

Preface

Aam admi, India's 'common man', would ask us a sensible question.

Why bother to sweat it out in episodes of field research over four decades in a rapidly growing and changing town—Arni—that is obscure to all but those who live there?

With a touch of incredulity local businessmen enjoyed the sight of a European woman—tailed in those days by a twitching line of small, ragged children—making maps of the businesses of the town. It became known locally as 'professor's work'. So the first question in this Preface is why indeed did a dozen of us—plus committed research assistants—do 'professor's work' over such a long time? In the twenty-first century, penetrating questions about the accountability of such research are also routinely asked by politicians and research funders. So the second question is how could it be justified: what use was it? The editor is British and the British government's development research agencies now require scholars pleading for research funds to pre-judge the extent to which their proposal will be 'value for money' in policy relevance and will have impact (defined ever more narrowly, to refer to benefits to business). After four decades did this work have any 'impact', and if so what sort of impact and impact on what?

This preface explains why this project has been addictive—question 1—and will attempt to answer the common man's reasonable question about its purposes, after which we will attempt to respond to question 2 about its practical relevance.

On question 1, ever since 1973 the economic and social dynamics of urban growth and urban–rural relations have been being tracked every ten years or so in a long-term research project involving business histories in a South Indian market town, Arni. While towns have been the object of study in sociology, geography, politics and urban planning,¹ we have been told by urban studies experts that this project on a small-town *economy* is now uniquely long-lasting. It has been closely

¹See for instance, E. Thompson, T. Bunnell and D. Parthsarathy 2013, *Cleavage, Connection and Conflict in Rural, Urban and Contemporary Asia*, Ari–Springer Asia series, especially the Introduction, p 4.

associated with the long-term village studies of agrarian change in northern Tamil Nadu (Maps 1, 2 and 3). These randomly selected villages were part of Tamil Nadu's rice bowl in the 1970s. Several of these villages were in the hinterland of the market town—off the beaten track of the Madras-Bangalore highway (now a globalized industrial corridor) but at the dynamic centre of the Green Revolution on Tamil Nadu's Coromandel plain. Over four decades, this research has explored a rolling agenda of questions about 'Middle India', non-metropolitan India's economic and social development, which cannot be answered in any other way than through sustained or long-term rural and urban field research. In so doing, it has been compelled to engage with a great range of theoretical ideas from social science disciplines.

The agenda has included:

- economic linkages from agriculture
- the social structure of rural–urban credit, savings and investment flows
- the role of market exchange and transactions in agrarian development
- the structure and trajectories of the urban economic base—local capitalism
- rural–urban labour processes, markets and institutions
- forms of socialization to wage work
- the role of caste, gender and religion in the modern, supposedly 'secular' urban economy
- the informal economy and its corporatist social regulation
- the centralization and decentralization, concentration and dispersion of craft production
- technological change, innovation and its institutional consequences in the informal economy
- the role of institutions in the development of local hard and soft infrastructure and utilities
- rural–urban revenue and expenditure relations
- the role of rents, corruption, tax evasion, concepts of merit, honour and trust in local development
- the spatiality of consumption
- the causes of rural and urban poverty

From the mid-1990s, this research was Indianized, much further internationalized and it crossed a generation (see the bibliographical appendix to this book). Yet the eight researchers who had worked there in the twenty-first century² had never

²The town has not been exhausted by five doctoral theses: E. Basile, 2011, *A Marxist Institutional Analysis of Rural Capitalism in South India: The Case of a Tamil Market Town after the Green Revolution*, D.Phil Thesis, Oxford University; M. Cavalcante, 2006, *La Liberalizzazione nell'India Rurale. Uno Studio su Tre Villaggi nel Nord del Tamil Nadu*, Available at: <http://padis.uniroma1.it/getfile.py?recid=546>; C. Roman, 2008, *Learning and Innovation in Clusters: Case Studies from Indian Silk Industry*, D.Phil. Thesis, Oxford University; M.V. Srinivasan, 2010, *Segmentation of Urban Labour Markets in India: A Case Study of Arni, Tamil Nadu*, Ph.D. Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University; and Arivukkarasi,

met one another together until June 2009 when a workshop was convened to discuss the rich dispatches of nearly four decades of enquiry. This book of essays—an ‘economic biography’ of a market town that has developed in a remarkably dynamic way—is a consequence of that meeting.

