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ETHNIC GROUPS, VILLAGES AND TOWNS  
OF PARCANA BARABHUM

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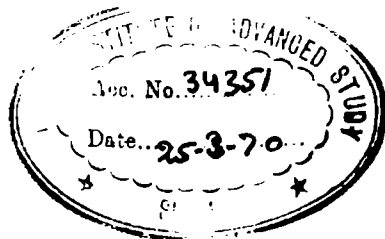
REPORT OF A SURVEY

SURAJIT SINHA  
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HEMENDRA NATH BANERJEE



ANTHROPOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA  
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## PREFACE

A study of the process of culture change among the Bhumij of Manbhum District was undertaken by the senior author during 1950-52 as a Research Scholar of the University of Calcutta. At this phase, the enquiry was mainly limited to the intensive study of cultural change in a single Bhumij-dominated village, namely, Madhupur in Chandil Police Station, Singbhum, Bihar. It soon became apparent that what was happening in the village of Madhupur was importantly dependent upon the fact that the village was a socio-political and land revenue unit within the pargana of Barabhum which used to be ruled by a Bhumij derived 'Rajput' lineage at the advent of the formal British rule in the area in 1765. The Raja of Barabhum was later on reduced to the position of a revenue collecting zemindar.

An enquiry into the over-arching structure of the zemindary of Barabhum and also about how economic, political and socio-ritual influence flowed from the top down to the Bhumij villages, was taken up by the senior author during October 1956 to May 1957 with the support of a research grant from the Ford Foundation through the courtesy of late Professor Robert Redfield of the University of Chicago. The work was continued during three successive field seasons of 1957-58, 1958-59 and 1959-60 under the sponsorship of the Anthropological Survey of India. During the latter phase of field work, Shri Biman Kumar Das Gupta and Sri Hemendra Nath Banerjee collaborated with the senior author in undertaking a survey of Pargana Barabhum. A monograph entitled: *Agriculture, Crafts and Weekly Markets of South Manbhum* (Bulletin of the Anthropological Survey of India, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1961) has already been published on the basis of this survey. The present volume mainly deals with the nature of distribution of ethnic groups in the Pargana.\*

During our various field trips to Barabhum, we received assistance in our work from many persons and organizations. We are particularly indebted to Shri S. Sen Gupta, B.D.O., Bangurda Block, Singbhum District, Shri B. N. Nandi, D.F.O., Purulia Division, Sm. Basanti Roy of Loke Sevayatan, Nimdih and Sarvasree Bahadur Singh Sardar and Syamaprosad Sardar of Madhupur village.

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\* A number of articles have been published by the senior author on the processes of culture change among the Bhumij (Sinha 1953, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1962, 1963).

( vi )

Sarvashree A. L. Deshpande, P. R. Das and P. K. Mitra, Photo-Artists and Sri R. C. Dey, Head Artist of Anthropological Survey of India are responsible for the photographs and the map.

A Fellowship at the Centre for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Sciences at Stanford, California during 1963-64 provided the senior author with many facilities for preparing this report.

Surajit Sinha  
Biman Kumar Das Gupta  
Hemendra Nath Banerjee



## INTRODUCTION

When H. H. Risley studied the Bhumij during 1880's, they were well on the way to become a caste :

"Here a pure Dravidian race has lost their original language and now speak only Bengali; they worship the Hindu gods in addition to their own (the tendency being to relegate the tribal gods to the women) and the more advanced among them employ Brahmin as family priests. They still retain a set of totemic exogamous sub-divisions closely resembling those of the Mundas and the Santals. But they are beginning to forget the totems which the names of the sub-divisions denote and the names themselves will probably soon be abandoned in favour of more aristocratic designations. The tribe will then become a caste in the full sense and will go on stripping itself of all customs likely to betray its true descents."

(Risley, 1915 : 75)

Students of Indian society have struggled over the years to define the point at which 'tribe' becomes a 'caste' and have inevitably come to the conclusion that the borderline between the two are fuzzy (Elwin 1943, Ghurye 1959, Risley 1915 : 233). Recently, Bailey has made an attempt to clarify the issue by using Durkheimian categories: the 'tribe' is typically characterised by 'mechanical solidarity' and 'segmentary' relationship, while caste society is based on 'organic solidarity' with characteristic 'division of labor' and 'hierarchic relationship'. More specifically, Bailey states: "The larger is the proportion of a given society which has direct access to the land, the closer is that society to the tribal end of the continuum. Conversely, the larger is the proportion of people whose right to land is achieved through a dependent relationship, nearer the society comes to the caste pole" (Bailey 1961 : 14). The above criterion appears to oversimplify the situation. It is not only the volume of land held in a dependent relationship that marks the complexity of caste society, but intricacies in the hierarchy of land tenure as related to a heterogeneous ethnic set up has also to be taken into consideration.

In a comparative study of caste ranking and community structure of five regions of India and Pakistan, Marriott observes that one of the factors that determine the complexity of caste ranking



in these regions is : the number of ethnic groups living in a village community. Thus the number of ethnic groups typically found in a village community was estimated to vary " from a high average of about seventeen local caste groups in Kerala, to fourteen local caste groups in Coramandal, to about nine local castes in the Upper Ganges, and finally, to a mere two to five ethnic groups in both Middle Indus and Bengal Delta regions " (Marriott 1960 : 55). Although Marriott does not speak about 'tribal' groups, it may be deduced from his argument that he would expect in a typical 'tribal' village an even smaller number of ethnic groups than that of Middle Indus and Bengal Delta.

The present demographic survey was undertaken mainly to find out the nature of ethnic heterogeneity in the villages of Pargana Barabhum. We wanted to know about the number of castes and their respective numerical proportion in the population on the *Pargana*, *Taraf*\* and village levels. Particularly, we were interested to know with how many other ethnic groups the Bhumij typically lived in the same village. The relationship between population size and the number of castes in a village was also a subject of our enquiry.

We also attempted to follow up Risley's speculation that the Pargana of Barabhum is a coagulation of clan areas of the Bhumij and that the different clan areas correspond to the existing fief areas :

" It seems to me that the present distribution of the so-called Ghatowali tenures strongly suggest the influence that a body of Mundas divided into Khunts or stripes . . . settled in Barabhum and cleared the country. There were probably as many Khunts or stripes as there were Tarafs, and the ancestor of the present Zemindar was the head of the eldest Khunt. To him others owed military service and paid rent in cash and kind. . . . In course of time the Zemindar, from the chief of the eldest Khunt of the Bhumij, became a Hindu and called himself Raja. The Bhumij of other Khunts continued to do service as Paiks or foot soldiers, for which they received certain lands in their possession, they retained the regular Mundari right of 'Bhuinhars' or first clearers of soil. . . . The present organization of the Ghatowals in Barabhum correspond so exactly to the Mundari village system in Lohardugga

\* *Tarafs* are the major feudal segments in the traditional land tenure system of Pargana Barabhum.

that there can hardly be a doubt that it is the same thing under a different name.\* The village Sardars correspond to the Mundas, the Tabedars to the privileged Bhuinhari Raiyats. The Sadiyal at the head of a group of twelve or fifteen villages clearly correspond to Manki of the Mundari Porha. As for the Sardar Ghatowal of the larger Taraf it seems to me the most likely that they were originally Mankis of outlying Parhas and that in course of time fresh villages being created, new Parha groups were created under new Mankis (Sadiyals), who are now only nominally sub-ordinate to the head Manki (Sordar Ghatowal) of the Taraf."

(Risley 1883 : para 50)

Besides trying to collect simple data on ethnic composition and clan structure of the Bhumij in all the inhabited revenue villages of Pargana Barabhum,\*\* we also collected data on the organization of crafts and weekly markets in the pargana (Sinha, Das Gupta and Banerjee 1961). Besides the earlier intensive study of the village of Madhupur during 1950-52, some additional data on community structure were gathered from four other villages exhibiting different ranges of complexities. The only two towns in the Pargana—Barabazar, the traditional headquarters village of the Pargana and Balarampur, a recently grown town under the impact of lac industry—were also briefly surveyed.

