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RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION IN HANDLOOM WEAVING IN
THE MID-THIRTIES*

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Abstract

Descriptions of the handloom industry in the thirties contain the suggestion that competition with machine-made cloth induced adaptations rather than a passive decay in the textile handicrafts. The main components of this process were diversification into higher valued products, from cotton to noncotton for instance, accompanied by differentiations in the technoeconomic structure to which the rapid growth of handloom factories and small scale powerlooms bears witness. The paper attempts a survey of the second of these components, relational changes.

The process in its most general form involved reduction of 'independent' weavers to 'dependence', that is, a progressive erosion of the right of possession over final product. Two basic forms of dependence can be distinguished: contract for sale of products tied to a particular merchant and contract for sale of labour. At the other end emerged large producers usually with interests in cloth trade. Pure commercial capital was thus becoming differentiated and weaker as a class.

Regional differences in the strength and direction of the basic movement were considerable. The industry in the south, including Bombay-Deccan and Hyderabad, proved more progressive with greater stratification among producers while in the east and the north, merchants remained entrenched, collaborating or competing with large producer. The paper locates the preconditions for this divergence in the antecedent structures of handloom weaving in these regions.

The coexistence of modern and traditional technologies in Indian textiles has proved stable historically. What characteristics has the traditional sector's growth process assumed under these conditions? Has the coexistence been secured through a passive survival or dynamic adjustments? If the latter then what constituted these adjustments? These are some of the questions that form a background to the present study on production relations in handloom weaving.

In current historiography the problem of longterm evolution of crafts continues to be posed in terms of decay and survival. The question asked is, what prevented their elimination rather than what determined their growth. This practice not only renders detailed analyses of growth-process and conditions for growth unnecessary but leads to conjectures about the latter. For instance, theories which predict deindustrialisation allow for a very static conception of production relation in crafts -- typically, simple commodity producers surviving by self-exploitation. On the contrary, historical sources pertaining to the early twentieth century suggest the presence of accumulation and growth within the crafts. In other words, survival was achieved not statically through a fossilization of the system but by precisely its opposite.^{1/}

Quantitative descriptions of the industry reflect this dynamism. Thus cotton yarn consumed in the handlooms as a whole expanded more than three times between 1900 and 1939. Contrast this with a 40 per cent decline in cloth production in the third quarter of the nineteenth century according to the best estimates available.^{2/} Much of the twentieth century statistics is too aggregative and hardly do justice to the complexity and segmentation within handloom weaving. When suitably readjusted the data reveal that growth was in fact achieved not by way of import substitution, as a straight reading would suggest, but through continuous diversification into high value-added, skill-intensive, technologically complex products - from plain cotton fabrics to silks, mixed and synthetic fabrics, for instance (Table 1). In the process market-shares in quantum of the entire unorganised sector (handlooms and small powerlooms) were maintained and, in value, marginally increased after the mid-thirties.

Much of this growth had been taking place in handloom factories and workshops, while powerlooms and centralised processing units emerged as outgrowths of the handlooms. In Bombay-Deccan and Hyderabad roughly half of the entire weaver population had been reduced to a loomless proletariat by the late thirties. Those who were not dispossessed were working under increasingly rigid contractual arrangements. If Maxwell-Lefroy and Ansorge's statement that, at the turn of the century, 'the single weaver or family is probably the commonest unit in India' is accepted in its spirit, then developments in the next decades consisted in a continuous erosion of the status of the households, who were replaced by co-operative work of different forms.

Table 1: Market Shares in Textiles in the Mid-thirties

		Quantity (in million yards)			Value (in million Rs.)		
		Hand- looms	Power- looms	Others	Hand- looms	Power looms	Others
1931-32	Cotton	154.8	..	0	42.3	..	0
	Non-cotton	42.0	..	0	20.9	..	0
	Total Shares	(33.2)	(-)	(66.3)	(18.4)	(-)	(51.6)
1937-38	Cotton	138.4 (24.1)	(-)	425.7 (75.9)	41.5 (36.5)	(-)	72.2 (63.5)
	Non-cotton	64.9 (72.4)	12.8 (1.3)	12.0 (13.3)	18.0 (25.7)	8.7 (17.4)	3.5 (6.9)
	Total Shares	(30.7)	(1.9)	(67.4)	(48.6)	(5.3)	(46.1)

Notes: Quantity and value of noncotton fabric estimated on the basis of data compiled by the various Tariff Board enquiries on cotton and silk. Figures in bracket represent percentages of total quantity or value of each type of fabric. 'Noncotton' includes silk and silk-substitutes (synthetics, wild silks, spun, etc.), mixed and handspun cotton fabrics. 'Others' includes cotton mills and imports. These estimates are derived in my paper 'Size and Structure of Handloom Weaving in the Mid-thirties', forthcoming in Indian Economic and Social History Review.

Buchanan and Gadgil, the early chroniclers of industrialisation, sensed that industrialisation in capitalist enterprises had come to include the handicrafts rather than taking place at their expense. Yet in their writings and in those of the contemporary crafts experts there remained a gap between the level of empirical analysis, namely static description of forms of relationships and the generalisation implied, a process wherein all such forms were transitional. Consequently while the generalisation was far too general to be seriously followed, the particular was reduced to a catalogue, similarities and contrasts between the elements of which remained arbitrary in the absence of a conceptual framework.^{3/}

This study attempts to reinterpret the facts as descriptions of a transition and explores the transition in its general aspects. It begins with a description of the basic movement, reduction of 'independent' weavers to 'dependence' and clarification of what the terms meant ('The General Tendency...'). Forms of dependence varied and so did the nature of the capitalist associated. These differences which, moreover, had a regional component, will be brought out in the next two sections by analysing the data regionally ('Forms of Dependence ...' and 'Forms of Capital'). This will be followed by a section proposing certain hypotheses about why relational changes took different routes in different regions ('Preconditions'). Finally, implications of the movement for the long term growth-process and structural change in textiles will be discussed ('Conclusion'). This section will propose tentative answers to the questions we have started with.

The main intent of this paper is to describe and classify relational changes. Explanations must refer to the context in which the crafts functioned, especially competition from machine-made cloth. There is a sense in which crafts-history can be seen as an 'articulation', between exogenous processes, in this case market-induced, and the complex structure already in existence. This sense can only be explored in the larger study envisaged.

The General Tendency and Terminological Questions

Reference to a material and moral decay in the textile handicrafts was as frequent at the end of the nineteenth century as in the earlier decades. The famines of the last quarter proved the weavers the most vulnerable of the rural classes. They were the first to be reduced to starvation because they had no store of grain and as soon as grain became dear, demand for their cloth ceased. 'Most of them are unfitted for the heavy labour of the ordinary relief works'.^{4/} Town weavers reacted politically. Behind the food riots that broke out in Nagpur on the eve of the 1896 famine, weavers were 'prominent among the ringleaders'.^{5/} Where decay was gradual and resistance did not find an immediate object protest turned back on society. Thus Bankura silk rearers in the 1910s were referred in official records as criminal tribes.^{6/}

In the twentieth century political resistance was replaced by a state of resignation. For the official engaged in upliftment this mood was translated into 'stupidity and ignorance', for any arbitrary intervention aroused only suspicion and incredulity among the craftsmen.

The series of reports produced in the thirties made it sufficiently clear that the concrete economic process reflected in all this was not an all-embracing decline, as the nationalist writers interpreted them to be, but a differentiation. A distinction came to be made between the 'rank and file', the 'waifs and strays of the community' and the large producer for whom the former represented a proletariat. The ordinary weaver, 'wherever he survives today is eking out a miserable subsistence by working as a mere wage-earner in the numerous handloom factories and powerloom mills'.^{7/} In the mid-thirties, to which this statement refers, factory workers were numerically a minority. But even those outside the factories, i.e. those not yet dispossessed of their looms, were being delivered of the right of possession over output and effective control of labour process -- 'relieved of the responsibility', as the Tariff Board put it.

In contemporary terminology this represented reduction of 'independent' weavers to various forms and degrees of 'dependence'. The precise characteristics to which these terms referred were not necessarily identical nor always specified. In spite of this inexactitude the underlying distinction was real and easily grasped. Independence was defined as right of possession over finished goods, a right actually exercised through sale to consumers direct or to the merchant who bid highest. Sale was necessarily not tied to a particular buyer. Typically an independent weaver would be a travelling salesman, a hawker, selling at the weekly village market, or, as with rural crafts engaged in making agricultural implements, working to orders from users. Dependence, by contrast, implied tied sale, an arrangement with one particular buyer, usually a merchant employing many producers. While this definition suggests that the movement was one confined to the sphere of circulation, it is in the distinction between various forms and shades of dependence that decisive differences in relations of production become apparent.

The general tendency could progress towards a system of contracts for sale of products or contracts for sale of labour-power. Thus, a dependent weaver may or may not retain the right to sell to other parties if not satisfied with the terms. In the former case he is a seller of cloth, in the second, a seller of labour. He bargains over price in one situation and over wage in the other. He may himself decide on technology and product composition or leave the decisions to the merchant in which case the merchant can become producer. A seller of labour, moreover, may work on his own loom or on the looms of others. This relatively minor distinction separates out the handloom factories from any contractual arrangement.

The distinction between price-contractual dependence and wage-employment gets blurred in the typical 'putting out' system wherein the capitalist supplies raw materials and receives back cloth. Crafts history often treats this form of contract as homogeneous and undifferentiated and merely emphasises its distinctiveness vis-a-vis freedom of sale. In the present case, however, the outward form could be consistent with completely dissimilar relations between

capital and labour, dissimilar kinds of capital and, therefore, potentialities to progress in different directions. The person who organises the transaction can be a merchant buying cloth, a yarn-merchant or moneylender receiving cloth in repayment of past debts or a large producer employing wage-workers. These deeper distinctions become apparent when the secondary characteristics of the transaction concerned are analysed. The chart below, summarising the contexts in which forms of dependence are distinguished, lists the characteristics to be observed.^{3/}

The first two rows of the chart refer to the yarn side of the transaction wherein a price-contract weaver buys his yarn and a wage-worker receives it. Buying of yarn is characterised by the presence of debts to yarn merchant or, where purchased in cash with borrowed money, to moneylender. Buying is also characterised by bargaining on price which takes place afresh with each round of supply. Similar price-negotiations and terminable contracts distinguish cloth transactions of price-contract weavers. Wages on the other hand, though not stable over a long run, are not necessarily revised between rounds of advance. In brief, presence of production loans and bargaining on price are the characteristics of buying-and-selling systems. Conversely limited incidence of indebtedness and payment which is unambiguously compensation for labour are the indicators of wage employment.

Broadly speaking handloom weaving in Bombay-Deccan, Hyderabad and the deep south was witness to a greater extension of intra-producer differentiation. In all three regions producers formed a powerful class and participated in trade. Combined with immigration of a dispossessed work force in Deccan and Hyderabad, conditions there were more favourable for development of wage-contracts leading to full-fledged handloom factories. In Bengal and the east coast, in contrast, a prior penetration of commercial capital and emergence of comprador classes had made the merchant-producer difference fundamental. Preexisting differentiations within the producer class were superseded and undermined. Cases of collapse of weaver aristocracy were reported from Bengal until the thirties as finance and trading

Characteristics of Forms of Dependence

	Price Contractual	Wage Employment
Supply of Raw Material	<p>Obtained in kind</p> <p>credit sale, interest implicit in differential prices of yarn, or interest explicit</p> <p>yarn price flexible and negotiable</p>	Interest free advance
	<p>Obtained in cash or money-advances, interest explicit or interest implicit in differential prices of cloth (moneylending)</p> <p>Production loans ensure tied sale of cloth</p>	<p>Production loans absent</p> <p>Consumption loans ensure tied sale of labour-power</p>
Supply of Finished Product	<p>Post-weaving price-fixation, haggling and complaints of cheating on price</p> <p>Price fixed under terminable contract</p> <p>Final price subject to commission/rentals/discounts and arbitrary exactions</p>	<p>Rates fixed by prior agreement</p> <p>Contracts of permanent tenure (stable piece or time rates)</p> <p>Does not arise, wage is labour charge alone</p>
Nature of Capitalist	Usually yarn merchant or money-lender	Usually large producer
Capitalist's Response to Crisis	Termination of contract	Wage cuts

capital continued to consolidate itself as a class. Alongside these pure forms there were numerous variants in existence. In northern India, especially in Punjab, moneylending and merchant capital was powerful and closely integrated together until the mid-twenties when its hold on production was loosened to some extent, presumably owing to enforcement of legislations restricting usury and employment of usurious income. Parallely large producers had also survived, either independently as competitors or in collaboration with merchants as subcontractors or 'karkhanadars'. In the subcontract system the two pure forms converged.

The contrasting tendencies in relations of production can be understood in the context of broader regional distinctions. Dispersed location, predominantly rural character, greater incidence of part-time weaving, of coarser, plainer weaving -- this interrelated complex of characteristics distinguished the north and the east from the southern handlooms, more urbanised and more skill-intensive. The small scale and low skill-content of village weaving restricted concentration of capital in production. The merchant, on the other hand, combined trades and interlocked branches. His nonspecialised character, reduced dependence on weaving, made him less sensitive to conditions within weaving (see also 'Preconditions' below).

The context in which independent weavers were getting reduced to dependence was that of a slowly growing and sharply fluctuating market for cotton cloth. Competition from mill cloth was intensified in the thirties after tariff restrictions enabled the mills to diversify into finer spinning and weaving. Competition, however, did not eliminate options for the handlooms. For, the scope of product differentiation between mill and handloom cloths was considerable. Preference-rigidities ensured that a large segment of the market remained beyond the reach of the mills. Specifically, diversification into the more expensive non-cotton fabrics could be a successful way out but there were strong barriers to entry, especially for the rank and file.^{9/}

The uncertainties found expression in the numerous extra charges, commissions and discounts, which the professional merchant demanded when approached to undertake sale of cloth on behalf of the independent weaver. The speculative nature of sale was reflected in the frequent allegation of cheating on price. Along with the ability to bear such non-contractual obligations, creditworthiness represented barriers to independence. The weaver who wished to sell to the highest bidder must wait and must persuade his money-lender or yarn-dealer to wait for repayment of debts. The mere possession of a loom was not enough because the loom had little redeemable value. Only the owner of a number of looms or one otherwise propertied could afford to remain independent.