All along, the intellectual challenge has been to avoid a narrow focus on the town itself but to use a market town and its rural hinterland (originally chosen to study the impact of the green revolution in northern Tamil Nadu) as a lens through which to examine aspects of its life and times. ‘Life and times’ has meant the development of the informal, ‘rurban’ and agrarian economy and how this economic development is understood.

Since the crises in grand theory a generation ago (when powerful criticisms were made of neo-classical economics and neo-liberal politics on the one hand and of Marxism and socialism on the other)³ understandings of development have been shattered into subfields, swaddled in discourse analysis and frequently driven by technique. In this book, we cannot—and do not—escape issues of concepts, theory, method and practical policy. But like the three others that tell the story of this region, our book is *theoretically pluralist*. With many ways of understanding both the institutional structure which gives character to an economy and the motors of its dynamism, researchers have been free to reason about, and choose, their own theoretical frames.

In an earlier book synthesizing an All-India literature, Arni’s socio-economy was used to exemplify how even in the era of liberalization, institutions of culture such as caste, gender, religion and locality are reworked to regulate the stability of accumulation in the informal economy that is out of direct state control. They form a social structure of accumulation (Harriss-White 2003). Others have used cross-sectional samples of business in the town to explore its economic integration and diversification (see Basile, Chap. 2). Yet others have researched a theme, such as clustered development or technology and innovation (respectively Stanley, Chap. 5; Roman, Chap. 7). Aspects of the town’s economy and its urban–rural linkages have now been examined from a rich range of theoretical perspectives. They range from rigorous comparisons of old and new institutional economic theories as applied to rural credit (Polzin, Chap. 9) through labour market theory (Srinivasan, Chap. 3), Marxist institutionalism (Basile, Chap. 2) and Gramscian hegemony (Basile, Chap. 6) to

(Footnote 2 continued)

forthcoming, *The Silk Industry in Northern Tamil Nadu*, Ph.D. Thesis, MIDS/Madras University, Chennai. Three Oxford M.Phil. theses have also been based on it: J. Stanley, 2002, *A Common Cluster in a Crowded Market: The Gold Ornaments Cluster in Arni, Tamil Nadu, India*, M.Phil. Thesis, Oxford University; C. Roman, 2004, *Skills and Silks: Learning to Work in the Informal Sector*, M.Phil. Thesis, Oxford University, and C. Polzin, 2007, *Credit in South India—An Empirical Critique of Competing Frameworks of Institutional Change*, M.Phil. Thesis, QEH, Oxford University.

³D. Booth, 1985, Marxism and Development Sociology: Interpreting the Impasse. *World Development*, 13(7) July; but also see Q. Skinner, 1985, *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, Canto; and C. Leys, 1996, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*, London, James Currey.

contested theories of mass consumption (Cavalcante, Chap. 10). Development theories generated to account for the way the economy is embedded in social and political relations are tested against the ground realities of Middle India and insights from this interaction suggest ways to improve our understanding.