\* In order to get an idea of the Mundari land tenure system of Ranchi see S. C. Roy—*The Mundas and Their Country*. Calcutta, 1912.

\*\* Of the 596 revenue villages or *mauzas*, 20 are no longer inhabited.

**MAP OF PARGANNAH BARABHUM SHOWING  
TARAF HEAD QUARTERS AND MAIN CLAN OSSUARIES**



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE SETTING IN SPACE AND TIME

#### THE SETTING IN SPACE

Pargana Barabhum covers an area of about 635 square miles and lies between 22° 42' and 23° 12' north latitude and 86° 1' and 86° 36' east longitude. It includes Balarampur, Barabazar and Bandoyan police station areas in Purulia District of West Bengal and Patomda police station in Singhbhum District of Bihar. The greater part of Chandil police station, Singhbhum, Bihar, also lies within Barabhum.

Pargana Barabhum is surrounded by seven other Zemindaries or former chieftaincies: Panchakot (or Panchet) and Baghmundi to the north, Patkum to the west, Seraikella and Dhalbhum to the south and Kuilapal and Manbhum to the east. The Raja of Barabhum had to guard his frontiers against any incursions by the neighbouring chieftains. The subordinate fief holders or Taraf Sardars were entrusted with the task of guarding the frontiers while the Raja had direct control over a central portion within the pargana.

In one of the earliest reports on this area by the British administration, we find Barabhum to be 'the wildest and the most remote of the Jungle Mahals' (Strachey 1800: para 1). When we visited Barabhum at various periods between 1950 and 1960, only a small portion of the pristine jungle was left on the Dalma ranges and their extensions, marking the southern and the south-eastern boundaries of the pargana. There are also sporadic patches of thin jungles scattered all over the pargana, concentrating more towards the south and the south-east. The undulating topography, so characteristic of Chota Nagpur, are less pronounced here. The country is more open and presents the appearance of a series of rolling downs, with occasional outcrop of small hills. The Dalma ranges, whose crowning peak is about 3,470 feet, mark the division between the water-sheds of the Subarnarekha and the various feeders of the Kasai, of which the Nengsai and the Kumari pass through the pargana.

When Valentine Ball surveyed the area in the 1860's, he divided the land area into four categories: 'Original jungle land in which

trees are of large size', 'stunted jungle land from which timber is regularly cut', 'dry, gravelly and rocky ground cut up by ravines, incapable of supporting a tree cultivation,' and 'land under cultivation.' The bulk of the surviving jungle of Barabhum belong to the second category. The most characteristic trees in the first division are: the *sal* (*Shorea robusta*), *asan* (*Terminalia tomentosa*), *kend* (*Melanoxydon*) and *pial* (*Buchanania latifolia*). On the higher hills, the bamboos, as a rule, take the place of the other trees. Mr. Ball's second and third divisions have no very characteristic vegetation; stunted *sal*, the *pabas* (*Butea frondosa*) and various grasses and dwarfed bushes form the ordinary vegetation. Numerous *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*), *palas*, fig trees, the mango, *nim* and *bair* are found in and near cultivable tracks (Coupland 1911: 11-12).

The rapid pace of deforestation has naturally resulted in the depletion of the fauna. Coupland writes in 1911: "...the district is now singularly destitute of wild animals and games of all descriptions... It is possible now to travel through and to beat miles of jungle covered hills and see not a single head of game of any description; country eminently fitted for the smaller varieties of deer, for wild pig, for hare, for partridge, the jungle fowl or the pea fowl is untenanted save by the squirrel and the owl, and the natural habitation of the tiger, the leopard and the bear may, perchance, produce a hyaena or jackal (*ibid*: 21)."

Such an ecological setting is certainly not very encouraging for hunting as a means of livelihood. However, there are still some tigers, leopards, bears (black and sloth), wolves, hyaenas, jackals, Indian fox, spotted and barking deer, wild pigs and the langur. The Dalma hills nurture a small herd of elephants.

The game birds are also not very numerous today. Jungle spur and pea fowl and grey partridge can occasionally be seen. Pigeons, both rock and green, are fairly common.

Snakes are fairly numerous, and there are elaborate rituals and lores to protect men from snake-bites. During the ten years ending in 1908, 1,022 persons were reported to have been killed in the entire district of Manbhum. The main poisonous varieties are the cobra and the karait. In the hilly areas, an occasional python is met with.

Many of the tanks and irrigation *bundhs* are regularly stocked with fry of the *rui*, *mirgel* and *katla*, and various small species are to be found in almost every piece of water, including the low

paddy lands. Specialized fishing castes, however, are concentrated only in a very few villages in Barabhum.

The range of temperature during the year is considerable. The mean maximum temperature, which is between 76° and 79° during December and February rises to 89° in March, and in April and May to 103°. Throughout the rains, it averages about 90°, dropping to 88° in October and 84° in November. The mean minimum temperature varies from as low as 52° in January to 79° in June, the mean for the cold weather months being about 58° and the hot weather 76°. The mean temperature throughout the year is 77°.

“The average annual rainfall for Barabhum is about 54 inches. The cold and hot weather rains are usually very light, less than 3½ inches during the six months, November to April. The fall in May averages just under 3 inches, and the burst of the monsoon in June gives some 9½ inches; July and August with nearly 13 inches each are the wettest months; in September the fall averages about 8½ inches, and the final effort of the monsoon gives another 2½ inches in October.”

(Coupland 1911 : 25)

The temperature and the rainfall is conducive to paddy cultivation, provided that the cultivator takes the trouble to convert the undulating land surface into terraced fields and to partially control the supply of water to the paddy fields with small-scale irrigation dams or *bundhs*.

## THE SETTING IN TIME

Paragana Barabhum or Barahabhum (literally meaning the land of the boar) derives its name from Nath Baraha (Nath, the Boar), the legendary ancestor of the present Zemindar of Barabhum. A variant of the legend was briefly reported by Dalton as follows :

“It is pretty certain that the Zamindars of all these estates are of the same races as their people, though the only man among them whom I found sensible enough to acknowledge this was the Raja of Bagmundi; the others all call themselves kshatriyas or Rajputs, but they are not acknowledged as such by any true scion of the illustrious stock. In claiming to be Rajputs, they do not

attempt to connect themselves with any of the recognized families of the tribe, but each family has its own special legend of miraculous production.

"The family legend of the Raja of Barabhum may be given as a specimen of their skill in making pedigrees . . . Legend of the Barabhum Family: Nath Varaha and Kes Varaha, two brothers quarrelled with their father, the Raja of Virat, and settled in the court of Vikramaditya. (This has some connection with the tradition of the adjoining estate Patkum, the Raja of which claims descent from Vikramaditya). Kes, the younger was sawn into two pieces, and with his blood Vikram gave a *tika*\* to the eldest and a pair of umbrellas, and told him that all the country he could ride round in a day and night should be his. Nath mounted his steed and accomplished a circuit of eight Yojanas,\*\* whatever that may be, within the time specified, and a precious stiff line of country he took in riding round what is now Barabhum, but it must be all true as the print of his horses are still visible in the southern slopes of the hills." (Dalton 1872 : 176-177; see also Coupland 1911 : 264-265).