But while the vast majority was thus excluded from freedom of sale by market-uncertainties, those who managed to diversify and survive were doubly better off: earning a higher unit rate of profit and sharing a market with fewer competitors. They could expand scale and conduct contractual rather than speculative transactions. Under the circumstance of a continuous polarisation the category independence was losing concreteness. Independence was therefore purely a transitional characteristics.

The ordinary weaver preferred contractual arrangements for the security of employment, and hence a certain stability in earnings, it entailed. Besides the prospects of getting continuous work, contract-work and especially wage-employment eliminated bargaining and deferment of payments as could happen to an independent weaver.^{10/} Preference for permanent contract can be understood also in the context of several other circumstances which contributed to insecurity. The presence of marginalised, itinerant, part-time and immigrant weavers was an invariable feature of the factory centres and posed a threat to settled, specialised weavers. Bombay-Deccan, Amritsar, Salem - major concentrations of handloom factories - were never short of a reserve army. A large proportion of the karkhana workers consisted of recent settlers and a population still highly mobile.^{11/}

The market excluded not merely by means of uncertainties and high costs of risk-bearing but also by creating new economies of scale. This happened as handloom market came to be regionally integrated in this period, a concern prominent in FFC, and intra-handloom competition in selected products intensified. At the same time need for interventions in technology may have been reinforced by a deterioration in quality of work, especially in decorated cloth, to which crafts-researchers at the turn of the century frequently referred.^{12/} Some of the product-lines to come under large scale production such as mixed fabrics of Deccan and Hyderabad were in fact mass produced decorated cloths.

The composition of textile workers according to status at the end of the thirties is brought out in the following table adapted from FFC. The latter conducted a census into the question, no details however were supplied as to how the definitions were operationalised.^{13/} As other similar attempts revealed such measurements were inevitably fraught with ambiguities.^{14/} The FFC data nevertheless suggest a certain pattern in the regional differences.

Table 2 shows that pure wage employment had progressed much more in the south. On Bengal no direct estimates were supplied by FFC. But descriptive accounts available from the three provincial reports (1929, 1937 and 1940) as well as FFC suggest that handloom karkhanas as yet did not exist in Bengal while an uncertain, but small, percentage was cooperativised. In Table 2 TEC's estimates for the early fifties have been readjusted to get a rough idea of the proportions in 1937-38. A decade and a half later, handloom factories explained 4 per cent of the weavers and cooperatives 8 per cent, in Bengal. Factories, therefore, were a late development in the east. For Madras comparable proportions exist for 1951-54 which suggest a doubling of the percentage working in the factories, from 8 to 16, while the percentage under cooperatives had increased from 4 to 14.^{15/} Where the cooperative was a marketing agency the inducement for collectivisation was much the same as in the case of weavers driven to karkhana work

Table 2: Status of Handloom Weavers by Province, 1940

(No. in thousands)

	Independent		On Contract		Factory Workers		Cooperativised		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Bombay	23.8	21	28.0	24	63.3	54	2.0	1	117.1	100.0
Deccan States	2.0	15	8.7	70	0.8	7	..	.	12.9	100.0
Madras	119.8	28	256.6	60	34.2	8	17.1	4	427.7	100.0
Travancore	9.0	47	4.2	21	5.7	32	..	..	19.0	100.0
Hyderabad	28.6	26	35.4	32	43.5	40	1.3	2	109.0	100.0
Punjab	206.6	58	139.3	39	6.4	2	3.5	1	355.9	100.0
Bengal ^{3/}	72.7	36	129.3	64	..	..	..	..	202.0	100.0
Bihar	100.2	98	2.3	2	..	..	0.2	..	102.7	100.0
Orissa	10.0	20	39.5	79	0.3	..	0.3	..	50.0	100.0

Note: (a) Based on TEC data for 1951-54

or contracts under the master weaver. The cooperative weavers were 'in fact wage-earning weavers with employment guaranteed to them by the societies'.^{16/} In Bombay the percentages stabilised after the late-thirties although shifts between handloom and powerloom factories occurred.^{17/} In Punjab percentage of handloom factory workers is not available for the early fifties, but the proportion of powerloom workers had increased from negligible to 16 per cent of full time weavers.

There were also systematic correlations between growth differences between regions and the nature and extent of organisational changes experienced. As shown in Table 3, growth of loomage was generally negative in the east during 1921 to 1940 while it was moderate to high in other regions, Punjab and Hyderabad showing no definite trend. FFC data suggest that percentage of idle looms to total was also higher in the east. It was high in the north as well but actual employment intensity may have been even lower in the

Table 3: Loomage by Province, 1921 to 1940

	(in thousands)							
	Bombay	Madras	Hyd- era- bad	UP	Punjab	Bengal	Bihar	Orissa
1921(Census)	100.0	169.4	115.4	..	270.5	213.9	124.0	40.6
1932(ITBC)	100.0	225.0	140.0	87.5 ^{a/}	192.3 ^{a/}	200.0	113.0	37.0
1940(FFC)	117.1	340.5	114.5	213.2 ^{b/}	268.7 ^{b/}	142.5	92.5 ^{b/}	38.0

Notes: (a) Loom Census, 1931; (b) ITBS, 1940

east adjusted for the larger proportion of part time weavers there. The last characteristics, again, points to closer connection between crafts and agriculture in the east which could have acted as a block to the emergence of a dispossessed labour force (see also the next section). Bulk of the southern weavers, in contrast, were wholly dependent on weaving.

Do wages and earnings of craftsmen reflect the general tendency? If it is true that security of employment drove independent weavers to various forms of dependence then wage-trends should display increasing stability over time. And if piece-rates are roughly uniform then one would expect dependent weavers to earn larger monthly or annual income than independent weavers.

The data base, however, is notoriously weak. While major sources did usually collect information on craftsmen's wages, when assembled, they are far from enough to construct product-specific and location-specific series. Until the appearance of FFC, data on earnings were not collected for the groups separately but referred to an 'average craftsman' whose very existence can be questioned. Besides, the original and reliable form in which wage data were (and could be) obtained was by piece, but these were invariably presented as earnings over time thereby incorporating assumptions about intensity of employment which were rarely made explicit.

Roughly from 1925 to 1940 money wages were falling all over India and across products, but so were product prices.^{18/} Weavers' share in net product, however, was fairly stable, perhaps even increased in cotton and silk between 1931 and 1937. The rise may reflect the ambiguous status of independent weavers. The latter included many nascent large producers whose earnings, since these could not be treated as mercantile profits, must have been classified along with wages. During the second Tariff Board enquiry on cotton the Bombay Government, who went into the question in some detail furnished statistics which showed that wages were relatively more stable in towns such as Surat in which factories commanded a larger percentage of the labour force. Later, in the fifties, the Textile Enquiry Committee found that compared to the prewar level both real and money wages were higher in the early fifties.^{19/} A contemporary ILO study on Madras corroborated the tendency and suggested that the rise reflected to some extent greater upward flexibility of the earnings of dependent weavers, as compared to that of the independent or cooperative weavers, though the absolute

level of earnings of the former may have been lower and widely variable across districts.^{20/} On the other hand, the series of reports on Bengal published between 1929 and 1940 indicated a drastic fall in daily wages of especially the silk weavers. The rates, in 1940, were among the lowest in India.^{21/}

About wage level differentials, data on Madras, again from the early fifties, do suggest that factory and hired workers were better off compared to independent, dependent and cooperative weavers. The difference was attributed to security of employment. The Bombay Economic and Industrial Survey Committee (1938-40) came up with similar findings. Kakade found for Sholapur that wages of factory labour varied positively with the size of establishment and were probably more stable as well.^{22/} These are admittedly fragments and leave the question of wage-trends and differentials open for further investigation.

Forms of Dependence and Characteristics of the Proletariat

This section assembles the evidence from eight provinces. It brings out the nature of the stratification among the rank and file which professed to a greater degree towards wage-contract in the south. The southern evidence suggest, moreover, that proletarianization assimilated and utilised parallel tendencies of social marginalisation of ordinary weavers. The reserve army was constituted of distinct social groups - this fact may well explain its formation as a class in the southern region at first.

In the towns of Hyderabad - Paithan, Aurangabad, Armur, Jalna, Gulbarga etc. - where, in the mid-thirties handloom factories were a common sight, two parallel hierarchies were distinguished. Loomowning weavers working on contracts under cloth merchants or themselves buying yarn and selling cloth were contrasted with those dispossessed of looms and, 'though hereditary weavers, are entirely dependent both for their looms and work on other more fortunate weavers who employ them in their own factories'. The former included the master-weavers and large producers who both received

orders from cloth merchants for themselves and also subcontracted it to the loomless weavers. For such work the latter were paid a wage less than the merchant's piece rates, the difference being accounted for as 'rental' on the looms supplied by the master-weaver.^{23/} Pure buying and selling involved interest-bearing debts. Such weavers obtained yarn from wholesale yarn merchants on a month's free credit. On lapse of the moratorium, interest was charged at 12 per cent per annum from the date of issue.^{24/}

If the master-weavers are excluded, the small scale buyers and sellers were surviving precariously. Uncertainty of employment was great. Towards the close of the thirties they were in a minority, forming about a third of the population of weavers and were rarely found in the large urban centres where wage-employment was more common.^{25/}

The evidence from silk weaving in Bombay clarified the notion of independence. It meant precisely freedom of sale to whichever party the weaver wished, although in actual practice finished products were often handed over to the yarn dealer as repayment of debts. Hence it also meant short term debts. Finally no term of contract was permanent. The weaver depended on the sowkars 'only to the extent of that yarn'.^{26/} The number of such weavers was dwindling.

The ambiguity involved in classifying a household weaver who has freshly lost his independence was reflected in a debate that arose over the term bargaining. It was settled that most of the weavers (of Surat) were excluded from bargaining over price or quality of raw material advanced to them but, in fact, bargained about their wages. Indeed time rates were already common in Surat silk weaving. No details, however, are available on the process of wage-fixation in Surat.^{27/}

Cotton weaving in the towns of Deccan, especially Sholapur, was thoroughly surveyed by Joshi (survey period 1932-33) and Kakade (1938-39 to 1940) whose monographs remain classic sources on the subject. The distinction between independence and

dependence was central to their descriptions and tied sale was as usual the criterion. Kakade diluted the notion of dependence by applying it to any karkhanadar who depended on outside agency for sale which, of course, practically everybody did. Dependence in the strict sense of a revocation or suspension of the right to sell was approached only indirectly. Both writers, moreover, followed the convention of arbitrarily classifying weavers according to degrees of dependence and not its quality or nature. This usually led to a cumbersome multi-tiered classification easily creating the illusion that the tiers represented stages of an evolution whereas they could equally represent different directions taken by a general tendency.^{28/}

Kakade found that of the 1376 units working in Sholapur in the early forties, 916 or 66 per cent were dependent, that is, on price contract. Of the dependent weavers, again, an overwhelming majority (80 per cent) were small units with less than six looms each. Independence, in contrast, was distributed more evenly across size-classes which reiterates the point that freedom of sale was a transitional characteristics.^{29/}

Large producers dominated contract-work as well as direct wage employment.^{30/} Combination of direct production and contract work probably depended on a specific rationale, which remains unclear, but might equally have been dictated by the coexistence of loomless and loomowning weavers, both available on hire. Price-contracts usually entailed prior specification of price and/or quality and implied production debts. Loans were taken by independent as well as dependent weavers, the difference being, in the latter case debts regulated the contract itself by ensuring tied sale while in the former, debts were not linked to cloth sale.^{31/}

What induced weavers to contractual relations, in addition to the basic marketing constraints, was concentration of trading capital as a whole. Thus, yarn-dealers in Sholapur, who formed a distinct group, discriminated against smaller producers by charging retail prices on credit-sale. The prices, in fact, could be

entirely flexible according to estimation of the customer's financial soundness. So could the quality of yarn. Big karkhanadars, at the same time, were granted various concessions in regard to prices, repayment periods, etc.^{32/}

The class of contract weavers was not uniformly constituted. Asami's Sangh, the union of contract workers included some independent weavers and took ambiguous stand with respect to the wage workers in the industry.^{33/} But the main grievance of the Sangh was directed at the flexibility still surrounding sale of products, however rigidly contracted. Contract sales were still subjected to arbitrary discounts and commissions, to sudden changes in orders, termination of contract and violation of the contract by unscheduled price-revisions.^{34/}

Who were the wage-workers in the karkhanas of Bombay-Deccan?

Kakade's data show that incidence of labour hiring began at 3 to 4 looms per unit while displacement of family labour was more or less complete at 8 to 9 looms. This range, within which hired and family labour worked side by side, can be termed large households. When Joshi surveyed the region in the early thirties, large households were dominant in Malegaon. Kakade's sample show a preponderance of 4-loom units in Sholapur. The distinction between pure households and the larger ones was, of course, one between dependence and freedom of sale.

