

RURAL COMMUNITY AND AGRICULTURE IN THE CAUVERY RIVER BASIN:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE PERUVALANALLUR VILLAGE OF THE  
TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

PART FOUR

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Part One, Two, and Three of the same title consisted of the following chapters and published in the different journals.\*

Part One:	Chapter I	Introduction
	Chapter II	Land-uses and Their Implications
	Chapter III	Landownerships and Its Implications
	Chapter IV	Occupational Specialization and Labor Organization
Part Two:	Chapter V	Land Tenure and Its Implications
Part Three:	Chapter IV	Concluding Remarks

EPILOGUE: THE CHANGING VILLAGE

The development of agriculture in and around the studied village has been largely dependent upon that of irrigation systems over a long period of years. There were noticeable characteristics in the development of irrigated lands during the period 1864-1980 examined in this paper: (1) an extensive conversion from dry to "single-wet" lands during the relatively long

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\*Yoshimi Komoguchi, "Rural Community and Agriculture-----, Part One," Studies in Socio-cultural Change in Rural Villages in Tiruchirappalli District, Tamil Nadu, India, No. 2 (Tokyo: ISLCAA, 1980), pp. 85-136.

\*Yoshimi Komoguchi, "Rural Community and Agriculture-----, Part Two," Science Reports of Geography, No. 20 (Tokyo: Department of Geography, Komazawa University, March 1984), pp. 1-59.

\*Yoshimi Komoguchi, "Rural Community and Agriculture-----, Part Three," Science Reports of Geography, No. 21 (Tokyo: Department of Geography, Komazawa University, March 1985), pp. 1-38.

