

R. NAIDOO 540
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REG. NO. 16298

HISTORY III PROJECT

1983

⁵⁴⁰ The immigration of Rajama Naidoo to
South Africa

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INTRODUCTION

Rajama: 24840/24841. She was married to Chinna Munsamy Naidoo in 1920. The couple had nine children; the eldest being a son, Kistnasamy (my father) and eight daughters. Rajama was the seventh daughter of the late Chinniah and Samjani Gottipati (my great grand parents). This is an account of the lives of Chinniah and Samjani Gottipati. It traces the events (where possible) that led to their arrival in South Africa and their life in South Africa. This is not an indepth study into their lives since much of the information had been lost and the information that I received has been vague.

PLACE OF ORIGIN IN INDIA

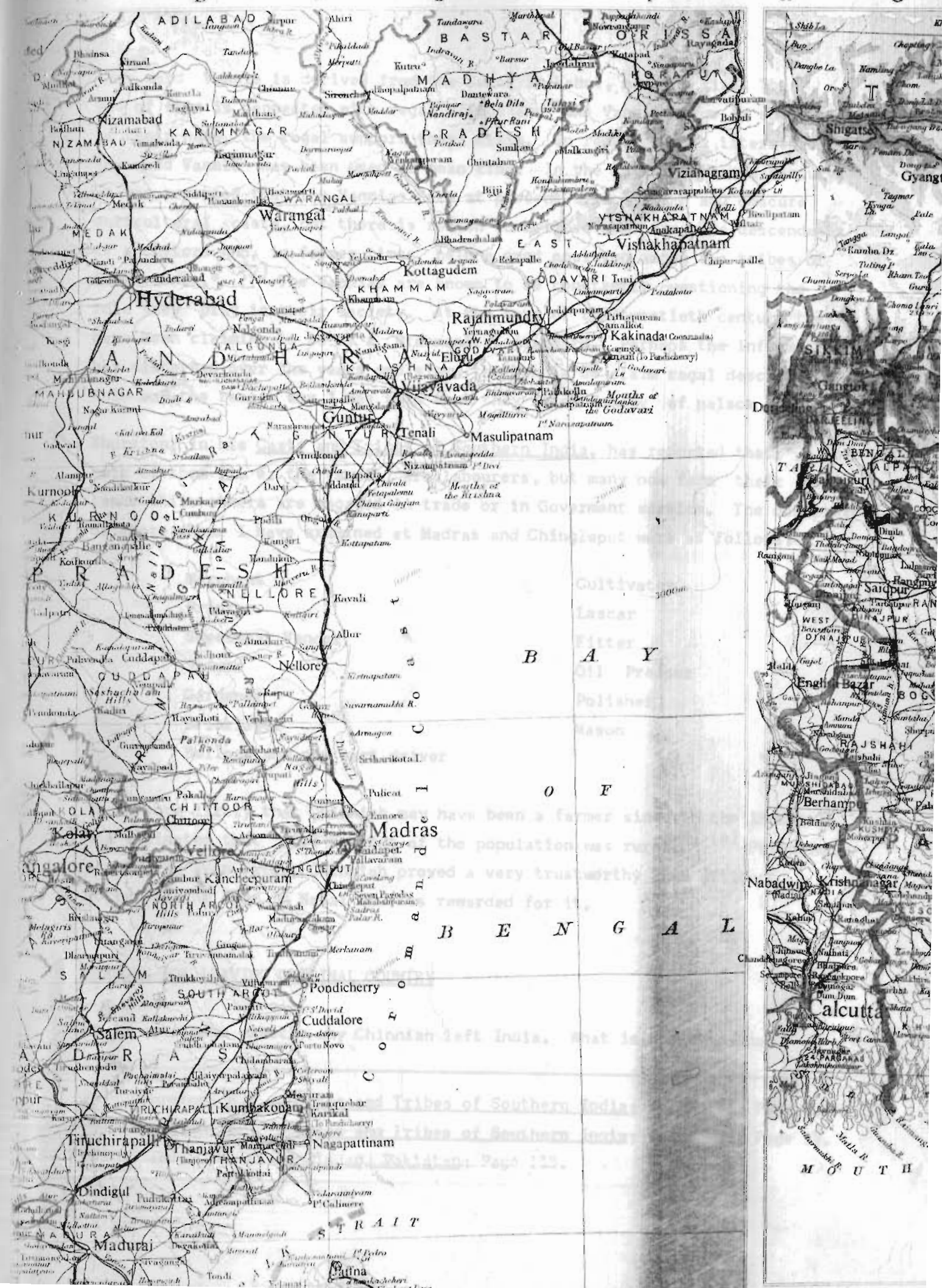
Chinniah, a five feet, ten inches tall man, came from the village of Vizianagram. This is a village situated in the districts of Vishakhapatnam on the East coast of India. The district of Vishakhapatnam is one of the Telegu districts in the Madras Presidency. It is the largest and most populous districts in Madras with an area of 17 200 square miles; 12 032 villages and a population estimated at the turn of the Twentieth century to be around 2 million and nine hundred thousand. ⁽¹⁾ Chinniah's wife Samjani a five foot one inch woman, came from the same village.