The genealogy flowing from the above legend connects the present Zemindar of Barabhum, Raja Harischandra Singh Deb, as the fourth descendant of the founder Nath Varaha. It is not possible to decide at what point in the ascending generation the genealogy becomes fictitious. If the existing genealogy is taken seriously, and time is calculated on the basis of twentyfive years per regime, then the founding of the kingdom should be dated to about 1,100 years ago, that is, around the ninth century A. D. But we know from the archaeological ruins that important outposts of Jaina and Brahmanical civilization existed in this area at that time and, it is likely, that small chieftaincies like that of Barabhum must have emerged in these areas after the breakdown of Brahmanical civilization in this area around the twelfth century A. D.:

"... there are no remains which can be positively ascribed to any date between the 10th or 11th century and the 16th century, when Muhammadan influence on

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\* Mark on the forehead.

\*\* 'Yojana' is equal to four 'kros' or a trifle over 9 miles, a 'kros' being equal to 8,000 cubits or 12,000 feet taking a cubit as 18 inches.



architecture begins to be evident ; the local zamindars' genealogical trees give regular lines of succession throughout the period, but, as already stated, no reliance can be placed on them and probably all that can be said with any certainty is that they had their origin as reigning families, whether from outside, or local stock, during this period." (Coupland 1911 : 52).

#### COUPLAND ALSO STATES :

"the name of pargana of Barabhum is beyond question a survival of Varahabhumi described in the Bhavishyat Purana of the 15th or 16th century, as a country 'contiguous in one direction to Tungabhumi' (the southern part of Raipar thana in the Bankura district), 'and in another to the Sekhara mountain' (either Parasnath or the Panchet hill) and comprising Varahabhumi, Samantabhumi (Chatna thana in Bankura) and Manbhumi. According to the same account the inhabitants were 'mostly Rajputs, robbers by profession, irreligious and savage, eaters of snakes plus drinkers of spirituous liquors,' a description which remained very true to the facts till a much later date' (*ibid* : 265)."

Although the larger kingdom of Panchet (Panchakot), lying to the north-east of Barabhum, accepted nominal suzerainty of Muhammedan rulers of Bengal between 1589 and 1633 A.D., there is no evidence that Muhammedan control was extended to the more inaccessible parganas like Barabhum and Patkum (Gokhale 1925 : para 33).

The British had formal control over Barabhum with the grant of Dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765. But actually authority could be established only after a series of military campaigns during 1766-1768. The Chief of Barabhum eventually agreed to pay a token revenue, or rather, tribute of Rs. 829-15-9 sikka, equivalent to Rs. 885, in 1776 (Higginson : 1776). However, little control could be established over the internal administration of Barabhum for a few more years. As late as 1800 Henry Strachey, the then Magistrate of Midnapore, regarded Barabhum as the 'wildest' area within Jungle Mahals. (*Supra* : 1).

As the early attempts to establish regular police rule in the area failed, Strachey recommended that the Chief of Barabhum and his sub-ordinate fief holders be formally entrusted with police

powers through the recognition of the Ghatwali police tenure system (Strachey 1800). Later on, in 1833, the Raja of the pargana was divested of police responsibility and was converted to an ordinary revenue paying Zemindar while the sub-ordinate tenure holders, Taraf Sardars, Sadiyals and Ghatowals continued to exert Ghatowali power. The Taraf Sardars, however, continued to pay ceremonial homage to the Raja of Barabhum on the occasion of *Ind Parab* festival and also on the occasion of a new Raja 'ascending the throne' of Barabhum. Such symbolic carry over of the traditional power structure of the Raja of Barabhum continued upto 1940's.

During 1880-1883, a survey of the Ghatwali tenures in Manbhum district was undertaken by Munshi Nandjee under the supervision of H. H. Risley, Commissioner of Ghatwali Survey. While the survey was on progress, Messrs. Robert Watson and Company, whose interest in the pargana upto that time had consisted only in encouraging indigo plantations, took *Ijara*, lease of the whole pargana from the Zemindar for a period of twentyone years and, later on, in 1885, he also took *Patni*, lease of the four major fiefs areas or *Tarafs* of the pargana—Dhadka, Saterakhani, Tinsoya and Ponchasardari. In 1896, Mr. Mathewson bought Messrs. Robert Watson Company's rights in Barabhum for the sum of Rs. 1,60,000. In 1906, Mr. Mathewson transferred all his rights to Midnapore Zemindary Company Limited in Barabhum for Rs. 2,00,000. Midnapore Zemindary Company continued to exert its powerful influence on the land tenure and social life of the area till 1951 when the Zemindari system was finally abolished in Bihar. The main impact of Midnapore Zemindary Company was to make the people of Barabhum frequently face the law courts in relation to their land rights as specified by a number of land settlement surveys. The most important of these surveys in this area are those by Nandjee (1883) and Shifton (1807-12). Midnapore Zemindary Company also brought in a number of Bengali upper caste members, mainly Kayastha, to serve as petty clerks in their establishment. The Zemindary Company made a determined bid to break down the Ghatowali tenure by involving the Ghatwals in numerous law suits. It must be said to the credit of the British Government that, in general, they extended strong support to the Ghatowals to hold their own against the aggressive litigant British commercial concern.

Before the introduction of land revenue settlement operations based on cadastral surveys, land used to be measured in terms of traditional criteria such as *muris*, *powas*, *rekhs*, etc., which represented fractional shares in villages and not specific areas of land. Or else, land used to be measured in terms of the area which can

be sown by a specific quantity of the seed, usually rice, which will necessarily vary not only with the quality of the soil but also with the customs of particular villages (Coupland 1911 : 143). From Shifton's report on settlement operations in Barabhum and Patkum during 1907-1912, we know how systemically indigenous Bhumij Ghatowals lost the whole or portions of their land titles to Robert Watson Company and its successor, Midnapore Zemindary Company, between 1883 and 1907 (Shifton 1907-12 : para 134).

Besides bringing in rigorous measurements of land holdings and the custom of payment of rents and revenues in cash, the British administration opened Barabhum to the outside world by improving means of communication. Between 1889 and 1890 the B. N. Railway line [now known as S. E. Railways] was opened connecting Purulia to Sini. This line passed for about 15 miles through the northern portion of Barabhum. Later on, Barabhum was connected to Tata and Purulia by metalled bus routes.

Barabazar was the headquarters of a separate Munsif's Court during 1880 to 1889. Later on, a sub-registry office was also opened in the pargana. There are now five police stations to look after law and order of the area.

This rapid exposure to the outside world from 1890 onwards brought in a large influx of immigrant population from West Bengal—so that, with its sixtyfive ethnic groups, Barabhum of today provides a picture of much greater heterogeneity than that given by Dent in his report of 1833 : "The chief portion of the inhabitants of Barabhum are Bhumijes with a small number of Kurmis and Sonthals plus other low castes and a slight sprinkling of Brahmans, Rajputs, Banea traders and Muhammedan" (Dent 1833 : para 3).

The unity of Barabhum as a land revenue and political unit was initially preserved by the British when they recognized pargana Barabhum both as a revenue and police station area. By the time of Shifton's survey operations of 1907-12, while the pargana continued to be regarded as a single estate, it fell within the jurisdiction of three Revenue Thanas. With the abolition of the Zemindari system in Bihar in 1951, the Raja of Barabhum was relieved of his tenure rights over the pargana. The final blow to the unity of Barabhum came with the Reorganization of States in November 1, 1956. Since then, while about twothirds of the pargana covering Balarampur, Bandoyan and Barabazar Police Stations were transferred to West Bengal, about onethird living in Patomda and Chandil Police Stations remained as before in Bihar. As a result, an area which enjoyed a long sense of social and cultural continuity, united by a

common Bengali dialect known as Barabhumia, is being pulled in two directions by two distinct linguistic states. When we surveyed the pargana during 1956-60, we were aware that we were dealing with a historical abstraction ; the pargana as a polity and as an economic unit belonging essentially to the past. The shadow of the past, however, still hovers over the pargana.