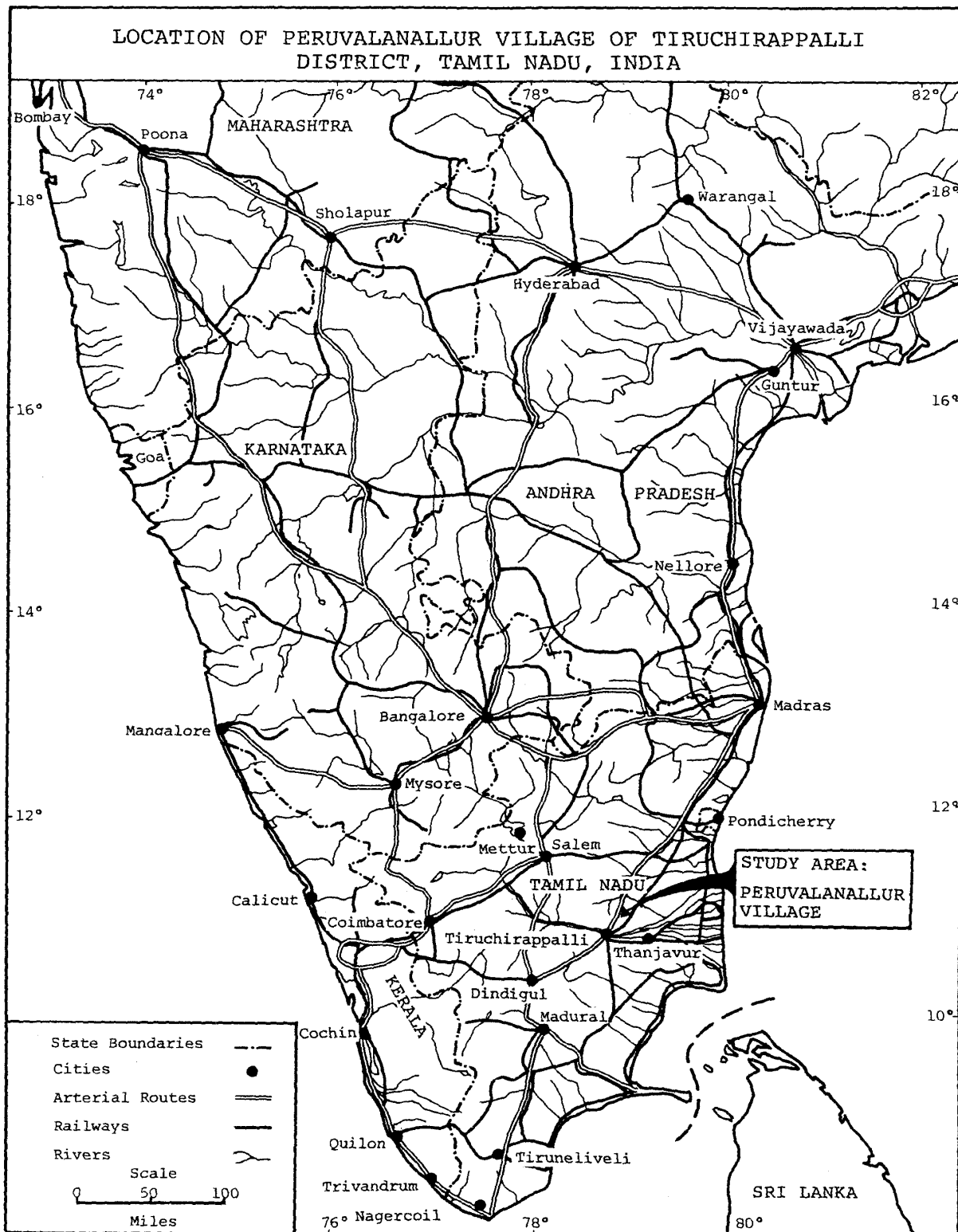


Figure I

period 1864-1925, in which the current network of field canals had been fundamentally shaped by 1898, and (2) a remarkable conversion from dry and/or "single-wet" to "double-wet" lands during the period 1927-1980, wherein intensive conversion occurred in the 1930s associated with construction of the Mettur Dam, and again in the second half of the 1960s and onward associated with the private installation of shallow and/or deep tubewells.

On the assumption that above process of development of agricultural lands and, by extension, growth of agricultural production might have occurred in most parts of the alluvial plains of the Cauvery River basin (although there would have been some regional variation within it, as observed in its current situation), there must have been two periods of so-called "Green Revolution" since 1927. There also is a possibility that another "Green Revolution" occurred in some years during 1864-1898, when the marked development of field canals at the village level took place during a relatively short period of years.<sup>1</sup>

When one focuses upon the most recent "Green Revolution" observed in the second half of the 1960s and onward, agricultural activities have become more vigorous than ever before. It has much emphasized modern agricultural inputs and the adoption of improved practices and technologies along with credits through government-linked cooperatives at the village level.<sup>2</sup> Thus, agricultural productivity has been increasing; the apparent "greening" has been through the intensification of cropping. Farming has become more capital- and labor-intensive in character, and thus farm management has become more important for

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1. In any rice-producing region or country, the development of various levels of man-made canals is one of the best expression of the developmental stages of agriculture.

2. There is wide spread speculation in both the academic and public spheres that the institutional credit for agriculture has mostly been assigned to the big landowners, neglecting the small farmers. It is a fact, however, that the amount of the agricultural credit for individual households in general has been allocated through the Village Cooperatives based on the per unit of area of thier operational landholdings. Since most credit

successful production.

Adoption of improved technologies is one of the key factors for the modernizing agriculture. The agricultural practices and technologies employed in and around the study area consist of "traditional" and modern ones in which the former is associated with human and animal sources of energy in its operation and the latter with inanimate energy. It should be noted that the currently employed agricultural practices and technologies have resulted mostly from indigenous development of integrated efforts by intelligent and/or innovative villagers (who are not necessarily farmers),<sup>3</sup> extension specialists, agronomists, irrigation engineers, other related scientists and technologists, and government specialists under the development agencies. It is fact that the traditional practices and technologies are still dominant, but there had been well coordinated with the modern ones. In general, adoption of modern technology in rural India has been exercised only when agricultural production would be considerably reduced without it or, conversely, be remarkably increased with it.