SOCIO - ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

In an interview with Kistnasamy Naidoo, I was told that Chinniah came from a family of palace guards in India. I checked on this and did not come across any palaces in the districts. However, there is reason to believe (as will be shown later) that Chinniah may have been a farmer. What I did find out was that Chinniah belonged to the Vannia Caste.

Vannia (also spelt Vanniar or Vaniyar) is a synonym for the word Palli

(1) The Imperial Gazetteer of India; Volume XVI; Page 260



The word Vannia is derived from the Sanskrit Vahni, meaning fire. The god of fire is connected with regal office and the Vannias urge in support of their name, the regal support they claim. In recent India literature the word Vannia has been used to mean king. In the late nineteenth century, it was reported that the Vannias "are at present time a small and obscure agricultural caste, but there is reason to believe that they are descendents of ancestors who, in former times, held a good position among the tribes of South India." (2) The Vannias are known to be constantly questioning the role they play in their society. At the turn of the twentieth century they have been claiming to be of a Brahmanical standard. Perhaps the information has distorted over the years and since the Vannia do claim regal descent, this may^{be} the reason why I was told that they were a family of palace guards.

Thurston, in his Caste and Tribes of Southern India, has reported that "...the bulk of them (i. e. the Vannia) are labourers, but many now farm their own lands while others are engaged in trade or in Government service. The occupations of those whom I have examined at Madras and Chingleput were as follows:-

Merchant	Cultivator
Printer	Lascar
Sweetmeat Vendor	Fitter
Sawyer	Oil Presser
Gardener	Polisher
Bricklayer	Mason
Bullock and pay cart driver	

"(3)

It is more likely that Chinniah may have been a farmer since in the 1880's it was estimated that "90,5 percent of the population was rural." (4) Furthermore as will be seen later, Chinniah proved a very trustworthy and diligent worker of the land in Natal and was rewarded for it.

REASONS FOR LEAVING ORIGINAL COUNTRY

It is not known exactly why Chinniah left India. What is known is that

(2) Thurston, E.: Castes and Tribes of Southern India; Volume VI; Page 6.

(3) Thurston, E.: Castes and Tribes of Southern India; Volume VI; Page 17.

(4) Spake, O.H. K.: India and Pakistan; Page 113.

Chinniah and Sanjani Gottipati expected to get rich in South Africa. They were under the impression that they were British citizens and were to be treated as such. However there is evidence to prove that conditions in India at that time were unfavourable.

One possible reason for Chinniah's leaving India is the huge population in India. O.H.K. Spake, in his book, India and Pakistan, reports that "... in the 1890's the first effects of the major population growth was beginning to be seen" ⁽⁵⁾ the problem is exacerbated when one considers that there was widespread famine due to the long periods of drought that the area experienced. Table I shows the wages and prices of the Madras Presidency for the decades ending 1880 and 1890.

Table I

Wages and prices, Madras Presidency

	Average Wages for the Decade Ending	
	1880	1890
Daily Wages		
Skilled Labour:-		
In towns.....Rs	0 7 6	0 8 1
In rural tracts..Rs	?	0 6 11
Unskilled labour:-		
In towns.....Rs	0 2 10	0 2 11
In rural tracts.Rs	?	0 2 5
Cart Hire:-		
In towns.....Rs	0 6 0	0 4 9
In villages....Rs	0 3 0	0 3 8

Notes: Prices include those years of famine (6)

In the first decade shown on the table, the famine was that of 1876 - 1878. Famine does not appear to raise prices permanently, for the prices shown on the table above were much lower than the average for the fifteen years prior to the famine of 1876 - 1878.