The distinction, on the other hand, between the larger households and the fully developed karkhanas of Sholapur, Ahmednagar and Sangamner consisted in the status of the labourer. At one extreme the worker was almost a member of an extended family and at another he was socially marginalised, a process guaranteed by his immigrant status. Both relations could be equally exploitative (see below, 'genesis of large producers', for more on relations within households)

Workers in households were local inhabitants, 'have homely surroundings of their own classes and castes .. and have larger amount of freedom than the factory wage-earner .. Though they are

inferior in position, they freely mix with their masters'. Workers in the Sholapur factories were 'wholly different .. and more miserable'. A large number were immigrants from Telengana where real wages were higher but employment insecure, hence earnings unstable. On coming to Sholapur they entered into an 'agreement' with a karkhanadar. The agreement provided for living quarters (really 8 ft by 4 ft space per family 'by courtesy called rooms'), work for women and triennial visits home. Against these privileges piece rates were much lower than labourers in households and could be arbitrarily revised, and working hours longer. While production debts ceased with wage-employment, consumption debts did not necessarily disappear. On the contrary such debts, usually to the karkhanadar himself, could be a condition of bondage and an excuse for arbitrary wage cuts. In certain cases the worker could go home only by leaving his family behind as hostage.^{35/}

In the next decade or so the karkhana workers increasingly resembled a class. Frequency of homeward journeys decreased and more immigrant weavers were permanently settling down in Sholapur. The Handloom Workers' Union had been formed and managed to enforce two relatively minor provisions of the Factories' Act, regarding hours of work and weekly holiday, despite a 'big hue and cry raised by local karkhanadars'. There was no improvement, however, in living conditions and wage-bargaining was yet unknown, as evident from reports of indiscriminate wage-cuts, sometimes in the form of fines for bad workmanship.^{36/}

Stratification in the Tamil Nadu towns in the mid-thirties closely resembled the above pattern. Venkataraman lists five systems of production: independent weavers, 'commission agency', cottage workshop, handloom factory and cooperative. Barring the last, which was negligible anyway, the others are reducible to the standard twofold classification. For the second involved dependence of the price-contract form (called commission agency because the direct employer was often an undercontractor himself) and the third and fourth, of course, pure wage-employment. The difference between workshops and factories was that the former contained many large households.

The independent weaver 'comes first in historical sequence.. and .. is fast disappearing'. For the next several decades the alleged disappearance of the independent weaver would form a focal point of almost any discussion on industry-structure in Madras, which suggests that the process went through many reverses.^{37/} Venkataraman's descriptions make it clear that independence of sale obtained mainly in centres of short distance trade and its disappearance, by implication, was a reflection of concentration of weaving in larger towns. Independence was also identified with use of family labour and with absence or low level of indebtedness which made effective the weaver's freedom of sale. Presence of debts, however, distinguished dependent weavers on price-contract from pure wage-workers, which implies that the debt curve had an inverted U-shape as dependence progressed, both in degree and quality, from freedom of sale to tied sale of products to sale of labour.^{38/}

But 'running into debts' was an ever-present threat, especially as 'the fluctuations in the prices of yarn and cloth are too great for (the weaver's) slender means'. Such fluctuations encouraged contractual sales and involved weavers whose dependence was secured through debts to the financier-cum-merchant. Although piece-rates were sometimes pre-fixed the system nevertheless involved sale of products and not hiring of labour as evident from the fact that tied sale did not guarantee security of employment. Except in specialised fields, chiefly the export trade in handkerchiefs, lungis and kailies, and in certain parts of Salem and Coimbatore district price-contract was probably not very common. As in Bengal silk and fine cotton this form occurred in long distance trade integrating dispersed production and concentrated consumption (these correlations will be developed in the larger study in progress).^{39/}

While debts could at the most be an instrument, the real reason for reduction of independent weavers to various forms of dependence was a reorganisation of trade on larger scale with increasingly stiff entry-barriers. A late-fifties report on Kanchipuram

silk clarified the nature of these barriers. Trade was controlled by master weavers who had access to crucial information while the independent weaver's inability to employ professional designers reinforced his remoteness to the retail market. Smaller size of stock ensured further erosion of market shares when conditions improved. Those on the margin were faced with the option of wage work under master-weaver or joining a cooperative. The former was more usual because of liberal credit-facilities available with the master-weavers and past commitments to them. In deciding for the master-weaver similar commitments to the cooperatives were often disregarded.^{40/}

The workshop, 'a more humane system', were expanding in the thirties. The workers were paid fixed piece rates irrespective of the final price realised in the market, the risk thus shifting to the capitalist. Also payments were never deferred and no haggling took place.^{41/} Notwithstanding these advantages, hereditary weavers probably retained the apathy for factory work for which they were earlier known.

Who, then, were the workers in the cottage workshops and factories, also referred as hired workers, coolies and, somewhat ambiguously, as 'assistants'? As in the Bombay centres, they represented a genuine proletariat of loomless weavers dependent on 'the owners of handlooms' for their own livelihood. In return they were paid piece-rates lower than what the price contract weaver working on his own loom received. The difference was a 'rental'.^{42/} Cooly weavers were ubiquitous. 'Grinding poverty and absence of proper dwelling place' drove them to migrate. Such migrations rarely threatened the settled weavers of the place receiving workers, contrary to what the textbook story suggests. For such weavers were already arranged in a fairly stable hierarchy which was even reinforced by the availability of 'labourers'.

This leads us to an aspect largely unstudied, interactions between preexisting hierarchy and economic processes. Venkataraman found that the workers in most of the cotton handloom factories

belonged to the nonweaver castes: Vellalas, Panchamas and Muslims in the Tamil districts and Balijas and Malas in the Telugu country. On this aspect later reports suggest continuity. In Kanchipuram silk immigration of coolies was confined to the Vanniyas, Yadavas, Naidus and Nadars. Some of these, Panchamas, Malas, Nadars, Yadavas -- were also of inferior status socially. Conversely, it appears that members of the upper-tier weaving castes, even if reduced to dependence, were protected from selling labour. For price-contract usually involved the erstwhile independent weavers, who belonged to the weaver castes.^{43/} The difference was obviously in ownership of looms. But the differential and frequently marginal social status of the labourers suggests that an element of right to own looms might have reinforced the difference.

While castes did interfere in the economic process it would be sweeping to conclude from the above anything about the nature of this interference. Later research suggests that while in the genesis of industrial cooperatives, caste-affiliations were indeed significant, such affiliations did not necessarily diffuse intra-caste differentiation in the long run.^{49/} Nevertheless, strictly with reference to the mid-thirties, intervention of caste status may explain the simultaneous expansion in Madras of democratic cooperation (intracaste) and capitalist cooperation (intercaste). Caste, in other words, attempted to diffuse differentiation whenever it threatened the community -- positively by propagating cooperatives, negatively by opposing the master-weaver or technological options such as the powerlooms -- and reinforced differentiation by lending it the established rules of dominance.

But while reduction of independent weavers was, already in the thirties, more or less complete in the towns of Tamil Nadu, the tendency was weaker in the predominantly rural regions, especially coastal Andhra. Weavers here were engaged in relatively coarser products, serving a local market. Distance of the wholesale yarn market explained high rates of interest charged on yarn-

debts, sometimes concealed as differential prices sometimes in addition to it. Sale usually took place in weekly markets in the nearest town. At least one weaver undertook to sell others' produce as well. He also cultivated and lent money at high rates of interest.^{45/} We can take these descriptions as typical of short distance trade systems at mid-century, local market served by simple commodity producers who retained a fair degree of independence.

In contrast to the southern towns, polarisation among producers, if not absent, was distinctly weaker in eastern India, Bengal, Assam, Orissa. Here the degree of development of finance and trading capital interacted with the tendency and determined its character: 'the small and cottage industries of the province (of Bengal) depend largely on the accommodation granted by indigenous bankers. The accommodation sometimes assumes the form of the loan of raw materials to the borrower on a definite understanding that the finished articles will be delivered at a favourable price to the moneylender who may happen to be a trader himself'.^{46/} Merchants-cum-financiers resembled a homogenous class. Yarn merchants and cloth merchants, distinct elsewhere, were united in the universal term 'mahajan'. Consolidation of capital in trade, however, was a historical process and accompanied by a weakening of capital in production. While potential large producers in many areas of Bengal experienced an erosion in their status, capital was neither forced (because of close interlocking) nor capable of successfully intervening in technological decisions which, as elsewhere, had become a necessity.

Corresponding to the nature of capital producers remained primarily buyers and sellers. But the relation was one of dependence: the weavers were ~~not (the mahajan's)~~ employees but attached to him'.^{47/} In 1940 about 60 per cent of the cotton weavers were affiliated to mahajans. What such attachment meant was an undertaking to buy yarn from and sell cloth to the same individual. The mahajan was primarily a yarn dealer who fully exploited the remoteness of the village weaver to the wholesale

yarn markets. The differential prices charged were represented as 'transport costs', analogous to loom 'rentals' imposed by large producers elsewhere, and malpractices were rampant, such as supplying cheaper brands of yarn, passing Japanese yarn for Bengal or Madura, cheating on counts and fastness of dyes, etc... The mahajans thus organising buying and selling transactions were distinguished from potential large producers, the 'capitalists' among the latter.^{48/}

As elsewhere it was the desire for security in the face of a fluctuating market which drove the weavers to dependence. The 20 per cent who refused to tie up sale with yarn transactions and sold, freely, in the local hats or directly to consumers were probably better off in respect of earnings but 'the freedom of operation carries also along with it considerable risks'.^{49/} Independent weavers, therefore, were perpetually under threat of losing their independence. Thanks to fluctuations in the market he could rarely manage to dispose off his entire produce, failing which he had to come back to the yarn dealer who would then undervalue the cloth on some pretext or another and 'the weaver has to take the next supply of yarn from that dealer at whatever price the latter may exact'.^{50/} For the merchant such transactions contained a speculative element.

Likewise in silk, increasing dependence found expression in extension of buying and selling contracts which, however, left the final price negotiable. Mukherji's monograph on silk suggests that, in the early 1900, tied sale was relatively rare and sales to yarn-dealer-cum-moneylender represented special as opposed to contractual transactions. As continued to be the custom, the moneylenders who received cloth in repayment of debts undervalued it in addition to charging interest at 12 to 36 per cent per annum. Such special transactions apart, the weavers enjoyed effective independence and often possessed substantial capital. Producers were differentiated and a rudimentary form of labour-hiring based on caste ties was reported.^{51/} The subsequent story in silk was one of consolidation of merchant capital and retreat of large producers.

In the late-thirties the silk weaver was free precisely to the extent to which he retained the right to sell his wares to the highest bidder. In his dealings with the mahajan this freedom was expressed in the absence of piece-rates fixed by contracts. In practice, however, sale was tied to the raw material supplier. Each transaction ended with the merchant 'haggling over the price' and usually managing to restrict the margin to about half of what the weavers could obtain in the wholesale market.^{52/} Indeed some of the substantial weavers, not a rarity in silk, did exercise this right on occasions and themselves took their cloths to the Calcutta market. But rarely did they succeed in superseding the powerful clique between merchants in Malda and those in Calcutta.^{53/}

It would probably be wrong to conclude from these instances that in Bengal fixed piece-rates did not exist. Fixed payments resembling wages were, in fact, not uncommon. Such payments were called 'bani' and were counterpart of 'dadan' in cultivation -- literally an advance on the price of the product. Despite being a fixed advance bani did not preclude bargaining on price, nor was it fixed between rounds. This flexibility presumably ensured that the weavers could sometimes 'successfully resist .. any attempt at "sweating" by the mahajans'.^{54/}

Predominance of buying-and-selling contract was reflected in the high incidence of indebtedness. A sample survey conducted in 1932 found 82 per cent of the wholetime weavers in debt, nearly half of the total amount being for production purposes. Arrears on yarn account accumulated over the year and were to some extent reduced in the festive season. 'Not that they voluntarily paid their extra profit towards liquidation of their yarn-debts. They are watched while selling their products and the yarn-dealer pounces upon the money as soon as it reaches the weaver's hands unless the yarn dealer himself purchases the fabrics in which case the matter becomes easier'.^{55/}

A possible reason why proletarianisation was weaker in Bengal was the relative ease with which craftsmen became cultivators.

This characteristics of eastern Indian weaving was noticed since quite early. Colebrook's report remarked indignantly, '... no apology can be offered for the peasants indifferently quitting the plough to use the loom and the loom to resume the plough. Industry cannot be worse directed. Yet this practise is nowhere more prevalent than in the richest provinces (of Bengal)'.^{56/} Later Mukherji referred to landowning silk weaver families in Malda. Numerous cases of depressed weavers taking to cultivation were reported. This happened, for instance, in Dacca in the late-twenties. The FFC found the percentages of parttime weavers in Bengal (25) and Orissa (40) significantly above those in Bombay (12), Madras (13) and Hyderabad (15). Two decades later Textile Enquiry Committee reiterated the finding.^{57/} The underlying occupational structure, in turn, reflected and reinforced the predominantly rural character of Bengal weaving which made concentration of capital within a single branch difficult but at the same time made interlocking of branches easier.