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has been sanctioned through the Village Cooperative, farmers' easy access to institutional credit is dependent upon the availability of well organized cooperatives. It should be stressed, however, that there is a great deal of difference in their organization and activities. At well established cooperatives like the one in the studied village, farmers can get credit without much difficulty, regardless the size of their landholdings. This is because the village cooperatives, being autonomous bodies, have benefited in accordance with the amount of the transactions in agricultural credit, and thus they tend to provide the farmers (share-holders of the cooperatives) with a maximum amount of credit within the limit of official allocation. Since most of the interest rate on loans are as high as 12-15 percent per annum, only the farmers who had carefully utilized credit for better farming would achieve the expected economic gains. Unfortunately, some farmers have not used the credit for what they ought to have, and thus they accumulated outstanding principal and interest over the years. In order to clear the loans from the cooperatives, quite a few landowners have pledged their lands under otti systems.

3. This includes job-seeking college and university graduates who usually stay in the village and help in the managerial part of farming.

The legal control over land tenureship is another responsible for modernizing agriculture. It should be recalled that since the later 1950s the legislature of Tamil Nadu has passed several tenancy acts and rules aiming primarily at protecting the "cultivating tenants," of which the 1969 Act (Tamil Nadu Agricultural Lands Records of Tenancy Act) has been the most influential. The recent rapid increase of agricultural production has proceeded under the strong influence of the various tenancy acts and rules.

Enforcement of legal controls has led to the following major consequences: (1) it has shaken up the existing landlord-tenant relationships in kuttagai (fixed rent tenure) by which some tenants have purchased the lands involved at a reduced rate and other tenants have returned the lands to their landlords with receipt of some cash money; (2) the new kuttagai markets have almost been closed; and (3) the landowning households (mostly Reddiars) who are short of working members in their families have been reluctant to expand their landholdings, but have preferred to invest their capital in the non-farming sector including agro-based business. As far as the growth of agricultural production is concerned, these changes themselves have generally work out positively, although there arguably remain problems of social justice in the process of tenancy resolution.

The changing agricultural systems have interacted with the socio-economies of the individual households and village communities as a whole. Whereas agricultural productivity has been increasing in the recent years, some households could not adapt themselves to the new conditions of farming and to the overall socio-economic changes in the village communities, and thus they have had to face the constraints of family maintenances and farm operation itself (if they ever have had lands). As part of the immediate solution for these difficulties, considerable numbers households have had either to sell a portion or all of their individual holdings of lands, or to pledge their lands under otti (usufructuary mortgage tenure), or to be involved in both land sales and otti transactions.

Of course, there have been various reasons for individual

landowner's involvement in land sales and otti transactions. Similar reasons (and motivations), however, can commonly be found both in land sales and otti transactions as follows: (1) family constraints, (2) consequences of the various influential tenant acts, (3) less productive lands (dry and single-cropping lands) or difficulty of farm management of the involved lands located in the distant villages, and (4) creation of capital for non-farming business.

Regarding the otti transaction, the capability of landowners' clearance of indebtedness (and re-enjoyment of the full right of cultivation of the land involved) is, of course, entirely dependent upon their individual economic achievement thereafter. Since the current agricultural productivity in general is high and stable the otti landowners' economic achievement can be measured to a degree on the percentage of the leased area of the individual total holdings. If the leased area was relatively small, the landowner usually could get back the otti land, but the leased area was relatively large (or the involved loan was large amount),<sup>4</sup> the landowner would, after all, have had to sell a portion or all of the lands involved.<sup>5</sup> These cases exist regardless of the size of holdings and of caste groups, but are prominent among the landowning Reddiars.

The recent rise in the productivity of agriculture has induced the prominence of otti transactions in which a considerable number of landless and marginal households have been involved as tenants (creditors). As far as the growth of agricultural production is concerned, the popularity of otti transactions is assumed to have worked out positively, because the otti tenants apparently better equipped for meeting the new agricultural conditions.