This commitment to theoretical pluralism has been accompanied by a wide range of practical research methods. To study a single town means attempting to manage the ambition of understanding how a complex and open socio-economic system works in urban space with the help of the fine-grain of detail usually associated with village level studies. At the same time, it is a struggle with the complexity of the urban economy and with the difficulties of making it tractable—let alone comparable over time. Over the period from 1972 the population of the real town (as opposed to the smaller ‘census’ town) has grown from about 30,000 to over 1,00,000; from a place with no court or college to one with both court and seven private colleges; from one with sufficient water to one where water is available one day in four and where even the fire brigade has had to borrow it; from a local agricultural marketplace to a settlement importing yarn from China and exporting de-oiled bran to Europe for fodder, sarees to South-east Asia and rice to Sri Lanka, Malaysia, France and the USA. Throughout all this change it has remained filthy and congested; but its congestion has been transformed from that of hand- and bullock-carts, jutkas and bikes to lorries, tractors, motorbikes and Korean-Indian cars. Its filth is now a lot more non-biodegradable. Its carbon footprint has ballooned. It might be possible for an organization like the National Sample Survey Organization (this we doubt), but it is certainly no longer possible for individuals or small teams like ours to scale-up a village level study and patiently to piece together our sample survey data so that they would enable quantitative generalizations about this single place. Let alone extrapolations to other non-metropolitan spaces. So in the twenty-first century the task has been tackled differently, each researcher focussing on a specific research question and collecting their own evidence as systematically as they could.

Our research methods include population studies (Arasi for silk weaving households in Chap. 8, Basile for all the business associations, Chap. 6, Polzin for all credit institutions, Chap. 9), sample surveys (Basile, Chap. 2, Srinivasan, Chap. 3, Harriss-White, Chap. 4, Stanley, Chap. 5, Cavalcante, Chap. 10), case material (Cavalcante for rural consumption behaviour, Chap. 10; Srinivasan for low caste power-play in trade and labour markets, Chap. 3) and ethnography (Roman for Arni’s silk industry, Chap. 7; Stanley in the gold cluster, Chap. 5).

This theoretical and methodological pluralism and the reasons put forward for the range of approaches to the economy taken in this book, we think, enrich it. We also hope they make the study of an urban economy an activity that others will find approachable.

The contributors to this book hold, however, that these explorations of substance and ideas are not irrelevant to modern India more widely, where the informal economy is estimated nationally at two-thirds of GDP and nine-tenths of all livelihoods. Over the last two decades it has been the informal economy rather than the registered one that has generated the growth in jobs. At the same time, with notable exceptions (such as a belt from Gujarat to Jharkhand) the part of the informal economy that is

agricultural has been growing at indifferent rates or, as in central India, has languished in outright crisis. The Arni region in Northern Tamil Nadu has passed through periods of both accelerated agricultural growth and stagnation. Its impacts on the non-farm economy and its labour force may resonate with developments elsewhere.

The *purposes* of this book are to assemble the contemporary rounds of research to write an ‘economic biography’ that relates the life of a town to India’s accelerating and dynamic growth *outside its major economic poles* because the vast bulk of India’s population lives outside them. It therefore examines twenty-first-century development as a combination of path-dependent and discontinuous activities. It locates the dynamics of general economic processes in the social specificities of a given place, and, since all economies are local in their dynamic expression, it examines how we can evaluate the character of a local economy. Not setting out, as so much contemporary scholarship does, deliberately to position the research in relation to world economic processes, it examines globalization and liberalization insofar as these processes relate to the local economy. However, despite Srinivasan’s fine-grained analysis of the caste politics of segmented labour markets (Chap. 3), there is much about the sociology (household, caste, and gender relations), the party politics of the town and their embedding in wider Tamil welfare-oriented mobilizations⁴ and even about small-town urban land use—at the intersection of urban studies and the study of informality—urban governance and planning⁵ that remains beyond the scope of this book. They are for future scholars to take up, with this book as background.

This is also the fourth in the line of books on research into agrarian change through village level studies in northern Tamil Nadu—in what started as North Arcot District and is now Vellore and Tiruvannamalai districts. The others are: B.H. Farmer (Ed.), 1977, *Green Revolution?* Macmillan; P. Hazell and C. Ramasamy (Eds.), 1991, *Green Revolution Reconsidered*, Johns Hopkins; and B. Harriss-White, S. Janakarajan and others, 2004, *Rural India Facing the Twenty-first Century*, Anthem.⁶ The fourth round of research has not abandoned the study of agrarian change and rural economic relations with the town. For, while evolving in a dynamic way, increasingly integrated with national and international markets, the town is embedded in its rural hinterland.