(5) Spake, O.H.K.: India and Pakistan; Page 113

(6) The Imperial Gazetteer of India; Volume XVI ; Page 353

Surgeon, Ships Officers etc. £169 7s 10d." (8)

During 1881, seven ships with emigrants from India arrived in Natal, four from Calcutta and three from Madras. One of these ships was the Mars 2nd. The Blue Book for the Colony of Natal-1881 reads that the ship was "inspected on arrival and the provisions of the Indians Emigration Act (VII of 1871), found to have been complied with." (9) The following is a table from the book:

Table 2

Name of ship	Mars, 2nd
Number embarked	338
Births on voyage	1
Total	339
Deaths on voyage	---
Number landed	339
Port of Embarkation	Madras

(10)

The emigration flow expanded considerably during the 1870's, as the demand for labour from Ceylon grew and then increased in the 1880's as Burma attracted more people from the Telegu districts around Vishakhapatnam (in the 1880's about 60 per cent of Madras emigrants went to Ceylon, 30 per cent to Burma, 3 per cent to Mauritius and some 2 per cent to the Straits Settlement; Natal and the Caribbean took the remainder). (11)

FIRST PLACE OF SETTLEMENT

Chinniah's first place of settlement was in the Inanda Division of Natal. There were about twenty six sugar mills in the Inanda Division. Among the owners was Messrs Courtney Acutt and Co. Chinniah was employed as an indentured labourer on the estates of C. Acutt and Co. It is not known exactly in which estates Chinniah worked since C. Acutt and Co. owned the "Great Umhlanga", Hammond Sugar Estates, which they bought in 1878 and Umhloti Central Sugar Mill Co. (Natal) Ltd. Chinniah could have worked in any of these estates.

(9) Blue Book for the Colony of Natal - 1881; Page S 21

(9/10) Blue Book for the Colony of Natal - 1881; Page FF 20

(11) Tinker, H.: A new System of Slavery

The labourers life on the estates can only be compared to that of slavery. They lived in a row of huts, a workers compound or "Slave Row", away from the house of the employer. The conditions under which the Indians had to work on the estates was appalling. Some worked for seventeen or eighteen hours a day. They were kept in poor residential quarters. They were malnourished and a lot of them depended on the rivers for water. Many contacted diseases because industries pumped pollutants into the river. There were many complaints about the living conditions. "The prevalent complaints have ... been syphilitic and cutaneous diseases, and diarrhoea and dysentery, the latter attributable in many instances to the bad quality of the water used by these people. A good deal remains to be done as regards sanitation and water supply where Indians are employed in large numbers." (12)

The labourer was confined within one mile of the boundaries of the estates. If found beyond with out written consent he could be arrested and taken back to the owner. There was also a reward offered. The labour system tried to prevent concerted action by the labourers. Confining them to the estates and places of work prevented contacts with other groups of workers. According to Section 101 of Act 25 of 1891, the mere act of complaining as a group, unless it was with the employers permission, was made punishable by a sentence of up to two months imprisonment with hard labour.

SUBSEQUENT PLACES OF SETTLEMENTS AND OCCUPATIONS

At the termination of his services as a contract labourer in 1891, Chinniah became a "free Indian" and moved further North into the Tongaat area. Here he started work for James Renault Saunders as a farm labourer. In July 1892, J. R. Saunders died and his son Edward Saunders succeeded to the estate.

A few years later Chinniah was made a Sidar by Edward Saunders. He was allowed to have a Sjangbok. He was responsible for keeping the workers together and making sure they did not resist. It is said that before a complaint

went to Edward Saunders a "court case" was held in Chinniah's house. If he found that the case was a difficult one to deal with then he referred it to the "boss". I was also told that Chinniah made a lot of money while performing his duties as a Sirdar. I do not know how much of truth there is in this. However Tinker, H. in his book, A New System of Slavery, does mention that the indentured men who had prospered most were the Sirdars. With a trend towards a fewer estates, and larger central sugar mills, the Indians shifted and from an estate based population they became rural small holders or peasant populations. There was a policy of renting out plots, first to the former overseer and Sirdars and then generally to time expired Indians.

Chinniah bought himself a small farm in Frasers (on the outskirts of Tongaat) while still working for E. Saunders as a Sirdar. Eventually he managed to expand the farm to 240 acres. I tried to trace the farm and this is what I found: the farm was sold by Chinniah to the Mayakisten family. They sold it to the Herbans family, who in turn sold it to a Mr. M. P. Govender (who is presently residing in Inanda). Mr. Govender sold it to the present owner Mr. Nandha Naidoo.

When he sold the farm, Chinniah bought another farm near the Tongaat Convent (presently "Boys Town" is situated on the land). On the farm Chinniah planted sugar cane. He also had a lot of cattle and ran a business selling milk and curd in the village in Tongaat. By this time Chinniah had adopted a son because he did not have a son of his own. The boy's name was Applesamy (Applesamy's son is still living today and he was able to provide with a lot of the information). Applesamy was in charge of selling the sour milk and for this reason he was given the nick name "Perrugu" (meaning sour milk) Applesamy. There is evidence to show Chinniah's stay on this farm. For example there was a hole made into a rock in front of the house. Samjani used to stamp her rice and chillies in it. Today, the rock, although partly damaged and weathered still stands there.