Although on a much smaller scale than in Bombay-Deccan and Hyderabad, proletarianisation did occur in Bengal, noticeably from the end of the thirties. A 1937 survey observed the existence of a group of workers who were employed on piece-wages by merchants. The latter 'themselves take the risks for the losses or profits caused by the fluctuations in the market'. The follow-up survey of 1940 was more definitive on the tendency. Analysing the statistics on fulltime workers and loomage by ownership status it concluded, 'just as there are landless agricultural labourers, there are also a large number of loomless workers'. It is not unlikely that a single loom was worked by different members of the family and incidence of idle loomage was quite high in Bengal. But there in fact existed a class of weaving labourers 'who do not possess any looms in their homes but do jobs in the families of other weavers or in the factories of mahajans'. The tendency, predictably, had an urban bias.^{58/}

The general feature of eastern Indian trade system in silk, greater interlocking between raw material and cloth, was evident in Assam where, in fact, specialisation seems to have

been altogether rare. 'The Marwari merchants, who monopolise the trade, supply yarn on credit and there is no time limit'. Cloth is sold to the same merchant. Pure contract work on previously fixed wages was rare. The merchants were also moneylenders; they lent money in season and out of season and thus '... appears to be a necessity as they hold the weaving population all the year round in some manner or the other'. To a limited extent in wild silks the link between yarn and cloth trade was broken by a closer integration of processes -- reeling, spinning and weaving -- within the household.^{59/} In Orissa a similar consolidation of trading capital was evident. The town weavers by and large 'return finished goods to silk merchants who supply them the raw silk on credit (charging 25 per cent more) and pay the weavers the balance of the prices of their finished goods. Here the weavers are quite at mercy of the merchants in so far as the fixing of the price is concerned'.^{60/}

Latifi's survey (1911) of Punjab crafts suggests similar control enjoyed by traders and financiers on weaving. The 'average' cotton weaver was indebted to 'the shopkeeper' for yarn and sold cloths to him. The silk weavers were, 'if anything, more than other artisans under the thumb of the moneylenders'.^{61/} The petty shopkeepers who conducted this business catered to the general requirements of a rural locality and were not yarn or cloth dealers primarily. They also charged interest on yarn ~~loans~~'s. Cloth sale, however, was not necessarily tied. The weaver made to orders from local zamindars and other residents, hawked about in the neighbouring villages or sold at the weekly market. But the extent of tied sale was probably increasing.^{62/}

More substantive information was available on the towns in the early thirties. In these centres wage employment was already more common and there are some intelligent leaders amongst (the craftsmen) whose sole aim is not to become slave drivers themselves'. Cotton and silk weavers worked under three arrangements: (i) Price-contract; receiving yarn as advance on condition that the cloth will be brought back to the yarn-supplier for sale. The merchant was a buyer and not an employer as evident from discounts and

commissions charged on such sale, (ii) independence; buying yarn on credit. Sale tie-up was not insisted upon but timely repayment of loan was, failing which compound interest was charged on the loan and the principal was revised upwards by charging higher prices, and (iii) working under an employer on piece or time wage.^{63/}

Merchants of the first system formed a powerful class, 'by cleverly creating competition among the workers (they) can bring down the price and can even wait till the workers are brought down to their knees'.^{64/} At the end of the crucial decade, only 'a small minority' of the silk weavers was still under the first type of contract. The second system whereby weavers not only retained the right to sell to whichever party they wanted but also exercised this right had more or less disappeared: 'the weavers are not in any way responsible for the marketing of the goods'. At the same time, however, a reserve army of weaver-labourers had come into existence whose employers included both professional merchants and large producers. Regular contractual employment involving this class merged into the factories and time-wage payment: 'At Sialkot the merchants are the proprietors of weaving factories and employ weavers both on piece-wage system and monthly basis. In Jalalpur-Jattan, the weavers work for the merchants on piece-wage system both in their cottages and in factories'. In Amritsar different systems of contract continued to coexist, buying-and-selling in the more expensive pure silks and wage-employment in the silk-substitutes which could be easily standardised.^{65/}

If the control of merchant capital per se was on the decline, it was to a large extent due to two related phenomena, both developments of the twenties: legislation on moneylending which, directly or indirectly, curbed reemployment of surplus in usury and the rise of cooperative agencies supplying working capital to weavers. While the former induced productive investment by merchants, the cooperative movement assisted large producers in particular. The effect of cooperative finance was primarily felt in prices; raw material became cheaper if purchased on cash and finished product obtained higher price if sale was not already tied. The secondary effect was reduced debt burden.^{66/}

The connection between towns and wage-employment reappears in descriptions on UP, although these are altogether inadequate considering the size and complexity of the industry in UP. Whatever descriptions exist focus on Benares. A survey conducted in the early twenties described Tanda (fine cotton) and Bara Banki (coarse cotton) weavers as largely their own sellers. Traders dealt in yarn and did not exercise much control on cloth. Large producers and labour hiring were rare, if not absent.^{67/}

In Benares, Mau or Lucknow, in contrast, centres of long distance trade, trading classes were differentiated to a much greater degree and large producers formed a distinct class. In Benares, the distinction was between merchants who were 'not necessarily of the weaving class' and producers who were 'richer members of the weaving class'. Correspondingly, with the development of capital, dependence and tied sale were more common among the rank and file. This included working as hired labourer in the karkhanas, which were in fact somewhat larger households with 4 to 10 looms each. The karkhanadars, in turn sold to professional merchants and were on the whole a prosperous class but 'the conditions of the weavers who work in these factories is very deplorable'.^{68/}

Barring the large producers and those who worked under them, trade per se was divided into yarn and cloth and corresponded to the division of loomowning weavers into freedom of sale and dependence. The former class had regular relations only with the yarn-merchants from whom they received raw material on interest-free credit for a period of from ten days to a month, the time it took to set up one warp-length. The weaver was expected to sell to whichever party he wished and clear the account. Terms of credit depended on status, that is, number of looms owned and were thus discriminatory to the very small producer. Dependent weavers, on the other hand, were those employed on contractual rates by cloth merchants who also supplied the raw material: 'It is practically getting work done on wages with this difference that the middleman does not do any accounting for individual pieces'.^{69/} The difference between this and karkhana-work must have been small, just as karkhanadars themselves could be cloth merchants.

There is no direct evidence that suggests expansion of contract work in general and wage-employment specifically. However, employers of wage labour did expand in the intervening one and a half decades.^{70/}

Forms of Capital

As with the ordinary weavers large scale capital was getting differentiated. Contemporary accounts distinguished between capital based in trading-moneylending and in production; between yarn trade and cloth trade the latter requiring greater familiarity with craftsmanship and technology; between producer caste and trader caste and between producer-turned-trader and pure trader. These differences really arose out of one principal development, emergence of large producers with or without interests in cloth trade. This had several consequences.

Relations of production changed to adapt, as it were, to the coexistence of different kinds of capital. Thus in the south, from largescale capital in weaving to capitalist workshops was a direct evolution. This process was aided by proletarianisation -- through migration in the Deccan and caste in Tamil Nadu. Conversely coexistence of capitals itself adapted to the preexisting relations. This happened in the north and east where merchant capital per se was entrenched. Presence of large producers could lead to conflicts, as in Malda silk, or to various forms of collaboration, as in the karkhanadari of Benarés and Amritsar. As coexistence was not necessarily synonymous with competition among capitals, the outcome of these processes for the ordinary weaver could be a tightening of dependence relationships.

The basic movement, genesis of large producers, will be discussed in the next section. In this the phenomenon of coexistence of capitals will be studied through the regional evidence.

Yarn and cloth trades were distinct spheres in most Hyderabad towns according to reports on silk and mixed weaving. Weavers obtained raw material from yarn merchants and sold cloths either in the bazaar to wholesale cloth dealers from outside or

themselves hawked about in the neighbouring villages. An element of usury was mixed up in yarn-transactions and was often singled out in the texts as 'the crux of the whole problem'.^{71/}

The division between cloth and yarn merchants corresponded to the one between 'sowcars among weavers' or master-weavers and 'shopkeepers'. Master-weavers combined cloth trade, subcontracting and production on their own looms. Hiring in of labour was common among them and progressed imperceptibly to factories: 'well-to-do weavers have already adopted the "factory" system of production where the weavers are employed on wages. The employers provide improved handlooms, raw materials and other necessary equipment'. The shopkeepers, on the other hand, specialised in yarn, sometimes, though not usually, receiving cloth as repayment of yarn-loans. In the smaller centres shopkeepers were still dominant while master-weavers controlled business in the larger weaving townships. Thus the average merchant of Aurangabad was 'himself a master-weaver (who) at the same time employs weavers to work under him ... He is a capitalist in a sense, but he himself works simultaneously'.^{72/}

Similarly in the urban handlooms of Bombay-Deccan yarn- and cloth-merchants formed wholly distinct classes. The former, usually large scale stockists, did not interest themselves in weaving. However cloth merchants often engaged weavers on price-contract in which case yarn or cash advances were made. Larger karkhanadars, more numerous among cloth-dealers, did the same with smaller households.

Separation of trades and the implicit weakness of merchants as a class favoured interlocking of production and trade the advantages of which went to the large producer. FFC described the large karkhanadar of Sholapur as one who 'still remains the middleman-weaver in essential respects' that is, combined weaving with yarn-processing, had subcontractors under him, was a wholesale cloth merchant and bought yarn at wholesale rates. Supervision of designs was among the crucial functions performed. He also took bank loans to finance his undercontractors. ' .. In 1918,

when the Indian Industrial Commission reported, such middlemen were not so powerful nor so numerous; but since then the movement in this direction has been rapid'.^{74/} But the movement also implied increasing competition among capitalists as representatives of different classes. Signs of confrontation were discernible in Sholapur though; by the late-thirties, institutional means of settling disputes had been devised and the confrontation was already much diffused.^{75/}

Size-structure of karkhana establishments suggests that economies of scale in production concentrated at two end-points rather than being distributed evenly. Two types of factories were preponderant, those with loomage ranging between 3 and 5 (termed large households, see above) and those with loomage exceeding 30.^{76/} The double-humped character of the distribution is corroborated in ITBS data on Hyderabad silk and mixed factories.^{77/} The evidence on Hyderabad also suggests a possible reason: the specific advantage enjoyed by the larger-sized factories was that of combining trade and contracting with production whereas the 3 to 5 loomage class, being a mixture of household and factory, could economise on labour.

In Bombay at least, large producers' involvement in circulation had antecedents, although the form of this involvement probably altered over time. Already in the 1880s, 'like other Khandesh moneyed classes, artisans who have capital act as money-lenders' and 'the successful tailor or weaver often finds a favourable employment for his savings in moneylending'.^{78/} Nor were fully developed karkhanas uncommon. In Sholapur town itself the first karkhana was established in 1880 and Enthoven's monograph described in rich detail a typical karkhana of Bhiwandi at the end of the nineties. The workers in the latter were immigrants to Bombay and shared the home of the owner.^{79/} Reference to such units, however, is sporadic and they remain preconditions of a possibility that was realised only in the mid-thirties.

As elsewhere in the south, in Madras divisions within trade facilitated accumulation by producers in trade. Early

sources suggest that producers' control over cloth-trade was near absolute in the Tamil towns and nowhere seriously challenged. Salem Gazetteer reported that the loomowning weavers of the town sold on their own. The Devangas of Gurai (Salem) worked without interference by professional merchants. Weavers controlling yarn supply was precisely the reason why early efforts at setting up cooperative yarn-stores did not succeed.^{80/} The Saurashtras or Patnulkarans of Madura were as much 'a mercantile community' as hereditary weavers: 'The trade in cotton textiles, dyes, gold thread and silk in Madura and Kumbakonam is mainly in their hands'.^{81/} In the mid-thirties Venkataraman identified cottage workshops with large-scale trade, 'the master-weaver is also a merchant'. At the same time, merchants who were not weavers confined themselves to specialised branches such as the export trade in handkerchiefs and lungis. Pure traders, moreover, nowhere appeared as a class but fragmented into several caste and regional divisions. The export merchants were mainly the Komati Chettis, village-to-village long distance trade was conducted by the Labbais of Karur and Marwari moneylenders sold garments to the urban working class.^{82/}

The producer-trader, however, was the product of a shift in the composition of capital, a process noticeable from around the time of the First World War. The southern master-weavers probably did not exist as a class until then. Chatterton observed in 1918: 'There is a term which has been introduced of late years called the "master-weaver"'. He anticipated the development of a specific communal relation of production while considering the possibility that 'by training in special institutions, such as the one which is under erection at Madura, ... this class of master-weavers would be able to go into the weaving villages and introduce a kind of organisation among the weavers without actually starting a factory which could be successful'.^{83/}

The shift had a basis in tendencies within the sphere of production. It depended on the capacity to successfully intervene in technology. It was clear that the 'banias', merchants controlling the industry from outside, would not be upto the

reorganisation envisaged. In reply to Chatterton's query regarding the bania's attitude to fly-shuttles, the Director of Industries agreed: 'They don't want these individual weavers working under them to improve their position and get away from them. They want to keep them always under their grip'. 84/

The loss in potential increases in productivity was probably compensated through usurious income. Venkataraman also dwelt on divergent attitudes towards direct or indirect intervention in labour process. The professional merchant was rarely willing to 'finance the weavers for the purpose of equipping their looms with improved sleys and harnesses'. Preparatory processes were decentralised and done with the help of family labour. Methods of processing as well as the loom itself remained primitive and crude. The weaver-merchant on the other hand, almost invariably a workshop owner himself, attempted to incorporate as many of the labour-saving devices as were then available. Warping and sizing were the first to be centralised (see also the next section). Rationalisation might have been the very basis of the success of large producers and, by association, of producer-traders: 'the small workshop system with the master-craftsman is a feature of that branch of the industry which requires the constant guidance of the master-weaver or where strict supervision of the work is required'. 85/

Like his counterpart in Hyderabad and Deccan, the Tamil master-weaver was a large producer, a seller and a contractor. FFC mentioned weaver-merchants of Erode who controlled between 500 to 1000 looms each. A later report described the tightly knit system that had developed in some of the towns. Wherever the master weaver was a big merchant a three-tiered hierarchy was in function: the master-weaver at the apex, head weavers who 'inspire confidence in the big master-weaver' functioning as intermediary in each village and direct producers at the bottom. The latter could work on owned looms or looms leased out by the head-weavers. 86/

In contrast, yarn and cloth trades were more tightly integrated in Bengal, cotton as well as silk. Large producers' attempts to enter trade to retain hold of the existing sphere of control resulted, in Malda silk, in a protracted conflict between large producers and yarn-cum-cloth merchants. The outcome, clear at the time of the second ITPC, was adverse for the producers who retreated from long distance trade, contracted production and eventually became dependent on the merchants.