⁴See for example, M.S.S. Pandian, 2007, *Brahmin and Non-Brahmin: Genealogies of the Tamil Political Present*, Delhi, Permanent Black; B. Harriss-White, 2004, Nutrition and Its Politics in Tamil Nadu. *South Asia Research*, 24(1), 51–71; K. Kapadia, 1995, *Siva and Her Sisters: Gender, Caste and Class in Rural South India*, Westview Press.

⁵See the Review of Urban Studies, *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 31, 2014, xlix(22) for cases illustrating the problems of unplanned development in small towns, especially P. Mukhopadhyay and A. Mariganti, 2014, Articulating Growth in the Urban Spectrum. *Economic and Political Weekly*, xlix(22), 44–45.

⁶Other books emerging from the same project in this region are J. Harriss, 1982, *Capitalism and Peasant Farming*, Oxford University Press; B. Harriss, 1981, *Transitional Trade and Rural Development. The Nature of Agricultural Trade in a South Indian District*, Vikas; B. Harriss, 1991, *Child Nutrition and Poverty in South India*, Concept; S. Wanmali and C. Ramasamy, 1994, *Developing Rural Infrastructure for Poor People: Studies from North Arcot, Tamil Nadu, India*; ICAR New Delhi and IFPRI, Washington.

The last part of this book engages with rural development and the long-term study of villages not just in their own right—as the fourth round of the research started in 1972 and updated by Cavalcante (Chap. 10)—but more importantly because the story of Arni cannot be told without those of its surrounding villages. We have, however, shifted the long-term project's centre of gravity in this book and we focus on what has been happening to the local town in its interaction with the rural economy: urban–rural relations rather than rural–urban ones.

There are other long-term *rural* studies of Tamil Nadu's development, notably those on the Cumbum valley,⁷ wet and dry villages near Tirunelveli,⁸ and the Slater villages, studied since 1916.⁹ The *urban* ready-made garments cluster of Tirupur is currently more renowned as a magnet for sustained research¹⁰—‘Tirupur studies’ is

⁷V.K. Ramachandran, 1991, *Wage Labour and Unfreedom in Agriculture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; V.K. Ramachandran and M. Swaminathan, 2005, Financial Liberalization, Rural Credit and Landless Labour Households: Evidence from a Tamil Nadu Village, 1977, 1985 and 1999. (pp. 157–177). In V.K. Ramachandran and M. Swaminathan (Eds.), *Financial Liberalization and Rural Credit in India*, New Delhi: Tulika Books.

⁸V. Athreya, G. Djurfeldt and S. Lindberg, 1990, *Barriers Broken: Production Relations and Agrarian Change in Tamil Nadu*, New Delhi, Sage; G. Djurfeldt, V. Athreya, N. Jayakumar, S. Lindberg, A. Rajagopal, and R. Vidyasagar, 2008, Agrarian Change and Social Mobility in Tamil Nadu. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(45), 08–14 November, pp. 50–61.

⁹See references to the history of Slater village studies in J. Harriss, J. Jeyaranjan and K. Nagaraj, 2010, Land, Labour and Caste Politics in Rural Tamil Nadu in the 20th Century: Iruvelpattu (1916–2008). *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45(31), 31 July–06 August, pp. 47–61.