## CHAPTER TWO

### POPULATION, SIZE, ETHNIC COMPOSITION AND ECOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF VILLAGES IN BARABHUM

#### WHAT IS A VILLAGE ?

If you ask a person in Pargana Barabhum, "What is the name of your village?" You will always get a specific name in reply. But then, another person from the same settlement cluster may give another name in response to the same question. The difference in the names is on account of the fact that while one person gave the name of the total cluster of hamlets in a revenue unit or *mauza*, the other was referring to the hamlet within the *mauza* where he lived. While all people agree that they live in 'villages', it is not completely clear as to what set of characteristics are considered by the people of Barabhum as essential in defining a village. The Census Superintendents in this part of India, as elsewhere, had great difficulty in deciding where to set the limits of a census village :

"The disadvantage of basing the census on the residential village has been explained before ; briefly, it is that it is impossible to decide which groups of houses form independent villages and which groups are merely parts of other villages...." (Census of India 1921, Bihar and Orissa, vol. 7, part I : 92).

The people of Barabhum think of village at least as a visible cluster of houses distinguishable from other similar clusters of houses. Moreover, they expect that the cultivable land in the immediate neighbourhood of their cluster of houses be primarily owned by the residents of the village. The other expectations are : a defined revenue boundary under one or more superior tenure holders, a village headman, a council of adults (*shola ana*) for maintaining law and order, a sacred site (*goram*) and its Presiding Deity, a priest of the same deity and some festivals around it. The villagers also customarily use kinship terms in addressing people of the other castes in the village, although they do not go by the rule of village exogamy as in north-western India. But the spatial limits of the operation of each of the above criteria may not be wholly coterminous.

Under the circumstances, it was considered operationally convenient to regard the *mauza* or the land revenue village as the unit of our survey of villages in Pargana Barabhum. This was done with the awareness that in some cases there was no close fit between a *mauza* and a village as a sociological unit. In the overwhelming majority of cases, however, the *mauza* does represent a sociological unit.

A number of local terms are used to define various levels in settlement pattern. The terms for the village are *gram*, *gnan*, and *bustee*. The term *bustee* actually means a conglomeration of huts surrounded by cultivable plots. The core settlement of a village is usually given this term, while the satellite hamlets are called *di* or *tola*. A *bustee* or *tola* may contain within itself named *kulhis* or lanes with huts arranged on either side. A street down the slope is known as *namo kulhi* (the low lane) while a street on the higher plane is known as *upor kulhi* (the high lane). A narrow lane with huts huddling on both the sides is known as *kocha kulhi*. When a joint family or a lineage undergoes a division, the component families may live in separate huts while sharing a common courtyard. Such a cluster of huts forms a *bakhail* and is usually named after the senior male member of the lineage.

#### THE ETHNIC GROUPS AND THEIR POPULATION

Out of a total of 596 villages in Pargana Barabhum 20 are deserted. We also avoided surveying the village of Mango at the southern boundary of the pargana as it has come, in very recent years, within the scope of Tata township expansion scheme and has consequently lost its characteristic pre-urban population structure. On the basis of a survey of the rest of 575 revenue villages, we find the following about Barabhum :

Total population	.. ..	2,44,733
Total number of families (households)		48,699
Number of persons per family	.. ..	5
Number of persons per village	.. ..	411
Number of families per village	.. ..	82
Number of inhabited villages per square mile		90
Population per square mile	.. ..	386
Population per acre	.. ..	60

There are about sixtyfive ethnic groups in Barabhum today, and their population, along with traditional occupation, has been given in Table 1.

TABLE 1

*Ethnic Groups and their Population in Pargana Barabhum*

Sl. No.	Ethnic Groups	Traditional Occupation (s)	No. of Families (House-holds)	% of the Total in Pargana	No. of Persons	% of the Total in Pargana
1	Mahato	Cultivator	13,955	28.66	71,892	29.38
2	Santal	Cultivator	8,349	17.14	40,236	16.44
3	Bhumij	Cultivator and Zemindar	8,395	17.24	37,947	15.51
4	Brahman	Priest	1,296	2.66	8,421	3.44
5	Kumhar	Potter	1,406	2.89	7,522	3.07
6	Gorai	Oil-presser	1,001	2.06	5,517	2.25
7	Bagal	Milkman	901	1.85	4,658	1.90
8	Kamar	Blacksmith	958	1.97	4,654	1.90
9	Napit	Barber	803	1.65	4,373	1.79
10	Boishtom	Priest	815	1.67	4,203	1.72
11	Deshwali Majhi	Cultivator	843	1.73	3,912	1.60
12	Sahis	Taking Care of horse ; bark rope making ; mid-wifery	769	1.58	3,848	1.57
13	Kharia	Hunters and gatherers	759	1.55	3,740	1.53
14	Muhammedans	Trader	605	1.24	3,231	1.32
15	Sunri	Wine maker	498	1.02	2,859	1.17
16	Mudi (Kora)	Agricultural labourer	570	1.17	2,677	1.09
17	Chattri	Cultivator and Zemindar	479	0.98	2,471	1.01
18	Gandhabanik (Beney)	Trader	399	0.82	2,377	0.97
19	Jolha	Weaver	472	0.97	2,366	0.97
20	Dom	Basket-weaver, drummer, midwife, scavenger	503	1.03	2,302	0.94
21	Muchi	Leather-worker	440	0.90	2,248	0.92
22	Moirra	Sweet-maker	339	0.70	1,999	0.82
23	Tanti	Weaver	424	0.87	1,924	0.79
24	Dhoba	Washerman	377	0.77	1,832	0.75
25	Mahali	Basket-maker	377	0.77	1,665	0.68
26	Mudi (Orang)	Labourer	292	0.60	1,645	0.67
27	Kayastha	Scribe	275	0.56	1,534	0.63
28	Bhuiya	Labourer	290	0.60	1,382	0.56
29	Tamli	Betel vendor	224	0.46	1,363	0.56
30	Marwari	Trader	166	0.34	1,266	0.52
31	Keont	Fishermen	216	0.44	1,049	0.43
32	Lohar Majhi	—	192	0.39	948	0.39



TABLE 1—continued

Sl. No.	Ethnic Groups	Traditional Occupation (s)	No. of Families (House-holds)	% of the Total in Pargana	No. of Persons	% of the Total in Pargana
33	Bawri	Labourer	170	0.35	912	0.37
34	Mudi	Labourer	172	0.35	871	0.36
35	Rajawar	Chapped rice-maker	122	0.25	575	0.23
36	Ekadash Teli	Trader	99	0.20	492	0.20
37	Ghuniya	Fisherman	90	0.18	443	0.18
38	Subarnabanik	Trader	70	0.14	394	0.16
39	Pahira	Hunters plus gatherers	85	0.17	362	0.15
40	Bagti	Making flat-tened rice, cultivators	76	0.16	340	0.14
41	Jaiswal	Trader	54	0.11	326	0.13
42	Sadgop	Cultivator	49	0.10	296	0.12
43	Chhutor	Carpenter and mask-maker	45	0.09	203	0.08
44	Ghasi	Labourers and scavengers	46	0.09	202	0.08
45	Thenthari	Brass worker (lost wax process)	41	0.08	180	0.07
46	Munda	Cultivator	32	0.07	175	0.07
47	Vaidya	Medical Practitioner	23	0.05	171	0.07
48	Bhat	Genealogist	27	0.05	150	0.06
49	Paitkar	Painter of scrolls	23	0.05	118	0.05
50	Jugi	Wool weaver	22	0.05	111	0.05
51	Kuiri	Cultivator	17	0.03	93	0.04
52	Kansari	Bell-metal worker	18	0.04	92	0.04
53	Gawr	—	11	0.02	62	0.03
54	Bediya	—	4	0.008	23	0.009
55	Nepali	—	3	0.006	13	0.005
56	Sikh	—	1	0.002	8	0.003
57	Mehtor	Scavenger	3	0.006	9	0.004
58	Lodhi	—	1	0.002	9	0.004
59	Christian	—	1	0.002	8	0.003
60	Kamoila	—	1	0.002	8	0.003
61	Telengi	—	1	0.002	6	0.002
62	Daira	—	1	0.002	5	0.002
63	Kachhi	Trader	1	0.002	5	0.002
64	Bajikar	Magician	1	0.002	3	0.002
65	Paswan	—	1	0.002	3	0.001
		TOTAL	48,699	100.00	2,44,733	100.00

On first inspection of Table 1, one is indeed overwhelmed by the ethnic heterogeneity of Barabhum. But it soon becomes apparent that the bulk of the population is formed by a limited number of ethnic groups. The three large agriculturist groups, the Mahato, the Santal and the Bhumij cover over three-fifths of the population. The marginal position of the twelve ethnic groups at the bottom of Table 1 will be apparent from the fact that each of them is represented by only one to four families and three to twentythree people and that they altogether cover only 0.04% of the population. While the first seventeen castes in Table 1 contribute 86.7% of the population, the rest of the fortyeight castes cover only 13.3%.