At the turn of the century master-weavers represented a familiar and powerful element in Bengal silk weaving. Cumming noted that the silk weavers had 'more influential headmen' among them, in addition to being 'as a class far more prosperous than cotton weavers'.^{87/} To the substantial producer, trade as well as land were avenues of accumulation and it was not uncommon to 'rise from the ranks' to become substantial.^{88/} Murshidabad had many weaver-traders who hawked about in the towns and sometimes carried bundles of cloths down to Calcutta as personal luggage by train. Seasonal influx of silk weavers into the city during the festive months was a common phenomenon at that time. Contractual relations between large and small producers were also not uncommon.^{89/}

Coexisting with the master-weaver was the merchant-financier, reduced to a type in official literature and referred as the 'mahajan'. The term originally seems to have connoted money-lending as implicit in Mukherji's usage. Indeed in Murshidabad silk in Mukherji's times interlocking of trade and moneylending was quite usual. In addition to professional moneylenders who sometimes received cloth in repayment, traders in silk, especially the Marwaris, were also engaged in moneylending 'which all rich Jains more or less delight in'. In the silk trade between Bengal and northern India 'the Marwaris and other money-lenders' played a prominent but controversial role. 'One point noticed by most of (the district reports) is of vital importance, viz., the harm done to the silk-weaving industry.. by the indebtedness of the weavers to the mahajans, who charge very high rates of interest. ..(They) try to take all the good out of an industry

and ultimately leave it in a wretched condition'. The description may be a little exaggerated for a generalisation, but the decay of at least one centre, Baluchar in Murshidabad, could be directly attributed to exploitation by finance capital.^{90/}

As in other centres of long distance trade merchant capital was heterogenously constituted. Along with producer-traders and merchant moneylenders functioned an all-European network, complete from silk-filatures to trading houses, which served the export market for Bengal Silk.^{91/} The greater Indian market was supplied by several Marwari houses, of which the Chinoys were probably the largest. Lower down were the master-weavers and trader-moneylenders described above. Of these various segments the small scale trader-moneylenders proved more stable in the longrun while a prolonged crisis in Bengal sericulture eliminated both the Europeans and the larger of the north Indian firms. The space thus vacated was filled up by the smaller scale and more flexible elements. Specifically, it now became possible for the cloth merchants to tie up raw material trade and consolidate as merchant capital per se.

Prior to this shift, fabric trade in Malda was dominated by 'local mahajans who were either weavers themselves or persons closely connected with weaving and understood the business'. Weavers were employed by them at previously fixed piece-rates or bani. Some of the large producers, such as the representative of Shibganj (Malda) weavers at the ITBS, directly owned and operated more than 40 looms. The entry of Marwari merchants resulted at first in underselling while small producers were enticed by the offer of higher bani rates to enter into contracts with the merchants, leaving the producer. At the same time the merchants maintained closer ties with the shopkeepers and wholesalers at Calcutta through liberal credit facilities, something which the large producer could not afford. 'The local mahajans were thus eliminated'. The witness referred above suffered a drastic reduction in loomage within about 8 or 9 years, from more than 40 to a bare 5. Some of the producers attempted to bypass the merchants and sell directly at

Calcutta but 'there.. they were at a still greater disadvantage. The shopkeepers dictated any price they liked because they knew that the weavers could not wait at Calcutta and must sell their cloth at even greater loss'. Once in control the merchants stopped price-contract and free bargaining ensued with its invariable concomitant, arbitrary exactions.^{92/}

Why were the merchants specially privileged? The new entrants, in the first place, were 'masters of large funds' and could wait for prices to improve or permit credit-sale to wholesalers. But the special circumstance of the thirties was withdrawal of European capitalists from sericulture. The small scale cloth-dealer entered sericulture and, through his hold over the yarn side, tightened control over weaving.^{93/} Within sericulture control could be intensified by means of moneylending, a natural development in an industry already crippled by disease and depression.^{94/} The merchant identified with his trade more than the place and the clientele. Once entrenched in yarn-trade, the Malda merchants diversified into imported silk yarn, a hitherto untried and unpopular product in Bengal. 'The sole aim of the Marwaris seems to be to push on Japanese silks', complained a weaver. A different source corroborated: 'The silk fabrics being too inferior in durability and lustre.. have created a bad name for Shibganj cloth in the market, for which the weavers consider their reputation at stake'. Elsewhere the weavers were not so innocent. In Malda proper, 'the quality of the produce has deteriorated as the weavers tried to accommodate themselves to lower prices by inferior and cheaper produce',^{95/}

Away from the sericulture belt systems of buying-and-selling under the direction of yarn merchants continued with sporadic incidence of wage-employment. 'The standard case' in the late-thirties was for the yarn-dealer to supply yarn sufficient for one warp length on credit. Rendering of account was made at the end of the year. The weaver could repay in cloth or in cash but never in full, 'deficits in the account accumulated and have been the cause of ruin'. Further, repayment in kind was conditional on

the merchant's ability to sell the product, as evident from a 6½ per cent commission charged on such sale, any loss being transferred to the weaver's account.^{96/} There are some indications that even this partial involvement of the merchants in cloth trade, hence any direct interest in production, was being withdrawn since the mid-thirties. Two new systems were described during the ITBS in both of which the weaver 'sells the products wherever he can'. At the same time terms relating to yarn sale were tightened -- prices raised for credit sale (in a system called janti or clippers), or cash-payment insisted upon.^{97/}

Prevalence of price-contracts in cotton handlooms of Bengal is a feature we have discussed. Price-contract was more usual in the western districts than in the east and its extent seems to have been correlated inversely with the prosperity of the industry.^{98/} Independent weavers are specifically mentioned in descriptions of the large weaving townships, Serampore and Santipur, in which freedom of sale for those who enjoyed it could be effective because of their proximity to wholesale bazaars in cloth and yarn (Howrah Ramkrishnapur hat and the Calcutta yarn market). In both, moreover, large producers existed as a category to reckon with.^{99/}

Price-contract is invariably described in the blackest of terms: Nadia weavers are 'in the clutches of mahajans', in Murshidabad 'practically enslaved' by them, in Dacca the bani rates are 'the lowest possible', and so on. FFC data do suggest that middleman's margin might have been higher in Bengal for comparable samples. On the onset of depression the merchant's share in net product could be as high as 33 per cent and the difference between wholesale and retail rates of yarn alone range between 12.5 to 25 per cent.^{100/} There was moreover a noticeable continuity between weaving and most other crafts on 'the baneful effects of the present .. organisation .. under the average mahajan'. If these impressionistic observations are to be made sense of one should perhaps look beyond the specifics of the economic relations involved and refer to the class character

of the mahajan. Mahajani was in fact one of the occupations 'the intelligentist content themselves with'. The Mahajan's remoteness and outsider status, 'divorced from the actual practical observations of the industry.: parasitical than integral to it', thus had a social basis.^{101/}

It followed that the contrast between control by mahajans and by large producers here, as in Madras or Deccan, consisted in the capacity and willingness to adapt. This point emerged sharply in the context of an intense intra-handloom competition in which Bengal was yielding ground to Madras and UP. The absence of innovation in craftsmanship was, in turn, accredited to the mahajan. Farasdanga and Santipur were both making roughly similar products of fine cotton. The Santipur industry, controlled by 'capitalist weavers', was dynamic in adjusting to shifts in design-preferences in which jacquards were used extensively. Farasdanga, originally an enclave of French trade and controlled by comprador elements, refused to adapt and was approaching extinction.^{102/}

Similarly in Punjab, the merchant with whom the weaver directly transacted combined yarn and cloth trades and was, almost invariably, interested in moneylending. Large producers existed usually as karkhanaders or undercontractors of merchants. The system was more commonly encountered in certain peripheral branches of handloom weaving. In the thirties a resurgence of subcontracting seems to have occurred in several centres of the north, chiefly Benares and perhaps Amritsar. At the same time merchants as a class suffered a certain decline.

In Punjab this could be attributed, among other factors, to legislations restricting moneylending. In Gurdaspur 'the number of sahkars has decreased by about 75 per cent. About 150 have retired in 6 years and the rest are ruined'.^{103/} One of the consequences of the legislation was redirection of savings into the cooperative credit societies which experienced an unprecedented boom. Even trade was, apparently, not considered to be very safe. There was at the same time investment in production

and in some of the art silk factories set up in the late-twenties sahuakar capital was involved.

Interestingly, it was in connection with the cooperative movement that the large producers who had 'escaped from the sahuakars' found mention. Enquiries relating to two cooperative members of Jullunder revealed the following. Both had installed powerlooms with capital borrowed from the society. In neither case the loan could be paid back. One was owner of a shop with 12 powerlooms in which he worked himself and had a retail store. He 'gets orders from all over India' and is 'doing quite well'. The other weaver was already hiring labour prior to the expansion. They may not represent the standard case every where. In ^{104/}Multan cooperative members included occasional weaver labourers. Yet they do indicate the uses to which the cooperative was amenable in the period in question.

At the same time evidence from Multan referred to conflicts between sahuakars and large producers resulting from sustained attempts of the latter to break into the merchant stronghold in cloth trade. Sometime in the mid-twenties the weavers opened a cloth store in the city. The sahuakars could meet the threat because they allowed creditsale whereas the weavers did not. In art silk rumals the market of which was especially sensitive to designs, innovation in designs, at which producers were more adept, helped the latter compete. However, 'sahuakars take the new patterns from the weavers and with their resources are able to produce more articles thus flooding the market..'. Sahuakars enjoyed an added advantage as yarn merchants and manipulated yarn price to discriminate independent producers. Also, collusive arrangements were reported and worked successfully between merchants. Finally the large producers themselves had occasionally to depend on the sahuakar for working capital. ^{105/}The constraints, however, were not sufficiently powerful to eliminate confrontation.

While in silk the emergent situation was one of conflict between capitals, in some other branches of weaving, especially woollen carpets, large producers collaborated with merchants in the capacity of karkhanadars. In Amritsar, the latter were supervisors and direct employers of labour in factories owned by merchants. The merchant paid him by a rate variable according to the quality of the work done. Such collaborations probably had a great deal to do with the technology involved - intensive in craftsmanship in these branches. In Benares too the large producer was primarily a 'supervisor' who 'gets orders from merchants and gets them executed'. But the karkhana itself belonged to the producer. In Tanda printing nearly half of the karkhanas were working for the dealers. In Lucknow embroidered silks 'expert workers act as agents'. Karkhanas belonged to the master-weavers who also obtained the silk themselves while the gotawalas, merchants in gold and silver wire, supplied the costlier material. Workers were indebted to the karkhanadar and practically bonded. The bondage was secured by collusion between large producers and the gotawalas, the latter agreeing 'not to take any one in service who owns anything to any other karkhanadar'.^{106/}

The evidence on the north referred, though cursorily, to interactions between relations of dependence based on the pre-existing hierarchy and differentiation in economic status. While in the south hierarchical relations aided the economic process and were assimilated into it, among the Julahas of western UP the outcome could be negative. ISUP cited instances, from Budaun and Sitapur districts, of attempts at setting up cooperative yarn stores ending in failure because 'this democratising system alarmed the chaudhuries .. of the weavers' and attempts of Hindu merchants to break into the cloth trade controlled by the chaudhuries similarly foiled through threats of excommunication. 'These chaudhuries exploit the weavers in their capacity as creditors and also as head of the panchayat'.^{107/}

Genesis of Large Producers; Selected Instances

Abstracted from the context, factories were common in urban crafts. Several peripheral branches of weaving had long

been practised in larger workshops. These included cotton and woollen carpets, woollen shawls and blankets and certain styles of block printing and painting. The reasons for an early development of factories in some of the urban crafts remain obscure, although India was not unique in this respect. At least in a few locations these were in the nature of manufactories under royal patronage. The small, close-knit, often immigrant, communities who practised these made possible some sort of cooperative work which resembled factories. Farrukhabad calico printing, for instance, was monopolised by a small caste-group called Sadh, to which belonged workers, factory-owners and traders. Also, the specialised nature of the market for some, exports for pile carpets or prints, required involvement of large-scale capital and a greater degree of standardisation. These segments, however, remained peripheral even in the twentieth century, perhaps even dissolved to some extent and did not directly contribute to the transition in question.^{108/}

In the twentieth century the direct preconditions for large-scale production of handloom cloth were, possibility of taking over trade, investment in processing of yarn or cloth and autonomous expansion by using economies of scale. The latter refers to the somewhat larger households turned workshops. Autonomous expansion of this sort was later aided by the availability of technological options such as improved looms, jacquards, secondhand powerlooms which could be adapted to household production. These conditions were interrelated. While centralised production necessitated centralised processing, the latter in turn encouraged centralised production by undermining the basis of households. With the intervention of one yarn processing plant, the relationship between the putting out capitalist and the weavers under him undergoes a drastic change. Family labour is made redundant and the household weaver ceases to enjoy any intrinsic advantage over the factory worker.

Three instances, large households, investment in processing and conversion into powerlooms, are discussed below.