¹⁰P. Cawthorne, 1993, The Labour Process under Amoebic Capitalism: A Case Study of the Garment Industry in a South Indian Town. (pp. 47–75). In I.S.A. Baud and G.A. de Bruijne (Eds.), *Gender, Small-Scale Industry and Development Policy*. London: IT Publications; B. Harriss-White, 1996, *A Political Economy of Agricultural Markets in South India: Masters of the Countryside*, New Delhi, Sage; P. Swaminathan, 1999, The Knit-wear Cluster at Tiruppur. An Indian Industrial District in the Making?, co-authored, In A.K. Bagchi (Ed.), *Economy and Organization: Indian Institutions under the Neo-Liberal Regime*, Sage; J. Gomes, 2002, Textiles: New Vistas for Tirupur, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(48), p. 4783; S. Chari, 2004, *Fraternal Capital: Peasant-Workers, self-made men, and globalization in provincial India*, Palo Alto, Stanford University Press, and Permanent Black, Delhi (co-publication), M. Vijayabaskar, 2005, Labour under Flexible Accumulation: Case of Tiruppur Knitwear Cluster. In K. Das (Ed.), *Industrial Clusters: Cases and Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate); N. Singh and M. Sapra, 2007, Liberalization in Trade and Finance: India's Garment Sector. In B. Harriss-White and A. Sinha (Eds.), *Trade Liberalisation and India's Informal Economy*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press; G. De Neve, 2009, Power, Inequality and Corporate Social Responsibility: The Politics of Ethical Compliance in the South Indian Garment Industry. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(22), pp. 63–72; J. Heyer, 2010: Improving Labour Standards: Lessons from the Tiruppur Region, paper presented to the 21st European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, 26–29 July 2010, Bonn (currently submitted to the *Global Labour Journal* for publication); M. Vijayabaskar, 2011, Global Crises, Welfare Provision and Coping Strategies of Labour in Tiruppur, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 46(22), 28 May–03 June, pp. 38–45; G. Carswell and G. De Neve, 2013, Labouring for Global Markets: Conceptualising Labour Agency in Global Production Networks. *Geoforum*, 44(1), pp. 62–70; G. Carswell and G. De Neve, Geert, 2013, From Field to Factory: Tracing Bonded Labour in the Coimbatore Powerloom Industry, Tamil Nadu. *Economy and Society*, 42(3), pp. 430–454; G. De Neve and G. Carswell, 2013, T-Shirts and Tumblers: Caste, Dependency and Work under Neo-liberalisation in South India. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 48(1), pp. 103–132.

a growing sub-field in its own right—but Arni’s research has been going for longer. While until very recently Tirupur’s research has been focused on the industrial district, Arni’s has been centred on the local economy and the hinterland of settlements that generate and contain ‘common clusters’ and retail services. The very obscurity of Arni also makes it interesting.

*‘Our ‘middle path’ needs the constant grafting of knowledge-based policies’*¹¹

Our engagement with questions of policy—question 2—can now be appreciated. Whereas international development policy has been paying extensive lip service to how Washington understands development, local development policy is crafted through managing many tensions. The most notable involve engaging with Washington’s intellectual and political project, coping with the relentless commodification of politics and policy, responding to local civil society’s waves of single-issue mobilization, managing the entanglement of policy with party political factions (with arrangements that look suspiciously like political markets) and building and demolishing relations of patronage in policy making.¹² This book has been written in what Mao Tse Tung called, not very positively, ‘interesting times’.

All four rounds of the Arni studies have been motivated by development policy issues of the day, and have shed light from the town on the ideas and assumptions of development theorists who would make policy.

But the Arni project has never been required to be *‘policy relevant’*. We see it as highly relevant for education and learning—but the advancement of understanding has never received much favour as a criterion of research ‘relevance’. Yet the research in this book has certainly been relevant to our team’s own education and our practice as teachers of economics, of development and of policy in Europe and India—as well as to the public understanding of India—and we hope it will interest others with the same vocation. Perhaps our work could never be very ‘policy relevant’ because by definition we are mostly researching what happens in the informal economy outside the regulative reach of the state, rather than evaluating the state’s formal policies.

But the site and the questions we have asked have been *relevant for policy*. ‘Non-policy research’ helps society understand the processes that may need managing through public policy. It may even help society understand why policy has unintended impacts. For examples: (i) early research on Tamil Nadu’s noon meals scheme explained the multiple labels through which it would persist even had it failed as a nutrition intervention; (ii) the very poorly theorized and *not* predicted connection between liberalization (expected to reduce corruption) and the

¹¹Y. Alagh, *The Hindu*, 16 March, 1994.