Table 2 gives the number of castes belonging to different population ranges.

TABLE 2  
*Ethnic Groups and Population Range in Barabhum*

Population range	No. of Castes within the range	% of the total no. of castes in the <i>Pargana</i>
0 — 10	9	13.9
11 — 50	3	4.7
51 — 100	3	4.7
101 — 200	6	9.2
201 — 300	3	4.7
301 — 400	4	6.1
401 — 500	2	3.0
501 — 1,000	4	6.1
1,001 — 2,000	10	15.4
2,001 — 3,000	7	10.8
3,001 — 4,000	4	6.1
4,001 — 5,000	4	6.1
5,001 — 10,000	3	4.7
10,001 — 20,000	0	0
20,001 — 30,000	0	0
30,001 — 40,000	1	1.5
40,001 — 50,000	1	1.5
50,001 — 60,000	0	0
60,001 — 70,000	0	0
70,001 — 80,000	1	1.5
TOTAL	65	100

About 5,597 people or 2.3% of the population are Muslims; the rest, with the exception of twelve Sikhs and about a hundred Christians, are all Hindus.\* Among the Hindus, about 11.9% (thirteen groups) belong to the upper castes from whom the

\* This is so if one regards the so-called Tribes in the pargana as Hindus.

Brahman accepts water for drinking and nearly 53% (fortythree groups) belong to the low castes from whom the Brahman does not accept water for drinking. The rest of the Hindus, forming six ethnic groups and 35.1% of the population, are regarded as 'tribal' groups by the Government of India.

The population of Barabhum may, again, be divided as follows in terms of traditional occupation (Table 3).

TABLE 3

*Traditional Occupation and Ethnic Groups in Pargana Barabhum*

Sl. No.	Traditional occupation	No. of ethnic groups	% of the total no. of ethnic groups	% of the total population
1	Agriculture and agricultural labour	13	20	67.4
2	Artisans	15	23.1	14.2
3	Priestly groups	3	4.6	5.2
4	Traders	8	12.3	4.3
5	Ritual cleaners : Napit and Dhoba	2	3.1	2.5
6	Hunters	2	3.1	1.6
7	Fishermen	2	3.1	.6
8	The Rest	20	30.7	4.2
	TOTAL	65	100.0	100.0

The villages vary widely in the number of ethnic groups living within their boundaries. Some are lived by a single group while there are others with as many as fortyfive ethnic groups (see Table 4).

TABLE 4

*Population and Ethnic Groups in Villages*

## No. of Ethnic Groups in a Village

Population	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31 and more	Total and %
1- 500	293	110	11	—	—	—	—	414 (72%)
501-1,000	9	67	45	6	1	—	—	128 (22.25%)
1,001-2,000	1	6	12	8	3	—	—	30 (5.21%)
2,001-3,000	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1 (0.17%)
3,001-4,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4,001-5,000	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1 (0.17%)
> 5,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1 (0.17%)
TOTAL	303	183	68	14	5	1	1	575 (100%)
	(52.69%)	(34.30%)	(11.82%)	(2.38%)	(.85%)	(.17%)	(.17%)	

From Table 4, we get a fair degree of correspondence between population size and the number of ethnic groups living in a village.

Nearly three-fourths of the villages have less than 500 people and more than 90% of the villages fall within the population range of 1,000. A little over half of the villages are lived by no more than five groups and the range of one to ten groups cover four-fifths of the villages.

There are altogether 41 uni-ethnic villages: Santal—20, Mahato—10, Bhumij—6, Kharia—2, Deshwali Manjhi—1, Mudi—1, Muhammedan—1. Thus the Santal, in proportion to the other ethnic groups of Barabhum, show a distinct tendency to live by themselves. This is also noticeable in the case of sixtyfive bi-caste villages, thirty of which include the Santal in their population. The Bhumij are so involved in thirteen cases and the Mahato and some artisan groups eleven cases each. The upper Hindu castes prefer to live in larger hetero-ethnic villages.

At this point, we may look into the number of villages in which the major ethnic groups in the pargana are distributed (Table 5).

TABLE 5

*Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Villages in Pargana Barabhum*

Sl. No.	Ethnic Groups	Population	% of the total population	No. of villages where found	% of the total villages
1	Mahato	71,892	29.38	389	67.6
2	Santal	40,236	16.44	316	54.9
3	Bhumij	37,947	15.51	436	76.0
4	Brahman	8,421	3.44	126	21.8
5	Kumhar	7,522	3.07	75	13.0
6	Gorain	5,518	2.25	131	26.3
7	Bagal	4,658	1.90	80	13.9
8	Kamar	4,654	1.90	292	50.8
9	Napit	4,373	1.79	181	31.5
10	Boishtom	4,203	1.72	124	21.5
11	Deshwali Majhi	3,912	1.60	65	11.3
12	Sahis	3,848	1.57	148	27.5
13	Kharia	3,740	1.53	107	18.6
14	Muhammedan	3,231	1.32	53	9.2
15	Sunri	2,859	1.17	61	10.6
16	Mudi (Kora)	2,677	1.09	66	11.4
17	Chhatri	2,471	1.01	50	8.7
18	Benya	2,377	0.97	43	7.4
19	Jolha	2,366	0.97	86	14.9
20	Dom	2,302	0.94	80	13.9
21	Muchi	2,248	0.92	75	13.0
22	Moirra	1,999	0.82	36	6.2
23	Tanti	1,924	0.79	118	20.5
24	Dhoba	1,832	0.75	65	11.3
25	Mahali	1,665	0.68	44	7.6
26	Kayastha	1,534	0.63	28	4.8

TABLE 5—continued

Sl. No.	Ethnic Groups	Population	% of the total population	No. of villages where found	% of the total villages
27	Lohar Majhi	948	0.39	12	2.1
28	Bauri	912	0.37	17	2.9
29	Pahira	362	0.15	8	1.4
30	Thenthari	180	0.07	3	0.5
31	Vaidya	171	0.07	8	1.4
32	Paitkar	118	0.05	3	0.5

Each of the three numerically dominant groups, namely, the Mahato, the Santal and the Bhumij lives in more than half of the villages in the Pargana. The case of the Bhumij is somewhat unique. While their population is nearly half that of the Mahato, the Bhumij live in fortyeight (10.4%) more villages in the Pargana. This fits in with the widespread local tradition that the Bhumij used to be the numerically dominant group in the area in the past. The distribution of the Kamar (blacksmith) and the Napit (barber) is also quite striking. Every second village in the Pargana has one or more Kamar family, while every third has some Napit. Compared to the Napit, the Dhoba (washerman) is found in one-third the number of villages. The Brahman, though more numerous than the Boishtom, are distributed in about the same number of villages as the latter. The frequent occurrences of the Tanti and the Jolha are evidences of their past important role in the supply of handloom cloths. Trading castes like the Gandhabanik are represented in only 7.4% of the villages while the literate Kayastha are found in even fewer villages (4.8%). Some specialized artisan and occupational groups like the Thenthari (brass worker), and the Paitkar (painter of ritual scrolls) are found in even lesser number of villages: 3 (.5%) each.