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4. Such cases in general were the outcome of repeated otti transactions of the same lands in every three years by raising some amount of "credit" per unit of area in each new contract and/or expanding to other lands under otti.

5. When farmers have two or more fields, they tend to pledge the inferior one under otti. A similar practice is also observed in the sales transactions.

The impact of the "Green Revolution" on agricultural labor and its organization also has been an important aspect. The "Green Revolution" in rice production has induced more work per unit area and has thus provided more job for agricultural laborers, since, unlike the wheat-producing areas, it has proceeded without much emphasis on the adoption of labor-saving improved implements and modern machines.<sup>6</sup>

Corresponding to the growth of agricultural productivity, laborers' wages have increased in almost every year. It should be noted, however, that the recent trend of laborers' intensification of day work has been reflected in wage increases to some degree. Related to the recent increase of agricultural work per unit area, labor employment under the contract systems has been increasingly popular compared with that under the ordinary fixed wage system.

It is not a new phenomenon that some different sub-caste members of the "Backward" or "Scheduled" classes work together under the contract system. In recent years, however, this has become more prominent as more varied sub-caste members have been organized into working parties regardless of differences between "Backward" and "Scheduled" castes. The timely organization of proper numbers of day laborers has been increasingly important for both landowners and laborers. This has induced more frequent and direct association not only among the wage laborers, but also between landowners and laborers with different caste backgrounds. The intensification of villagers' associations itself indicates a re-structuring of social relations among the varied caste groups, this being regarded as one of important elements for modernizing the rural community.

So far we have discussed some important factors in the recent "Green Revolution" and its socio-economic implications. The "Green Revolution" has induced rapid changes in the

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6. This opportunity of employment for agriculture has certainly contributed at least for lessening the social unrest which would otherwise have been more serious caused by the more prevailing unemployment and underemployment in the rural communities.

agricultural systems and accelerated the overall change of socio-economic activities in the village communities to a great extent. Of course, these changes have been associated with more general changing conditions for the socio-economies at regional, state, and/or national levels.

The rapid rise and fall of the socio-economic situation of individual households have been the outcome of their varied responses (and adjustments) to the changing socio-economic milieu of the village communities, regardless of the existing amount of their property holdings (such as land). Thus, it is highly doubtful to state that "the rich have become richer and the poor poorer"---one of well known speculative statements as to the consequences of the recent "Green Revolution." Of course we could find such cases at the individual level, but they have much to do with the influences from events in the non-agricultural sector rather than the agricultural sector. When we examined the recent land transactions, there was no clear trend toward land concentration in the relatively large landholding class (households owning 5 or more).<sup>7</sup>

In any given time, we could observe the varied degree of inequality in the distribution of landholdings among households in the village communities. More specifically, although a few of the large households (families) could be usually found in any given time, they were not necessarily the same households (or households' descendants) after some decades.<sup>8</sup> This concept can be also applied to all categories defined by the size of landholdings.

As already pointed out in the early part of this section, it is possible that three so-called "Green Revolution" may have

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7. Some households belonged to this category of landholding have tried to invest their capital in non-farming business, but only a few of them have been successful.

8. Indeed, in the 1930s, the biggest landlord family in the studied village owned about 100 acres of wet land, and in 1980, none of its descendants' households had more than 15 acres.



occurred during the period 1864-1980. The rapid changes in the socio-economies of the village communities during the latest "Green Revolution" were assumed to have occurred also in the other two "Green Revolution." Including these "revolutionary" periods, continual change appears to have occurred in any given period of years, as exemplified by the change in the Reddiars' percentage holding of agricultural land or in the residential areas in the studied village.

Further changes in agriculture and village social structures in the immediate future can be expected to take place at a more rapid pace than ever before; such changes preferably should proceed in a controlled manner, thereby breaking free of the still-remaining social exploitation and economic stagnation in which they have been locked.