¹²A de Waal, 2010, ‘Dollarised’ *London Review of Books*, 24 June, pp. 38–41, looks at the process of political markets and their consequences in ‘failing states’; C. Leys, 2001, *Market Driven Politics*, London, Verso, and 2007, *Total Capitalism*, New Delh: Three Essays Press, looks at it in advanced states, and M. Khan and K.S. Jomo, 2001, *Rents, Rent Seeking and Economic Development in Asia*, Cambridge University Press look at it in South and South-east Asia.

blossoming corruption that has resulted from liberalization drew attention both to private corruption and to the significant power of ‘clients’ in relations of political-economic patronage; it lent support to the expansion of civil society’s role in monitoring good governance; and (iii) research on the social regulation of the informal economy has not been without influence on preparations for the inclusive development agenda.

Then situated research like the North Arcot project and the Arni research within it can evaluate—and often has evaluated—the *impact of policy practices*. Implementation is the poor relation of policy research. Exposing in the 1970s the adverse welfare impact of unsystematic and politicized post-harvest procurement practices for the public distribution system informed the forces that then expanded targeted food to rural areas and for a while made procurement more consistent and less amenable to speculation. Though it was early to attempt it, the 1993–5 round of research had an evaluation of the impact of India’s liberalization in the villages at its heart.¹³

Policy relevant findings from research are not always heeded however—even when policy makers know of it. Evidence for evidence-based policy has been ignored, e.g. very early warnings about water table depletion, only exacerbated by free agricultural electricity; quite early warnings about the relationship between property ownership and declining girl child sex ratios; about the hidden costs of targeted interventions; and about the role of exchange relations in preventing wealth accumulation by small-scale producers. Policy has *political rationales* that over-ride those based on evidence unless that evidence has factored in politics—which it is rarely able to do. ‘Policy relevant’ research dominated by political agendas which are always short-term may then be reduced to the supply of *policy-based evidence* rather than evidence-based policy research and recommendations. And even policy-based evidence is often ignored.

Field research has led us to understand development policy as a set of conflictual (bureaucratic) *political processes*—discursive, legal or procedural, resource-mobilizing and allocative. Research relevant to one kind of policy politics—usually the discursive, agenda-forming politics—commonly omits the others—let alone the links between them. ‘*Policy implications*’ of ‘policy relevant’ research conventionally residualize this entire complex process, especially (i) the resources required for a policy and (ii) the policies needed to buy off opposition to it and to compensate its victims. Policy relevant research in the narrow sense is therefore most unlikely ever to be complete. *Unintended outcomes* and *spillover* are embedded in policy relevant research and can be more fertile and powerful than intended outcomes. In fact, research findings from our long-term project, results inspired by a policy question in one field, have had impacts on policy changes in other fields. For example, the early research on the impact of technological change in agricultural production produced results which halted state support for what was then inappropriate technological change in post-harvest processing.

¹³B. Harriss-White and S. Janakarajan, 2004, *Rural India Facing the 21st Century*, London: Anthem.

While policy is shaped through processes of labelling, so is the landscape. The Maps we use here demonstrate that the English spelling of Tamil place-names has not stabilized, including that of the central character in this book. We use the labels Arni, Tiruvannamalai and Kancheepuram for local places of note.

None of us would have made any progress without the generosity with their time and initiative of what now amounts to thousands of Arni's businessmen and workers, together with matching numbers of farmers and labourers in the surrounding villages who have told their stories and answered our questions over the four decades. To say we are grateful is a gross understatement. Gratitude is also expressed by the contributing authors in their individual chapters. Here we also thank the leaders of trades unions and workers' organizations, political party members, the Lions, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce and over three score other business and caste associations.