#### SATELLITE HAMLETS

It has been mentioned before that formation of satellite hamlets (*di* or *tola*) is a frequent feature of the village communities of Barabhum. Census data on hamlets were available for 552 villages (Table 6).

TABLE 6  
*Population Size and Number of Hamlets in the Villages of Pargana Barabhum*

Population Groups	Bustee only	Bustee plus 1-4 Tolas	Bustee plus 5-9 Tolas	Bustee plus 10-14 Tolas	Total
1 — 500	256	138	4	—	398
501 — 1,000	24	86	11	—	121
1,001 — 4,000	1	19	8	1	29
4,001 — 5,000	1	1	—	—	2
> 5,000	1	1	—	—	2
	283	245	23	1	552
	(51.2%)	(44.4%)	(4.2%)	(0.2%)	(100%)

Thus in a little over half of the total 552 cases studied, the villages are without any *tola* or satellite hamlets. In 95.6% cases, the number of *tolas* does not exceed four and, in general, as the population increases, the number of *tolas* also tend to increase. As regards the origin of the satellite hamlets, the villagers give three kinds of explanation: (a) formation of new *tolas* away from the old *bustee* helps some villagers to easily approach their cultivable lands and also to watch over the crops; (b) when a new ethnic group comes to settle down in a village, it may choose to live apart from the main settlement and to start a new hamlet of its own; (c) quarrels among members of a lineage may lead some dissident members to get out of the major settlement and live apart in an upland which will be the beginning of a new hamlet. The *tolas* are often named after an ethnic group which is or was dominant in the hamlet.

#### ECOLOGICAL ZONES AND POPULATION STRUCTURE

Pargana Barabhum can be roughly divided into two ecological zones: the relatively plain northern part including mainly Gartali, Kumaripar and Tinsoya Tarafs and the hilly and forested southern Tarafs of Panchasardari, Satrakhani and Dhadka which are dominated by the Dalma ranges and its extensions. The following tables (Tables 7, 8 and 9) give a rough idea of the contrasting nature of the two zones:

TABLE 7  
*Two Ecological Zones of Pargana Barabhum*

Features	Non-hilly tract	Hilly tract
Area	206.65 sq. miles	359.34 sq. miles
Villages per sq. mile	1.3	.71
Population:		
Families	21,065	20,931
Persons	107,108	102,851
Density per sq. mile	518	386
Dominant Ethnic Groups	(1) Mahato (2) Santal	(1) Bhumij (2) Santal

TABLE 8\*  
*Population Concentration in the Two Ecological Zones of Barabhum*

Population Grades	No. of Hilly tract	villages in Non-hilly tract	Total
No population	1	13	14
1 — 100	29	20	49
101 — 500	157	166	323
501 — 1,000	49	57	106
1,001 — 2,000	20	6	26
more than 2,000	—	3	3
TOTAL	256	265	521

\* The data presented in Table 8 are based on the survey of 521 villages.

TABLE 9\*

*Ethnic Complexity in the Two Ecological Zones of Barabhum*

Ethnic Groups	No. of villages in	
No population	Hilly tract	Non-hilly tract
	1	13
1	19	18
2	32	24
3 — 5	86	90
6 — 10	79	81
11 — 20	37	35
more than 20	2	4
TOTAL	256	265
		521

While density of population and the number of villages per square mile are relatively low in the hilly and forested zone, there are otherwise not much of differences between the two areas in size of the villages and in ethnic complexity. In actual composition of ethnic groups, however, there is a good deal of difference between the two tracts. While tribal groups like the Bhumij and the Santal dominate the hilly tract, the Mahatos dominate the scene in the non-hilly tract. While the lesser tribes like the Kharia and Pahira live mostly in the hilly zone, later immigrant agriculturists like Chhatri and Sadgop and "clean" Hindu castes like the Brahman, Moira, Tamli and the Kayastha, as also the trading castes like the Marwari, Beneya, Jaiswal and Muslims concentrate more in the non-hilly zone.

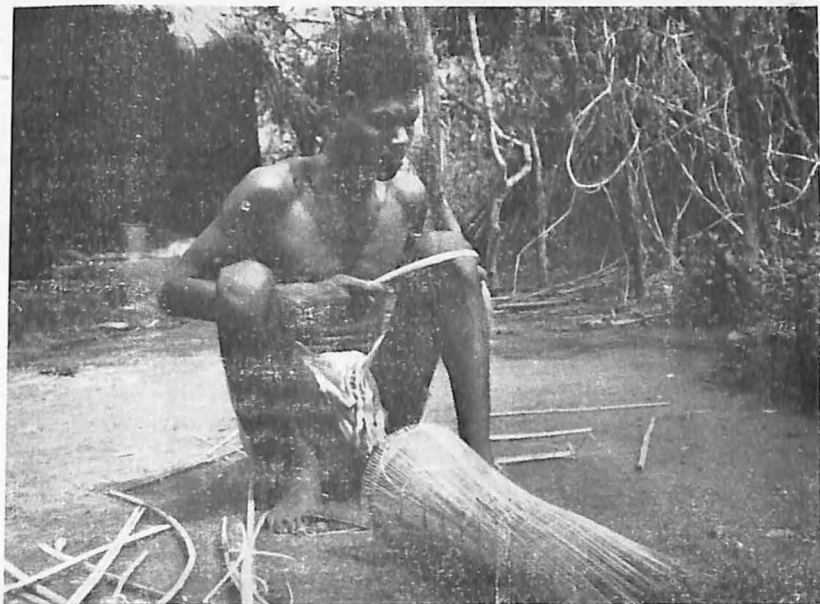
## LEVELS OF COMPLEXITY IN SETTLEMENT CLUSTERS

The villages may again be arranged in a hierarchy of 'levels of complexity' from the lowest to the highest as follow :

- (a) Uni-caste villages (or hamlets) with peoples depending upon hunting and gathering.
- (b) Villages lived exclusively by one or two agriculturist groups.
- (c) Multi-caste agriculturist villages, containing a few artisans.
- (d) Multi-caste big settlements, containing besides agriculturists and artisans, traders and literate upper castes like the Brahman and the Kayastha.

\* The data presented in Table 9 are based on the survey of 521 villages.





A Kharia weaving fishing basket



A Kharia family



Kharia hamlet at the foot of Makula-Bhangat Hills



Birhor lasses at Bhupatipalli

- (e) Semi-urbanized settlements: with greater concentration of traders and having some petty industrialists, professionals and industrial labourers.

The great bulk of the villages of Barabhum fall within the level 'b' and 'c' covering a population within the limit of 500 and a range of castes not over 10. There is no pure example of level 'a'. The closest approximation would be Pahira Tola hamlet of village Khokro lived exclusively by twentyfive Pahira families who still lean heavily on collection of jungle products as their source of livelihood. Big villages like Sindhri, Adadi and Bareda belong to the level 'd' and the town of Balarampur to level 'e'. Barabazar, the headquarters village of the Raja of the Pargana, falls between the levels 'd' and 'e' with a population of 4,183 belonging to 29 ethnic groups.

Although we do not rule out the possibilities of structural simplification over time down the above levels in some instances, the cases examined by us so far have indicated only the process of movement towards greater complexity in the population structure of the settlement clusters—a movement from a uni-ethnic settlement to multi-ethnic. In the case of the Bhumij, there is also a movement from uni-clan to multi-clan villages (see Chapters III and IV). The reverse cases are almost absent.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE BHUMIJ CLANS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION

In the introductory chapter, we mentioned Risley's ideas about the origin of Barabhum State through coagulation of a number of "clan areas". He assumed that the Tarafs, or, in some cases, their sub-division the Sadiyalis, once corresponded to clan areas (*Supra*; 3). We wanted to follow up this idea in course of our survey.