CONCLUSION

Chinniah died in 1920. By that time all his children were married. Due to ill management the farm went on auction and was bought by a Gujarati. The farm was

eventually absorbed into the Tongaat Sugar Estates. Samjani left Tongaat and came to Durban where she stayed with her daughter Rajama (my grand mother) in Umgeni Road. In 1932 Samjani died.

COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

Serial Number	243
Colonial Number	24840
Date of Arrival	23-05-1881
Name of Ship	MARS 2ND
Place of Registration	
Date of Registration	
Number in Register	
Name	GOTTIPATI CHINNIAH
Father's Name	G. RAJENNA
Age	28 YEARS
Sex	MALE
Caste	VANNIA
District	VISHAKHAPATNAM
Thanna/Taluq	VISHAKHAPATNAM
Village	VIZIANAGRAM
Height	5' 10"
Bodily Marks	MOLE ON NOSE
Name of Next-of-Kin	
Relations Accompanied	
Small Pox/Vaccinated	VACCINATED
Remarks	
Port of Departure	MADRAS
No of Adults on Ship	338
No of Births on Ship	1

COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

Serial Number	
Colonial Number	24841
Date of Arrival	23-05-1881
Name of Ship	MARS 2ND
Place of Registration	
Date of Registration	
Number in Register	
Name	SAMJANI
Father's Name	JESSA MUTYALU
Age	19
Sex	FEMALE
Caste	VANNIA
District	VISHAKHAPATNAM
Thanna/Taluq	VISHAKHAPATNAM
Village	VIZIANAGRAM
Height	5' 1"
Bodily Marks	
Small Pox/Vaccinated	VACCINATED
Remarks	
Port of Departure	MADRAS
No of Adults on Ship	338
No of Births on Ship	1

SOURCE LIST

- 1) Blue Book for the Colony of Natal - 1881; Vause Slatter and Co.; Government Printers; Pietermaritzburg; MDCCCLXXXII.
- 2) Ginwala, I. : Class consciousness And Control; Unplubished Phd.
- 3) Naoroji, Dadabhai: Poverty and UnBritish Rule In India; Swan Sonnenschein & Co.; London; 1901
- 4) Osborn, R. F. : Valiant Harvest: The Founding of the South African Sugar Industry 1848 - 1926; South African Sugar Association; Durban; 1964.
- 5) Sookdeo, A.: Indentured Indian Immigration in Natal with Special Emphasis on the 1890's and the Caste - Structure amongst Indians ; 1982; Honours Thesis
- 6) Spate, O. H. K. : India and Pakistan; Methuen & Co.; London; 1954
- 7) The Imperial Gazetteer of India: Kotchandpur to Mahavinyaka; Volume XVI; Claredon Press; London; 1908.
- 8) Thurston, E. & Rangachari, K. : Caste and Tribes of Southern India; Volume VI; Government Press; Madras; 1909
- 9) Tinker, H.: A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830 - 1920; Oxford University Press; London; 1974.

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH MR. M.K. NAIDOO
ON 10 APRIL 1983

Q : Did your parents or grand-parents come from India?

A : My grandparents

Q : When did they come?

A : I don't know

Q : How many children did they have?

A : They had nine daughters and they adopted a son.

Q : How many of their children were born in South Africa?

A : All of them

Q : Do you know their ages?

A : No. My mother was the seventh daughter and she was born in 1898.

Q : Where about in India did your grandfather come from?

A : I don't know. But he spoke Telugu. His family were palace guards in India

Q : ... and your grandmother?

She also spoke Telugu.

Q : Did your grandparents talk about their lives to you?

A : No. My grandfather died before I was born. My grandmother died when I was

a little boy. My mother you used to tell me a lot about them but I can't remember much now.

Q: When did your grandfather work for when they came to South Africa?

He worked for the Sanders family. He was a Sindar and they used to have "court cases in his house."

Q: Did he work for anyone else?

No. After he worked for Saunders he bought his own land in Frasers. Then he sold that and bought a farm near the Tongaat Cawent.

Q: What happened to the farm?

When he died the farm went on auction; The Tongaat Sugar Co. bought it.

Q: Do you have any papers that I can use as proof?

No. My mother told me that my granny used to stamp rice outside in a hole in the rock in front of the house.

Q: You say your grandfather adopted a son, what was his name?

His name was Appalsamy but everyone used to call him Perruque. Appalsamy's son is living here, in Chatsworth, Unit 9.