Large Households -- Descriptions of transitional units -- midway between households and factories and bearing characteristics of both enable us to infer the nature of prior differentiation among producers. Sources close to 1900 speak of large households as the dominant unit in many parts of the south. They did their own selling. In the towns of Deccan around the eighties 'few workrooms have only one loom. Most have two or three, and some especially at Belgaum and Guledgud in Bijapur, have four'. Settlements in Sholapur in 1872 reported more looms than there were weavers in the town. In Salem and Coimbatore towns in 1918 there were many rich weaver households with 5 to 6 looms each. And in the mid-thirties in Madras the most dynamic units were the 'cottage workshops'. Venkataraman does not define the term but implies that they were extensions of the cottage itself. In Mau, one of the largest handloom centres in the north, the bigger broker-weavers who had by the thirties specialised in yarn and wholesale cloth trades, were called girhasts, literally the householder and were 'regarded by the workers with some affection'.^{109/}

Large households invariably hired labour. Yet not until much later can we discern the existence of a weaver proletariat. On the contrary, dispossessed weavers who would willingly offer their services for a casteman showed marked antipathy for work in a fullfledged handloom factory. This was one of the reasons for the failure of the Salem Weaving Factory, the first attempt to introduce formal relationship from above, which could attract only 'the waifs and strays of the community' whereas caste weavers, even those who worked as hired labourers in the households, found the atmosphere of the factory 'uncongenial'. This aversion for labour in a factory persisted, perhaps even intensified as more labourers were brought under factories.^{110/}

Clearly relations obtaining within bigger households were quite different from those within a factory or a purely family labour using household. The contrast, for instance between hired workers in the cottages of Sholapur and Malegaon and the immigrant workers in the factories, or between contract



weavers of the same caste and the 'coolies' in Madras, has already been encountered. FFC wrote of Deccan: 'The average worker in the employ of an independent weaver who has more than one loom still retains some of his old social position especially if his employer is of the same caste, but those who work in the karkhanas are regular wage-workers and in that respect are at the bottom of the ladder'.^{111/}

What could one say from the above about sources of accumulation in large households? Unfortunately too little is available on conditions within households to form a better impression. Of some assistance is the following description of the silk-cum-woollen factories of UP (Najibabad and Muzaffarnagar). The hired labourers in these establishments were all relatives of the owner, as if an extended family was at work. But the 'relatives' occupied a lower status compared to immediate family members as evident from the fact that they neither lived in the same house nor shared the same kitchen. They were paid, but at rates considerably lower than the (notional) market wage rate. While they formed the surplus labour in the community, it was also true that 'they would not go and serve anybody else for four annas'.^{112/} In other words, the very ambiguity of the relation, containing elements of both patriarchal authority and pure contract, provided the employer with unrestricted possibilities of exploitation.

Processing Reorganisation -- In pure silk, the circumstances which led to centralisation of processing included an increasingly stiff competition from east Asia since the mid-twenties.^{113/} The preceding half century or so had witnessed a crisis within indigenous silks which had its origin partly in natural events (pebrine disease of worms) and partly in economic ones (withdrawal of foreign filatures from Bengal). The immediate manifestations of the crisis were deterioration of quality, falling prices and loss of the European market in which Italian and Levantine silks were making sharp inroads. Within the home market, however, a straight substitution was difficult because significant product-differentiations existed between imported and local silks. Despite serious degradation in quality, most varieties of Indian silks retained a

certain superiority in tensile strength and lustre. To the extent there was a substitution, it was partly induced by shifts in preferences, e.g. the fact that foreign silks took dye well and brightness of colour came to be valued more. It was, however, also due to the ready-processed nature of foreign silks. The latter came to the market ready for the loom, already re-reeled, twisted and standardised. Bengal silk in contrast was neither uniform nor re-reeled nor twisted. Mysore yarn similarly was full of knots while its nearest competitor the Canton steam filature silk, being better reeled, had better winding qualities.

These advantages were powerful inducements for weavers to prefer foreign silks but for the product-differentiations referred to. Threatened by a potential changeover, local raw silk merchants and master-weavers themselves set up establishments for twisting, dyeing and for warp and weft preparation. In Mysore the tendency received state patronage. Some of the largest processing units, the power-throwing plants in Peddapuram and Rayadrug, were in fact weaving units with integrated processing facilities. In the Kollegal factory twisting was done for the benefit of local weavers. In Surat and some parts of Deccan, notably Yeola, mechanisation was combined with greater division of manually operated labour and the separate operations were coordinated by master-weavers and merchants. In Surat, moreover, proximity to the mill industry was turned to good account. Thus, reeling came to be done with an efficient machine adapted from mill practice. Uneven advances in silk-processing intensified intra-handloom competition. The progress in mechanised twisting already accomplished in Bangalore and Surat in the mid-thirties was considered 'one of the causes which have led to the decline of silk-weaving in some parts of the (Hyderabad) State', 114/

Centralisation of preparatory operations either displaced families specialised in these operations or merely detached these functions from those hitherto performed by the weaver-household. The former was reported from Benares where in fact division of labour was already advanced. Elsewhere members of the weaving

household became surplus and, in some centres, were available for employment under the direction of the capitalist. Thus, the Multan and Amritsar handloom factories engaged female labourers to perform winding while twisting was centralised. 115/

Until the close of the thirties, by which time tariff restrictions on imported silks and provincial governments' interventions in sericulture had eased the situation somewhat, the exact scale of investment in processing, and hence its significance, remains unclear. Contemporary accounts, however, suggest the following effects. Firstly, it contributed to the dissolution of the household.116/ Secondly, processing constituted the most typical form of productive investment by merchant capital and is thus indicative of a shift in the tendencies of merchant capital. Finally, involvement of master-weavers in processing reorganisation implies prior accumulation by producers themselves and their intervention in the yarn-trade network possibly undermining the position of merchant capital per se.

Emergence of centralised dyeing units in silk was different both in its origin and its implications. In the case of dyeing, the changeover from indigenous to imported raw material, although it displaced certain hereditary occupations connected with indigenous dyeing posed no threat to the industry as such since the dyeing operation could not be dispensed with nor could the specific modes of dyeing handloom cloth be easily mechanised. Nevertheless use of foreign materials entailed problems of its own, chiefly of standardisation and quality control. At the same time the initial deindustrialising effects may have intensified differentiation within dyeing and encouraged greater participation of largescale dyers in weaving. Thus we find a significant incidence (about 9 per cent of loomage) of Nilgur and Rangrez ownership of handloom factories in Hyderabad. In the mid-thirties we do come across sporadic instances of master-weavers setting up dyehouses. But dyeing reorganisation could not possibly affect the weaver-household since even earlier dyeing constituted a distinct occupation. The most important effect of dyeing reorganisation,

however, was in inducing standardisation of dyed and printed cloth. To the extent preferences were responsible for what happened in dyeing the subject lies outside the scope of the present study.^{117/}

In cotton too, centralisation of processing and weaving were proceeding parallelly. Perhaps more than in silk, cotton yarn processing was integrated within the weaving shop. Also, unlike silk, no exogenous reasons for reorganisation can be located. The suggestion that by virtue of largescale and mechanised processing 'powerlooms enjoys a great advantage over the handlooms', (Kakade) is relevant only when the specific advantages of small scale processing, on demand side of having short warps and nonstandardised designs and on the supply side availability of unpaid family labour, have already weakened somewhat. The need to standardise finished product and an already-proceeding break-up of the household must have provided the bases for the reorganisation.

Chatterton, who sensed the genesis of capitalist enterprise in crafts more acutely than most contemporaries, assigned to yarn-processing an instrumental role: 'what we may look forward to in the future are groups of from fifty to two hundred weavers centred round a warping and dressing plant. This will supply warps to the weavers, who may either be collected in a shed or will work in their own homes. The trade will be in the hands of those who run the warping plant and on them will mainly fall the work of introducing improved looms and methods among the hand-weavers'.^{118/} Elsewhere he expressed confidence in the master-weaver as one who could accomplish this plan. The plan itself formed part of the informed opinion on revival of handlooms and was probably influenced by impressions of the Japanese experience.^{119/}

Chatterton more or less anticipated the system that eventually emerged in the principal handloom towns of Madras, notably Madura and Salem. Although Salem Weaving Factory was a failure, it 'materially contributed to the success of the movement' by popularising fly-shuttle sleys and, more importantly, improved methods

of warping. The substitution of traditional methods of warping, viz. winding the yarn around two pieces of stick, for the hand warping mill was more or less complete in Salem already in 1918. There was a large number of warping factories supplying ready warps to the weavers. The mill itself was an adaptation of the horizontal machine once used in Europe. But no uniform pattern was in usage and probably innovations on the basic frame continued over time. Upper-tier castes, Kaikolars and Salis, owned these factories, and Patnulkarans were their main customers.^{120/}

Over time several other processes were centralised and yarn-processing as a whole became integrated to the handloom factory (or the warping mills diversified into weaving, which it is not clear). In the fifties the cotton handloom factories of Tamil Nadu performed only weaving manually. Hand-driven bobbins, winding machines, warping mills of various sizes and capacities, beaming machines were standard equipments of the factory.^{121/}

Karkhanas in Deccan were also introducing 'new methods of sizing and warping' some of which were carried on inside the karkhana itself. By 1940 over 90 per cent of the warping in Sholapur was done in separate factories. The process had the advantage that it reeled off more than one thread at a time. Almost all the mills were owned and operated by caste-weavers.^{122/}

Overexploitation of female labour constituted 'a definite advantage over the small weaver'. In this respect the handlooms and mechanised mills had progressed together. The 'contract' which bound the immigrant worker in Sholapur to the karkhana owners provided for employment for his wife in the winding section of the karkhana but, unlike with the men, left the rates of pay unstated. Of the warping mill workforce in the town more than 75 per cent were women while for hand-warping women were available on contract. Likewise in the karkhanas of Pune all processing was done by women and children. Similarly in the Tamil Nadu and the Malabar factories bobbin and pirn winding were done with the help of female labour while the children were

employed for doubling the thread and knotting the ends -- roughly the same tasks they performed at home. Only in warping and sizing was mechanisation significant. For the other operations older processes continued but transferred from the home to the factory shed.^{123/}

The captive processing capacity of Sholapur handloom karkhanas usually exceeded own requirements. Ready warps were given out by the large producers to loomowning weavers engaged on contract and the cloth received back. In contrast putting out arrangements under the direction of merchants still involved unprocessed or semiprocessed yarns.^{124/} Thus if centralised processing did have any intrinsic advantage, say, in respect of standardisation of production, the large producer-cum-putter out was in a better position than the merchant. Simultaneously the weaver who received ready warps for weaving was bound to his employer by a tighter dependence.

Powerlooms /- Two tendencies - on demand side diversification into nontraditional products and on the supply side differentiation among producers -- converged in the small powerloom unit. The products in which the first powerlooms flourished, synthetics (mainly art silk), silk and mixed fabrics, were sufficiently complex and nonstandardised for the mills to avoid their production. At the same time, compared to handlooms, these could be mass-produced at lower costs. This flexibility of the small user of power, 'the elasticity which allows small works more readily to adapt themselves to changes and fluctuations in trade' was already noted by Chatterton.^{125/}

The immediate inducement for adoption of powerlooms in the thirties came from a tendency to diversify into noncotton fabrics reinforced by freshly imposed tariffs on silk and synthetic fabrics imports. In the west coast, Surat, Bhiwandi and Ahmedabad, powerlooms were, from the beginning engaged in art silk and spun silk shirtings, coatings and saris. Bangalore looms likewise were weaving pure silk. Only in Deccan did powerloom and cotton

handloom product-structure overlap. The former were making saris from mercerised and twofold cotton yarn of designs and patterns established within the handloom tradition, usually cotton saris with silk borders. Powerlooms' inability to use singles yarn maintained a certain distance between handloom and powerloom fabrics even when both were engaged in making cloths of roughly similar styles.^{126/}

While powerlooms had certain specific advantages their rapid growth cannot be understood except in relation to the unsuitability of several types of improved handlooms, the nearest comparable options available for use already in the early twentieth century. Apart from being almost as expensive as a loom run by an oil-engine these handlooms of complex make could not be repaired by the ordinary carpenter or blacksmith and were more strenuous to operate.^{127/} What had probably constrained the adoption of either was the small scale and dispersed location of cotton yarn processing, a constraint substantially overcome by the mid-thirties. At the same time noncotton yarns, especially the synthetics, did not require many of the processes at all.

In the mid-thirties the standard powerloom unit was a direct outgrowth of the large households. There were many instances where persons owning two or three handlooms subsequently invested in powerlooms. At a different level, but confirming the same association between handlooms and powerlooms, handloom karkhanas were converting into powerlooms. This happened in phases giving rise to many 'mixed' units. The Tikekar mill of Sholapur with two divisions, handloom and powerloom, was, according to Joshi, 'typical of the latest development in the Deccan handloom industry' in the mid-thirties. The TEC also reported the existence of numerous similar establishments in Punjab, Kerala, Delhi and Bengal.^{128/}

Large scale conversion to powerlooms by handloom weavers was, in fact, anticipated as early as in 1918. In Bombay the prediction was based on enquiries received from Malegaon weavers about small powerloom factory. In Madras the Government was

advised to 'cooperate with the would be private companies' of handloom weavers in propagating powerlooms. Mysore had already progressed in this direction. Successful experiments with looms 'driven by electric motors in weavers' homes had been conducted but no actions were taken due to shortage of such looms'.^{129/}

Late reports confirm the specific origin of powerlooms while indicating incipient signs of change. A census conducted in Bombay in the fifties showed that districtwise, concentration within handlooms (approximate percentage of looms in units having 3 or more looms each) was positively associated with concentration within powerlooms suggesting that a relatively high level of concentration in the former could be a precondition for investment in powerlooms. In the sixties, when powerlooms were growing rapidly in Madras, they constituted, as before, a symbol of inter-generational mobility among handloom weavers. Simultaneously, however, a controversy had developed as to whether or not powerlooms should be reserved for hereditary weavers or be open to any interested entrepreneur.^{130/} The original connection between the two sectors had begun to grow weaker.

Preconditions

What were the conditions for new relations to emerge? Why, despite circumstances being similar, did handloom weaving in the south prove more progressive than in northern and eastern India? Certain probable conditions have already been indicated. The availability, for instance, of a subsidiary occupation in cultivation may have diffused differentiation among craftsmen in the east. By excluding similar alternatives the arid tracts of Deccan forced weavers to congregate in a few localities. In Tamil Nadu rigid correspondence between caste and occupation, especially the 'left-hand' (artisans) and 'right hand' (agriculturists) dichotomy, might have performed a similar function although the rigidity of this correlation was evidently in decline.

