

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Ruling the Countryside

Q1. Define the following terms: Mahal, Ryot, Satta, Bigha, Slave and Plantation

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Q2. What were the circumstances which led to the eventual collapse of indigo production in Bengal?

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Ans. Mahal – In British revenue records mahal is a revenue estate which may be a village or a group of villages.

Ryot - Ryot was a general economic term used throughout India for peasant cultivators.

Satta – Satta means an agreement.

Bigha - A unit of measurement of land. Before British rule, the size of this area varied. In Bengal the British standardised it to about one-third of an acre.

Slave - A person who is owned by someone else – the slave owner. A slave has no freedom and is compelled to work for the master.

Plantation – A large farm operated by a planter employing various forms of forced labour. Plantations are associated with the production of coffee, sugarcane, tobacco, tea and cotton.

Q2. What were the circumstances which led to the eventual collapse of indigo production in Bengal?

Ans. The circumstances which led to the eventual collapse of indigo production in Bengal were:

i. The indigo ryots felt that they had the support of the local zamindars and village headmen in their rebellion against the planters.

ii. The indigo peasants also imagined that the British government would support them in their struggle against the planters.

iii. The ryots saw the tour of the Lieutenant Governor as a sign of government sympathy for their plight.

iv. The magistrate Ashley Eden issued a notice stating that ryots would not be compelled to accept indigo contracts.

v. As the rebellion spread, intellectuals from Calcutta rushed to the indigo districts. They wrote of the misery of the ryots, the tyranny of the planters, and the horrors of the indigo system.

vi. Worried by the rebellion, the government set up the Indigo Commission to enquire into the system of indigo production. The Commission held the planters guilty, and criticised them for the coercive methods they used with indigo cultivators.

vii. It declared that indigo production was not profitable for ryots. The Commission asked the ryots to fulfil their existing contracts but also told them that they could refuse to produce indigo in future.

viii. After the revolt, indigo production collapsed in Bengal.