It is already known that the Bhumij form 15·51% of the total population of Barabhum, and they live in as many as 76% of the inhabited villages in the Pargana. Their distribution in the different Tarafs is not uniform (Table 10).

TABLE 10

*Distribution of the Bhumij in the Tarafs of Pargana Barabhum*

Tarafs	No. of vil- lages in the Taraf	No. of vil- lages hav- ing Bhu- mij	% of Bhu- mij inhabi- ted villages in the Taraf	Bhumij popula- tion	% of the Taraf po- pulation	% of the Bhumij population in the Pargana
Panchasardari	80	72	90·00	12,310	35·21	32·44
Satrakhani	97	83	90·07	9,955	26·70	26·18
Tinsoya	35	32	91·43	3,573	23·32	9·41
Dhadka	79	57	72·15	4,883	17·13	12·86
Bangurda	17	10	58·82	663	7·97	1·74
Sarberia	48	30	60·41	1,621	7·63	4·27
Dubraji	10	9	90·00	311	5·97	·82
Gartali	120	74	61·66	2,801	5·24	7·38
Kumaripar	110	65	59·09	1,830	4·77	4·90
Total for the Pargana	596	437	100·00%	37,947	15·51%	100·00%

The total of 37,947 Bhumij persons belonging to 8,395 families are affiliated to fifty clans (*gotras* or *gotar*). Seventeen of the above fifty clans cover more than three-fourths of the total Bhumij population in Barabhum. From the available data on 350 Bhumij inhabited villages, we find the following order of distribution for the seventeen major clans who form more than four-fifths of the total Bhumij population of these villages (Table 11).

TABLE 11

*Distribution of the Major Bhumij Clans in 350 Villages*

No.	Clans	No. of families	No. of persons
1	Ubursandil	1,325	6,032
2	Gulgu	880	3,860
3	Jaru	870	3,828
4	Badda	800	3,672
5	Bhuinya	621	2,962
6	Hembrom	595	2,685
7	Jugi	393	1,813
8	Baghra	327	1,597
9	Sama	143	635
10	Parsa	130	589
11	Sainthia	128	565
12	Deon	106	505
13	Sirka	91	419
14	Koira	72	351
15	Kauri	57	242
16	Hansda	42	182
17	Nag	36	146
	TOTAL	6,616	30,083

Thus the eight clans, Ubursandil, Gulgu, Jaru, Badda, Bhuiyan, Hembrom, Jugi, and Baghra, are by far the dominant clans in Pargana Barabhum.

Something should now be said about the structure and function of clan among the Bhumij. The clans are patrilineal exogamous sub-divisions of the tribe assuming descent from a common ancestor upto whom genealogical relations cannot be traced. The clan is not a corporate social unit today. The members are not distributed in compact contiguous territories and do not claim ownership over a territory. There is also no chief or council to regulate the affairs of the clan. The main function of clan today is the regulation of marriage through the principle of exogamy. Each clan, however, has one or more villages with an ossuary or *sasan* site in it where the corpse or the charred bones of an adult deceased clan member is carried for burial and for the erection of memorial stones. Clans are thus divided into sub-clans in terms of lineages affiliated to particular ossuaries located in villages first settled by their lineage ancestors. Usually, the ossuary villages are numerically dominated by the members of that particular clan which claims affiliation to the village *sasan*. Thus the ossuary village of Berma is dominated by Ubursandil clan, Amjhor by Jaru, Madhupur-Bhangat by Parsa, Jugilong by Jugi and so on. This dominance is not only expressed in relative numerical strength (31 out of 45 Bhumij families in Berma, 27 out of 142 Bhumij families

in Madhupur-Bhangat), but also by the fact that the Bhumij Headman (Ghatwal) and the Priest of the Village Sacred Grove (*Laya*) usually belong to the clan affiliated to the village ossuary.

A Bhumij clan ossuary possesses an "owner" or *Laya* or a group of owners who have duties and privileges with regard to the bone-burying ceremony :

The consent of the owners is required at the time of burying bones. The ownership right follows patrilineal descent. At present, the late Kanai Singh's wife, Malindra, Sukdev and Mahadev Bhumij (daughter-in-law and three sons of the late Balabhadra Singh, the former *Laya* or priest of the ossuary) owns the *sasan* at Berma. Regarding the fee (*manni*) for burying a dead body or charred bones, we were told that there is no fixed rate. It varies under different circumstances. If the party is poor, they pay the owner a rupee or so, or give him a piece of coarse cloth. If the party is well-to-do, then the owners may receive more. . . . In some cases, the party is so poor that they cannot pay anything to the owners. When the corpse (in the case of poor people who have no means to cremate the dead body) or the pot containing charred bones is brought to the ossuary, the owners of the *sasan* are supposed to show them the particular *panta* in which it is to be buried. Other ritual functions are carried out by the members of the deceased person's party. These include : painting the charred bones with turmeric powder and mustard oil paste, painting vermilion-and-oil paste on the outer surface of the pot in which the charred bones are kept, putting rice-powder and cakes made of rice-powder (*pitha*) in the pot, providing a cover or lid made from the bark of a *sal* tree and a new piece of cloth for the mouth of the pot, and finally sprinkling *khoi* (puffed paddy) over the entire area of the *sasan*.

However, at some other ossuaries of the Bhumij, namely those in the villages of Darberia (clan *Badda*), Bansgarh (clan *Bhuinya*), Jugilong (clan *Jugi*), and Bhula (clan *Gulgu*). We found that the owners (*Laya*) have the following ritual role at the time of the burial ceremony.

(a) After the arrival of the bereaved, with the pot containing charred bones, and stones (burial cover), one

of the owners (usually the senior-most person of the owner's family) paint the vermillion-and-oil paste on the outer surface of the pot.

(b) The owners themselves dig a hole in the *panta* of the bereaved to bury the pot containing charred bones.

(c) The owners have to place the pot in the grave and then must ask members of the deceased's party to fill in the hole with earth and place the tomb-stone on it.

(d) The owners may even be asked to perform ritual rites to appease the departed soul (Banerjee 1962 : 145-146).

The members of fifty Bhumij clans are divided into 366 ossuary or *sasan* groups. Thus, on the average, each clan has six ossuary villages. Although the rule of clan exogamy holds good for most of the clans of Pargana Barabhum, in a few cases, intermarriage has been allowed between members of the same clan affiliated to different ossuaries. There have been, for example, a few cases of marriage between the Ubursandil of Berma with the Ubursandil of Roshuldih and Tengadih.

Risley mentions twenty Bhumij clans of which for thirteen he could get some totemic association :

"Clan	Totem
Badda Kurkutia	a kind of worm
Barda	?
Bhuinya	fish
Chandil	?
Gulgu	fish
Hansda	wild goose
Hembrom	betel palm
Jaru	a bird
Kasyap	tortoise
Leng	mushroom
Nag	snake
Oborsandi	a bird
Pila	?
Sagma	?
Sal Rishi	?
Saola	?
Tesa	a bird
Tamarung	a pumpkin
Tali	a sort of vegetable "

(Risley 1891, vol. II : p. 93)



Even today the Bhumij are aware that many of their clans consider animals, plants and birds as agnates (*bhayad*). The members of these clans believe that their ancestors were either born of these non-human items or were miraculously associated with them. It is also considered customary to avoid killing or doing any harm to these totemic agnates. But when one probes into these beliefs today, it becomes evident that totemic association of the clans has become very feeble and confused in the minds of the clan members. Many respondents did not know about the totems of their clans, and some named items which they did not exactly know what they were. Some Parsa clan members, for example, mentioned "Parsa plant" as their agnate, but they had never seen a Parsa plant. In some cases, different totems are mentioned by different members of the same clan. Some members of the Gulgu clan claimed *sal* fish as their agnate while others regarded molluscs, *gugli*, as agnates. It is also known that although the Gulgu clan members claim that eating of *sal* fish or molluscs is taboo in their clan, they actually take them. Similarly, Baghra and Nag clan members do not observe the ideal taboo against killing their respective agnates, tigers and snakes.