The role assigned to large households in a transitional period suggests that social and demographic factors which determined

the formation of extended families and their breaking up again had an influence. For instance, Kakade's demographic data indicate that the 'composite family', a corporate of several distinct family units, was the typical form appearing among large households in Sholapur - a concrete instance of 'family cooperation' being the basis of capitalist cooperation in handicraft factories.^{131/}

Somewhat along the lines of Hopkins' distinction between short distance and long distance trades,^{132/} a contrast between rural and urban organisations emerges through the literature surveyed above. This becomes relevant together with the fact that handlooms were more urbanised in the south, especially Deccan, compared with their dispersed location in the north. Stratification among craftsmen as well as merchants was more advanced in the towns. This appears sharply in regions like Punjab, UP and Bengal where a few large towns existed in the midst of a predominantly rural weaving. While the village weaver was not necessarily less or more dependent on the capitalist, the form of dependence did differ, being in the village of the price-contract type and in the town secured through wage contract. Forms of independence likewise varied, from a hawker or travelling salesman the weaver progressed to a large producer in the town - a transition clearly seen in Deccan. Correspondingly merchant capital was more differentiated in the towns to cope with the scale whereas in the village the middleman often combined yarn, cloth and finance. The eastern Indian weaver, moreover, was often an agriculturist just as land represented to the capitalist a means of moving upward.^{133/}

We have suggested that the merchant producer difference was fundamental in eastern India and that the presence of merchant capital as a class contradicted tendencies of differentiation among producers. This characteristics can be seen as a consequence of the destruction or modification of an original hierarchy as a result of colonial intervention. Studies on European trade in the eastern coast have highlighted this process. Many of the conclusions would apply equally to parts of Bihar and eastern UP. Hossain and Arasaratnam mention head weavers in Bengal and Andhra

coast in the eighteenth century. The latter represented a social hierarchy which was utilised and transformed by the trades. By becoming a part of the new structure the head weavers were subordinated to merchants and financiers who were paid officials of the Company and alien to the production system -- a process resented, often violently, by the former. The system that appears to have taken shape in eastern Bengal was one in which weavers at one end and several buyers (the English, Dutch, French Companies, private traders) at the other were mediated by a professional middleman who could be a paid official of the English company. The advantages of having many buyers accrued to the middleman. In addition Hossain alludes to double exploitation of cultivating weavers in the hands of zamindars. This situation explains the emergence of commercial capital independently of tendencies within the production system. Relatedly it clarifies the nature of dependence that arose. While sale could in fact be tied, even by legal contract, this did not make the weaver a wage-worker precisely because such contracts explicitly related to sale of products.^{134/}

Conditions for accumulation were also product specific. Capital accumulated to a greater degree in noncotton weaving than pure cotton and, by implication, in regions which had a strong tradition of noncotton weaving, especially the south. Broadly speaking in silk large producers were more common, which can be understood, negatively, as the counterpart of a tendency of merchant capital to be more differentiated. Raw material and cloth trades remained separate branches chiefly because of the complex character of raw material processing and trade itself. Cotton yarn could be bought readymade but silk was made locally and raw silk merchants accomplished the difficult task of coordinating several large-scale and autonomous processes, some of which were land-based.^{135/} Similar complexity characterised weaving and cloth trade as well. Noncotton involved complex technologies and its market, accordingly, was sensitive to craftsmanship. For the same reason producers may not have faced very stiff barriers to entry in trade. The separation of yarn and cloth was reinforced by the fact that the former was village based and the latter by

and large an urban industry. Finally centralisation of processing capital in silk may have added inducement for centralisation of weaving. Some of the advantages of noncotton, elimination of the processing constraint and being a skill-intensive but mass-produced item, were transferred to the synthetic yarns available from the thirties. Hence the close connection between art silks and handloom factories.^{136/}

Conclusion

The transition takes us beyond the somewhat worn-out questions about 'the imperial impact' and raises directly the problem of explaining sources of accumulation within the crafts and that of identifying the conditions that made possible a coexistence of different technologies in textiles. Certain tentative hypotheses can be proposed.

Handlooms were already a differentiated industry in the nineteenth century when machine made cloth arrived. The resultant competition was not total, but partial, because of continuing product differentiation between mill and handloom cloths.^{137/} Hence competition did not simply industrialise, but also intensified the differences within crafts organisation: differences among craftsmen, between craftsmen and merchants, between pure traders and producer-traders, between urban and rural crafts, etc. The nature of the pre-existing differences, the relative importance of these elements, varied from one regional system to another and so did their potentiality to bring into existence new relations of production. Where the situation was favourable, especially under conditions of significant intraproducer differentiation, capitalist relations of production appeared.

The transition renders the customary distinction between traditional and modern industries arbitrary. The distinction is built into the very definition of industrialisation in recent literature which excludes from its scope all manufactures predating colonialism. It seems more realistic to assume that continuity between and interpenetration of traditional -- urban crafts, rural agroprocessing, etc. -- and large scale industries determined

the character of India's industrialisation as deeply as did interventions by the colonial state or the absence of it. The textiles case suggests that the use of a specific technology or a particular size of establishment cannot be the criterion for distinguishing 'systems' of production as most typologies, organised - unorganised, modern-traditional, to do. Complementarily, analysing industrialisation in regions outside the orbit of the port-enclaves may suggest a story wherein modern industry evolved out of the pre-existing structures and was not merely imposed on the latter from above. This applies especially to what has been called the 'modern small scale industry'. Inadequate exploration of this aspect has resulted, paradoxically, in a dissociation between the position accorded a region in industrial history and the level of manufacturing activity within a region. The latter (proportion of industrial in total work force) was in fact the highest in some of the traditional industry complexes such as the Deccan and the lowest in, say, Bengal.

The convergence of small and large was mirrored in the characteristics of the labour force. The gradual development of proletarian identity from out of caste or familial affiliations is relevant in this context. Organised labour first appeared in the Bombay-Deccan and Malabar. The late-thirties in Malabar and the early forties in Deccan were periods of unrest. A 1937 Malabar strike involved 3000 handloom workers. In both regions demands centred on implementation of specific clauses of the Factories Act. As noted already the Deccan weavers were only partially successful in this endeavour. Widespread wage-cuts, in Bombay especially, around the time of the depression, also encouraged formation of collectives.

But continuous changes in labour process imposed a constraint on the success of collective movements. A consequence of wages being fixed by contract was that prices of products became a function of material costs. This may have induced, in non-cotton in particular, diversification into inferior substitutes often ahead of actual changes in preferences. The new products, being more standardised, were less skill-intensive: in noncotton,

synthetics compared to pure silk, in cotton, greys compared to finished fabrics and in both, piecegoods compared to garments. The last two were developments since the fifties.

What could be the possible consequences of deskilling? Skill intensity and product-differentiation, according to generations of crafts-historians, formed the very basis of the survival of handlooms. This basis was now being replaced by another, exploitation of cheap labour. Not the simple commodity producer, but his very antithesis, the factories ensured survival by exploitation. It is this reorientation from quality to cost of labour, a process that reinforces itself through product-structure adjustments, that defines the contradiction in the situation of the handloom-powerloom worker in recent times.

Abbreviations used

BEIEC	Bombay, Economic and Industrial Enquiry Committee
FFC	Fact Finding Committee (Handlooms and Mills)
IIC	Indian Industrial Commission
ITBC	Indian Tariff Board, Cotton Textile Industry
ITBS	Indian Tariff Board, Sericulture Industry
ISUP	Industrial Survey of United Provinces
PEC	Powerloom Enquiry Committee
PBEC	Banking Enquiry Commission, Provincial
TEC	Textile Enquiry Committee

Notes

1. Attributing survival of handlooms to weavers' capacity to accept lower wages is a familiar argument. For a formal statement in the context of Chinese crafts, see Chao. For nineteenth century India, the argument appears in Specker. Morris (1982) assumes depressibility of craftsmen's wages. Among contemporary sources, see BEIEC, pp 98-100. Alternatively, survival is also explained by an argument about markets. English textiles could not displace handlooms because cloth consumption, both aggregate and per capita, expanded rapidly since the early nineteenth century according to Morris (1968), and Baker. Hypotheses about market size, however, do not address the question of market sharing at all, and are of partial relevance at best. Moreover, the argument is often circular. Thus Baker cites cloth production figures to demonstrate expansion in market and then uses the latter to explain growth in the handlooms. Such ambiguities are common in the literature. In Bagchi's writings, consequences of deindustrialisation (1977) do not take into account adjustments internal to handlooms (1972). Baker concludes a survey of observed tendencies in Madras - expansion in loomage, in production and exports, number of capitalists, size of capital, size of the proletariat - with the assertion that all this 'looked as if they might constitute a trend away from a "traditional" towards a more "modern" form of industry... But this would be to misinterpret the process of adjustment' (Baker, p.45 and 44, emphasis added). See A. K. Bagchi, Private Investment in India, Cambridge, 1972, Section 7.1 and 'Deindustrialisation in India in the nineteenth century: Some theoretical implications' in Journal of Development Studies, 1977; C. J. Baker, An Indian Rural Economy, 1880-1955, New Delhi, 1984; Morris D. Morris' contributions in Indian Economic and Social History Review, January 1968 and in the Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. II, Cambridge, 1982; Kang Chao, The Development of Cotton Textile Production in China, Cambridge, Mass, 1977.
2. See Michael J Twomey, 'Employment in Nineteenth Century Indian Textiles' in Explorations in Economic History, Vol. 20, No.1, January 1983 and Reports of Bombay Millowners' Association.
3. Oversimplified frameworks, usually attempts to situate the transition in the industrial revolution sequence, were also available and reinforced the gap. See, for instance, ITBS, 1933, Report, pp. 103-4.
4. Gazetteer, Belgaum, p.347. Subsequent to this experience Bombay introduced a system of special relief for weavers through guaranteed cloth-purchase. Except in Sholapur it did not work. See Kakade, p.10.
5. Blennerhassett, p.4.
6. Maxwell-Lefroy and Ansorge, p
7. ITBS, 1940, Report, p.2.

8. The purpose of the chart is not to distinguish between the categories 'price' and 'wage', but to set out the criteria by which a price-contract and a wage-contract can be separated, that is, to conceptualise relations. At the level of categories, the distinction remains blurred especially when both include services of unpaid family labour. It is when the processing operations are detached from the family and centralised so that wages consist of weaving charges solely that the distinction becomes decisive, it now corresponds to the presence or absence of the very basis of household production.
9. The market-induced changes will be explored in a separate section of the larger study under preparation. To summarise the arguments: Product-differentiation provided the conditions for coexistence of different technologies in textiles. It also dynamically decided the products in which the handlooms could specialise. The longrun diversifications in the handlooms can be interpreted as a search for areas relatively free from competition. These areas did not remain fixed, for preferences were changing and mills imitated handloom products. Roughly two sorts of product-structural adjustments followed: a passive sort in which shifts between products did not necessarily involve changes in organisation or technology, e.g. shift from fine to coarse weaving or the reverse; and a dynamic kind which implied changes in the technoeconomic structure, e.g. shifts from cotton to silk, from less to more standardisable products, from prints to woven designs, etc. The former characterised the earlier phase, the nineteenth century, and the latter was more significant in the twentieth. The specific dynamic adjustments in the thirties involved restricted entry and at the same time supplied the conditions for mass production. Market-induced changes, in this fashion, converged into and reinforced the differentiation processes at work.
10. See ITBS, 1940, Report, p. 109; ITBS, 1940, Oral Evidence, p.249-256; ITBS, 1935, Oral Evidence, p.272 and various places in the next section.
11. FFC, pp.76-81; Kakade and Joshi on migrant workers and ITBS, 1940, Oral Evidence, pp.249-256; ITBS, 1935, Oral Evidence, p.272 and various places in the next section.
12. Writings of Ernest Havell, George Birdwood, T N Mukharji, Ananda Coomaraswamy belong to this school on which Pre-Raphaelite influence was considerable.
13. The data do not say how many of the independent weavers were employers and how many pure households, leaves the division of the second group (dependent on contract weavers) into price-contract and wage-contract unspecified, does not indicate the loomage definition of a karkhana and division of karkhana workers into hired and household.

14. Thus TEC's census ended up with a large segment of assistants and hired labourers' who could not be classified under any of the standard categories. How many of the assistants were paid and how many-unpaid were not known.
15. Madras, 1954, p.22.
16. ILO, p.49
17. TEC, Appendices
18. This is most clearly apparent in the costs and prices data supplied by the Tariff Board reports on cotton and silk.
19. TEC, Appendices, also ITBC, 1934, Evidence Vol. II, p.50
20. Madras, 1954, p.45
21. Bengal, 1929, 1937 and 1940
22. Kakade, pp. 48-9
23. ITBS, 1935, Written Evidence, p.318
24. ITBS, 1940, Oral Evidence, p.315
25. Ibid.
26. ITBS, 1935, Oral Evidence, p.271
27. ITBS, 1940, Oral Evidence, p.366
28. For 'stages' see Kakade, p.40
29. Kakade, p.37 (Table 10)
30. Nearly two-third of Kakade's sample of contract-weavers were tied to large karkhanadars while the rest were under 'broker-stockists'. This refers to the full time contract workers only. There were in addition many part timers. See Kakade, p.56.
31. Ibid, pp.53-4
32. Ibid, p.55
33. The very formation of the sangh was due to the initiatives of the bigger karkhanadars who wanted to prevent enforcement of the Factories Act. The idea may have been to preempt similar initiatives from wage-workers. But the Sangh also, 'thought it fit to cooperate, when necessary, with the handloom workers' Union', Kakade, p.89

34. Ibid, p.90
35. Joshi, p.111; Kakade, pp.49, 115, 164
36. Ibid, pp.49, 52, 117
37. Narayanaswami Naidu's sample survey (1947), between FFC (1940) and Madras, 1954, showed an increase in the proportion of independent weavers. Madras, 1948, p.8. To some extent the independent-dependent ratio was sensitive to the difficulty involved in obtaining yarn. The early-fifties were years of yarn-rationing.
38. Venkataraman, p.62 and PBEC, Madras, pp.362-5. Reference is to Madura.
39. Venkataraman, pp.62-4. See also Madras, 1948, on location of price contract, p.9.
40. Census, 1961, Kanchipuram Silk, p.29
41. Venkataraman, p.64, ITBS, 1940, Oral Evidence, p.197. Also, comparison of relative earnings above.
42. Madras, 1948, p.10
43. Venkataraman, p.181 and Census, 1961, Kanchipuram Silk, pp. 29-30.
44. Mines, pp.107-20, et passim. TEC supplies several instances of inter-caste wage-employment wherein employers and workers belong to distinct castes and the latter usually to a lower caste, though not necessarily nonweavers.
45. PBEC, Madras pp.134- 192-3, 305-6. Descriptions of one village in Bellary and two from coastal Andhra.
46. Memorandum of Bengal National Chamber of Commerce and Industry to PBEC, Bengal, p.386; emphasis added.
47. ITBS, 1940, Oral Evidence p.616, emphasis added. This statement intended a contrast between Bengal on the one hand and Bombay, Hyderabad, Punjab on the other where wage employment was extensive
48. As long as the mahajan's hold lasts, 'there is little likelihood of the handloom industry being organised by capitalists', Bengal, 1940, p.4
49. Bengal, 1940, p.38
50. Bengal, 1937, p.87
51. Mukherji, pp.41-2.