Though all the collectors of undivided and divided North Arcot District have been supportive, the support of N. Narayanan, IAS, has endured and we thank him for his sustained interest. We remember the late S. Guhan, IAS, for his keen questions and help behind the scenes from the time when he worked on the 1980s round of Slater village surveys—and for nearly two decades after that. Many officials in the districts' tax, development, food, public works, co-operatives, regulated market, sanitation, electricity, police, fire and postal services, municipal government and banks have spared time for us. We are grateful for the very interesting talks we had and the official material we could collect. Apart from experienced and knowledgeable research assistants, a set of scholar-colleagues worked on the town before the twenty-first century—notably John Harriss,¹⁴ S. Janakarajan,¹⁵ the late G. Jothi, the noted field researcher, and last but not least D. Jayaraj and K. Nagaraj,¹⁶ the influence of all whose work we wish to recognize with thanks. Kaveri Harriss Qureshi and Elinor Harriss's roles in coding and interpreting the schedules of their parents during school holidays and university vacations from 1998–2002 also deserves warm acknowledgement. The research of several of us also relied on years of conversation, correspondence, friendship and

¹⁴Most notably J. Harriss 1982, *Capitalism and Peasant Farming* New Delhi, OUP; B. Harriss and J. Harriss, 1984, 'Generative' or 'Parasitic' Urbanism? Some Observations from the Recent History of a South Indian Market Town. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 20, pp. 82–101; J. Harriss, 1991, The Green Revolution in North Arcot; economic trends, household mobility, and the politics of an "awkward class", pp. 29–56 in (eds.) P. Hazell and C. Ramasamy *The Green Revolution Reconsidered*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins Press; J. Harriss 2006, 'Postscript: North Arcot Papers' in *Power Matters* OUP; J. Harriss and B. Harriss-White 2007, The North Arcot Papers *QEH Working Paper no 146*, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University.

¹⁵S. Janakarajan 1996, Complexities of Agrarian Markets and Agrarian relations: A Study of Villages in Northern Tamil Nadu; paper presented to the ODA-Oxford-MIDS Workshop on Adjustment, Markets and Social Welfare in Northern Tamil Nadu, MIDS Chennai.

¹⁶D. Jayaraj and K. Nagaraj 2006, Socio-economic factors underlying the growth of silk-weaving in the Arni Region—A Preliminary Study, *S. Guhan Memorial Series Monograph 5*, Madras Institute of Development Studies.

the odd dispute with a deeply knowledgeable, engaged and reflective teacher of physics in the town, who enjoyed his role of key informant, P.J. Krishnamurthy, who died in 2007.

We are also grateful for their comments to the 2009 Oxford workshop discussants, not all of whom are active contributors to this book, but all of whom are committed to rural and urban field research: the political-social historian Nandini Gooptu, the political economists Judith Heyer and K. Nagaraj, the anthropologist Karin Kapadia and micro-finance specialist Suyash Rai.

Finally we wish to thank our funders. This project has mainly been funded out of the living allowances provided for other research and from the varied resources that supported a set of seven M.Phil. and doctoral projects. The editor acknowledges with gratitude the far sightedness of the International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, in 1981 for finding funds for the 1982–3 round; and support from the Institute for Financial Management and Research Trust, Chennai, in 2009. The latter made possible the workshop—the first workshop of Oxford’s new Contemporary South Asian Studies Programme in the School of Area Studies—that triggered this book. It goes almost without saying that the project has been carried out in a way that critically engages with some of the ruling ideas of research funding agencies, but is independent of them. She also acknowledges with great gratitude visiting fellowships to the University of Rome, ‘La Sapienza’, to the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Advanced Studies and the new Centre for the Informal Sector and Labour Studies at JNU, all very congenial environments in which to prepare and complete the project of this book.

We remain frustrated that, despite all this research and all our attempts to disseminate it, in the twenty-first century there are people in the village of Veerasambanur near Arni who are still poverty-stricken enough to contract leprosy and not be able to have it treated despite a leprosy hospital sited a short distance away.¹⁷

We would like to encourage readers and researchers able to commit themselves to a long-term field engagement to help take this project in urban–rural research forward in new ways into the future.

Barbara Harriss-White

¹⁷Anirudh Krishna and Devendra Bajpai have now generalized this finding in an important All-India study of distance-decay in many dimensions of development: A. Krishna and D. Bajpai, 2011, *Lineal Spread and Radial Dissipation: Experiencing Growth in Rural India, 1993–2005*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, xlvI(38), pp. 44–51.

Middle India and Urban-Rural Development

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