course of the book. In tending the fitful flame of authorship every writer is aware of the importance of domestic felicity and tolerance. To my wife and daughters, who have lived too long with a work they have known under the title of *The Pheasant and the Rat*, my gratitude goes deepest.

E.T.S.

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