52. ITBS, 1940, Oral Evidence, p.692
53. Ibid.
54. Bengal, 1929, pp.26-7, 29
55. Bengal, 1937, p.55
56. Colebrook, p.11
57. Mukherjee; p.42, Bengal, 1929, p.55; FFC, p.63; TEC, p.15. Also Bengal, 1940, calculated that weavers who followed weaving as a subsidiary occupation had higher average income than either wholtime weavers or parttimers who followed weaving as the principal occupation, p.93
58. Bengal, 1937, p.87; Bengal, 1940, p.19. Unfortunately altogether too little is available on the first handloom factories of Bengal.
59. ITBS, 1940, Oral Evidence, p.691
60. Ibid., p.735. Dominance of finance capital could be found in pockets outside eastern India. Thus, in Pune, where the silk industry suffered a noticeable decline in the thirties, much greater involvement of moneylenders was reported than was the case in the other towns of Bombay-Deccan. The standard case of yarn merchants supplying raw material on credit existed. In addition merchants advanced cash at as high rates as 75 per cent per annum. Finished articles were received back as loan repayments. A representation from Pune artisans was unique in its demand for legislation regarding interest rates. ITBS, 1940, Written Evidence, p.1099.
61. Latifi, pp.9,41
62. ITBS, 1935, Written Evidence, pp.283-4
63. PBEC, Punjab, Vol.II, p.546
64. Ibid.
65. ITBS, 1940, Written Evidence, p.593. In Punjab expansion of factories was closely associated with a shift to synthetic yarn in the thirties. In part the shift reflected specificities of demand. However, as the ITBS noted, it also formed part of an emergent territorial division of skill in non-cotton weaving. As markets came to be integrated Punjab found it increasingly difficult to compete with the south and Bengal in pure silk and bordered cloth. At the same time spun silk piecegoods were exported from Punjab to the southern market. ibid p.589

66. PBEC Punjab, pp.948-950 Reference is to Multan. See also the next section
67. ISUP, Fyzabad, p.25 and Bara Banki, p.20
68. ISUP, Benares, p.9
69. ITBS, 1940, Written Evidence, p.719
70. 'Many of (the karkhanadars) have become big merchants', Ibid.p.717
71. ITBS, 1935, Written Evidence, pp.291, 296-7, 344-348
72. ITBS, 1940, Written Evidence, pp.1,8 and Oral Evidence, p.262
73. The Sholapur yarn dealer 'has no interest in selling the fabric woven from the weavers as he specialises in yarn dealing only and the (cloth merchant) does not generally find it necessary (to give out yarn)' Joshi, p.109
74. FFC, p.79
75. Repeated disputes between members of the Brokers' Association and those of the Merchants' Association, an organisation dominated by the weaver-traders, testify to the process. The dispute culminated in an agreement between the two associations in the early forties which, according to Kakade, was biased in favour of the brokers.
76. Kakade, Table 10.
77. ITBS, 1935, Written Evidence, Appendix X of evidence of Hyderabad Government.
78. Gazetteer, Khandesh, p.144 and Sholapur, p.244
79. Enthoven, pp.21-2
80. Gazetteer, Salem, p.265 and IIC, Evidence, Madras, p.138
'Sale of yarn is in the hands of the bigger weavers in every place. It is easy enough to get the ordinary ryot out of the sowkar's hands, but where there is a big weaver belonging to the caste, who manages the whole of the sale of the yarn, it is very difficult to get the small weaver out of his hands'.
81. Venkataraman, p.181
82. ibid., passim, Gazetteer, Salem, p.280
83. IIC, Evidence, Madras, p.185

84. Ibid.
85. Venkataraman, pp.66-8
86. Madras, 1948, p.7 and FFC, p.72
87. In contrast, 'the financiers of the cotton weavers are as a rule not master-weavers; and have not improved the craft in the slightest'. Cumming, p.11.
88. Mukherji referred to producers who were interested in silk trade and were zamindars as well. There was one whom 'other Mirzapur weavers recognised as their master, as he was the means of introducing many improvements in the silk weaving industry of the Jangipur centre', p.42. Bengal, 1929, reported on Shibganj (Malda): 'The condition of most of the weavers is fairly good, some of them are rich, 27 families have lands, varying from 3 to 400 bighas .. some of the rich weavers are themselves mahajans'. p.142.
89. Gazetteer, Murshidabad, p.139. Murshidabad weavers employed 'fellow caste-men on a system of contract'. The special relationship that caste-affinity secured seems to have ensured quality-control ('a kind of supervision over the actual work'). It also ensured that the advances taken never failed to be paid back. Mukherji, pp.42, 54.
90. Mukherji, p.67
91. The bigger managing agency houses interested in silk included Kettlewell Bullen, Shaw Wallace, Anderson Wright, George Henderson, Balmer Lawrie and a French firm Louis Payen. Silk represented the first round of withdrawal of colonial firms. Studies on withdrawal, however, do not seem to be aware of the developments in silk which anticipated the more visible process in the forties and the fifties
92. ITBS, 1940, Written Evidence, p.414 and Oral Evidence, p.693
93. 'Previously (the weavers) were purchasing the yarn from the village reelers, but now the merchant who is there issues yarn for the cloth he receives, otherwise he would not accept cloth'. ITBS, 1940, Oral Evidence, p.689
94. 'They are both merchants dealing in the commodity (raw silk) as well as investors of money'. ITBS, 1940, Oral Evidence, p.669. 'The best rearers and reelers are no better than beggars in Malda. They only depend upon loans for their existence. They go and sell their things to Marwari merchants for any price they can get', *ibid.*, p.700. The Bengal Co-operative Silk Union, a reelers' association with a capital of Rs.22,000 while the biggest Marwari silk dealer had an

annual turnover of Rs.1½ lakhs, was doomed from the start. Both the cooperative and the private merchants supplied credit but while the latter could wait for repayment or be repaid in kind, the former soon accumulated bad debts to be met from reserves. ITBS, 1940, Oral Evidence, pp.700-02.

95. ITBS, 1940, Written Evidence, p.414 and memorandum of Bengal National Chamber op.cit.
96. ITBS, 1940, Written Evidence, p.413
97. Ibid.
98. Faridpur, Chittagong and Mymensingh, where a fair degree of independence was reported, were also the districts in which handlooms were doing better while in the province as a whole the industry was in a decaying state. Bengal, 1929, pp.80,99
99. Bengal, 1929, p.27 and Bengal, 1937, p.21. The percentages of independent weavers in Serampur was small in the late-twenties, but the weaver-traders who are mentioned might have been large producers; the town later emerged as Bengal's premier power-loom centre. Large producers also existed in the Dacca concentration. Bengal, 1940, p.23.
100. Bengal, 1929, p.60 and Bengal, 1937, p.71
101. Bengal, 1929, p.8. Also, 'the mahajans who control the industry practically are not well-informed and equipped enough to assist the weavers to adopt improved methods of weaving. commercial profits is their first concern and they are found hardly to trouble themselves about improving the technique of the industry'. Bengal, 1940, p.32.
102. Ibid., pp.21-2. Large producers of the Dacca concentration were also 'progressives' Ibid.. p.23
103. PBEC, Punjab, pp.856-7 Reference is to Gurdaspur
104. Ibid. pp.879-80, 948
105. Ibid. pp.948-51
106. Latifi, pp.53-4; ISUP, Lucknow, pp.24-5, Fyzabad, p.27 and Benares; Census, 1901, Punjab, Vol. I, p.369; Badenoch, p.52 and ITBS, 1940, Written Evidence, p.717. Indebtedness in karkhanas had a particular character. Workers took consumption loans and virtually bonded themselves. This instrument was highly developed. Thus in the carpet factories of Amritsar an elaborate system of informal accounting had been evolved to ensure tied labour. Often, owing to brisk demand for skilled labour, its function changed and it became an instrument for bargaining between employers.

107. ISUP, Budaun, p.29 and Sitapur, p.32
108. Several instances of dissolution -- reversal from factories to households -- were supplied by ISUP, Chikan in Lucknow, for instance; see ISUP, Lucknow, p.25.
109. Gazetteer, Belgaum, pp.137, 340. The Hatkars and Salis of Belgaum were described as weavers with capital who 'seldom sinks to a position of dependence'. Also, IIC, Evidence, Vol.III, pp.444-5; Gazetteer, Sholapur, p.491; Gazetteer, Salem, p.263 and FFC, p.72. On large households in Mirzapur carpets see Chatterjee, p.61.
110. IIC, Evidence, Vol. III, p.177 and FFC, p.80
111. FFC, p.80
112. Tariff Board, Woollen Textiles, Evidence, pp.264-5
113. When yarn started coming; east Asian fabrics were a long familiar product in the Indian market
114. ITBS, 1940, Written and Oral Evidence, passim ITBS, 1935 written Evidence, p.298.
115. ITBS, 1940, Written Evidence, pp.592, 716 et passim
116. The contradiction between processing and households extended to product quality. This was reflected in a later contrast between mashru weaving in Azamgarh (UP) and in Patan (Gujarat). In the former weaving and processing were done by family labour whereas in Patan division of labour and wage-work were more advanced. Azamgarh fabrics were cheaper but inferior in appearance as quality control was more stringent in the Patan workshops. This even resulted in unfinished Azamgarh being sent to Patan for finishing. Census, 1961, Mashru Weaving of Patan.
117. ITBS, 1940 and 1935, passim
118. Chatterton, p.33
119. See, for instance, Maxwell-Lefroy and Mansorge, p.142
120. Gazetteer, Salem, p.268
121. Madras, 1954, p.26
122. Joshi, p.104 and Kakade, p.26

123. Joshi, pp.104, 111, 121, Kakade, pp.25-6 and Venkataraman, pp. 71-2
124. Joshi, p.110
125. Chatterton, p.24, See also Kakade, p.72. 'As between the powerloom and the handloom .. the former enjoyed the advantage of lower cost of production and attractive finish'.
126. FFC, p.24. Availability of cheap electric power and reconditioned second-hand looms from cotton mills, which were going through a crisis, at about half the price of a new loom, were also among the immediate reasons for shift to powerlooms. Contribution of cheap electricity tends to be overemphasised. In fact, even in the fifties oil-engines and electric motors were used simultaneously and interchangeably, Nanekar, p.91; PEC, p.18.
127. IIC, Evidence, Vol. IV, p.340 and Chatterton, p.235. Two specific problems were, parts made of castings and foot pedals too strenuous for the 'underdeveloped legs' of the average weaver.
128. TEC, pp 8, 1408. See also PEC, p.24 and descriptions of particular centres, Surat, Burhanpur, Tanda, etc. Besides handloom weavers, other early entrepreneurs include unemployed mill workers (Sholapur), middle class 'swadeshi' entrepreneurs (Bengal), migrant handloom weavers (Bhiwandi), wholesale cloth traders (art silk mills of west coast), etc.
129. IIC, Evidence Vol. p.340 and Vol. pp.484, 582, 595
130. Bombay, 'Handloom Census' and Working Group on Handlooms. Of Salem Weavers it was said, with the spread of literacy and the extension of electricity in the villages, there is a growing reluctance on the part of the younger generation of weavers to the working of a handloom and an increasing urge to take to powerlooms' p.69.
131. Lenin found size of family and of family labour positively correlated with number of hired workers employed on an average. Development of Capitalism in Russia, Moscow, 1967, p. 345.
132. A G Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa, London, 1973.

133. This characteristics was present in different degrees in the entire north. The Punjab village weaver was, in the early part of the century, an agricultural labourer in the harvest season. This connection was closer in the canal irrigated areas. Such artisans who took to land were better off than cultivators following crafts as subsidiary. Latifi, p.9, Badenoch, p 1 and Census, 1901, Punjab, Vol. I, p.364
134. Arasaratnam sees in increasing dependence the appearance of wage-employment. Changes in market-structure, from competition to monopsony, introduces a specific form of dependence, namely price-contract. There is no change in production relations involved here. Emergence of wage-employment, on the other hand, is a movement within the sphere of production and cannot be understood without reference to the latter.
135. Advance system, supply of yarn and receiving cloth, was thus much rarer in silk than cotton. Where it was in existence prior to the mid-thirties it dissolved into specialisation of trading functions. The latter was reported from Benares. See ITBS, 1935, Written Evidence, pp. 269, 55, 601.
136. Venkataraman, p.69. Also PBEC, Punjab, 1930
137. See also the discussion on market under 'General Tendency', pp. 9-10 and fn. 9 above.

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