Sanskritization of clan names, which Risley had predicted, has gone on in full swing mainly by adding the suffix *Rishi* (sage) to the original name. Thus Baghra has become Bagh Rishi, Deon—Deon Rishi, Gulgu or Sal—Sal Rishi, Hembrom—Hem Rishi, Jaru—Jag Rishi, Kachhim—Kashyap Rishi, Badda—Bharadwaj Rishi, Ubursandil—Sandil or Sandilya Rishi, Parsa—Parasar Muni and so on. Sanskritization of names, however, has not been accompanied by innovation of elaborate myths. It is only assumed that the clan members are descendants of particular *Rishis*. The initiative for Sanskritization of clan names has usually been taken by individual upper class Bhumijes in their urge to be recognized as Rajput Kshatriyas. In this they have been assisted by "degraded" Brahmans who officiate in their rites of passage. Sanskritization of clan names has also taken place on a mass scale in connection with social mobility movements of the Bhumij (Sinha 1959).

While Risley's predictions regarding increasing Sanskritization of clan names and decline of totemic association of Bhumij clans have proven to be accurate, his notion about the association between clan and Taraf cannot be supported by the evidence in hand. The inhabitants of the various Tarafs do not regard their Tarafs as "belonging to" particular clans. Some of the major Tarafs contain more than one clan ossuary, thus indicating the fact that these Tarafs have been long inhabited by more than one clan member.

Taraf	Ossuary Village	Clan
1 Panchasardari	Amjhor	Jaru
	Madhupur	Paroa
	Baghadi	Baddi
	Jugilong	Jugi
	Pokhria	Gulgu
	Raghunathpur	Kauri
2 Satrakhani	Bhula	Gulgu
	Kuiani	Baghra
	Lacbipur	Deon
	Bonta	Sama
3 Tinsoya	Berma	Ubur Sandil
	Dumari	Bhuiya
	Darbaria	Badda
	Daman Tanr	Hembrom

The small Taraf of Bangurda on the other hand has only one important ossuary, namely, the one of the Bhuinya clan at Bangurda. Similar is the case for the large Taraf of Gartali. The large Tarafs of Dhadka and Kumaripar and the smaller Taraf of Sarberia and Dubraji have no important clan ossuaries within their limit.

While a few Tarafs are clearly dominated by a single clan each (Sarberia—Bhuinya, Bangurda—Bhuiya, Dubraji—Gulgu), the others are dominated by more than one clan :

Taraf	The Dominant Clan	Ossuary Villages
1 Panchasardari	Ubur Sandil	Berma
	Jaru	Amjhor
	Badda	Baghadi
	Jugi	Jugilong
	Hembrom	Sindurpur
2 Satrakhani	Gulgu	Bhula
	Badda	Jamdi
	Baghra	Kuiani
	Bhuiyan	Dumari
3 Dhadka	Bhuiyan	Bangurda
	Gulgu	Bhula
	Hembrom	Sindurpur
	Ubur Sandil	Berma
4 Tinsoya	Ubur Sandil	Berma
	Badda	Darbaria

	Taraf	The Dominant Clan	Ossuary Villages
5	Kumaripar	Ubur Sandil Badda	Bhul Satara Latadab
6	Gartali	Ubur Sandil Gulgu	Berma Bhula

Even on the lower level of Sadiyali, one does not find the dominance of a single clan over the area. Thus the Sadiyali of Koira under the Taraf Sardar of Panchasardari includes fifteen villages. Seven of these, including the headquarter village of Koira, are dominated by Jaru clan, while three are dominated by Koira clan, two each by Badda and Baghra and one by Gulgu.

Even on the village level, where the dominance of a particular clan may be quite obvious, specially in an ossuary village, the village usually contains members of clans other than the dominant one. For example, in the Parsa clan dominated ossuary village of Madhupur, there are seven other clans forming 55 out of 142 (i.e., 38·7%) Bhumij families in the village. In the Ubursandil clan dominated ossuary village of Berma, there are five other clans including thirteen out of fortyfive (i.e., 28·8%) Bhumij families in the village. In both these cases, it is known that the villages started as uni-ethnic and uni-clan settlements.

On the basis of our existing data, the tentative conclusion is that clans in Barabhum dominated over the ossuary villages. Beyond the village level, however, the higher land revenue and (formerly) military jurisdictions like Sadiyali, Taraf Sardari and the Pargana were not directly based on clan principle. The Taraf Sardars, Sadiyals and village Ghatwal, however, invariably belonged to lineages within the dominant, or one of the dominant, clans of the area. The territorial system of Barabhum appears to be a later superimposition by an evolved feudalistic political structure on archaic clan areas. The historic steps by which the structural reference moved from "clan to territory" cannot be ascertained (Sinha 1962 : 44-47).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### NOTES ON COMMUNITY STRUCTURE IN FIVE VILLAGES OF PARGANA BARABHUM

#### A. DAMAN TANR : A SMALL BHUMIJ-DOMINATED VILLAGE

Daman Tanr is a Bhumij-dominated village where the Bhumij occupy the posts of Ghatwal, Tanbedar and Laya ; the Ghatwal and the Laya belong to the Hembrom clan whose ossuary is within the village boundary. This village is situated about two miles to the south of Balarampur town. It has thirtynine families with a total population of 145 persons, who are distributed castewise as follows : Bhumij—36 families, 132 persons ; Brahman—1 family, 3 persons ; Vaishnab—1 family, 2 persons ; Tanti—1 family, 7 persons. The Bhumij claim to be the earliest settlers in the village who cleared the jungles. Daman Tanr has an area of 218·77 acres and a population of 66 per acre.

One Daman Singh, the ancestor of the present Ghatwal and Laya, belonging to the Hembrom clan, is said to be the founder of the village, and had settled in the village four generations ago. The “degraded” Brahman, Tanti and Vaishnab all bastard issues of Bhumij concubines, have settled here later on.

The village does not have any regular off-shoot hamlet. The huts, however, form two slightly separate lane clusters, known as the Namokulhi (with 18 families) and the Upar Kulhi (with 21 families).

Agriculture is the principal source of livelihood of all the thirtythree Bhumij families ; agricultural labour is the main livelihood of only one family, whereas two families live mainly on their earning from labour in shellac factories at Balarampur. Agricultural labour is the subsidiary source of income of nine families, shellac labour of three families and day labour only of one family.

The main unifying features of this village are : a compact settlement, sharing the offices of the Ghatwal, the Tanbedar and the Laya in common, common Sacred Grove or *Jahira*, common set of festivals like *Sarhul* and the dominance of a single caste, i.e., the Bhumij.

Among the extensions of the village may be mentioned the following :

Out of eightyseven cases of marriage, brides have been brought from sixtythree villages, mostly lying within a radius of twenty miles ; but a few lying even so far as seventy miles. Only in nine cases (i.e., 10·3%) has the bride been selected from the local village.

In fortyfour cases, girls have been given in marriage to forty outside villages, all lying within thirty miles.

Although most of the land cultivated by the people of Daman Tanr fall within the boundary of the *mauza*, this is exclusively so only for seven families. Some plots of land are also held in three other villages lying within two miles of the village, while a few plots are owned as far as Berada, lying ten miles away. A portion of land, falling within Daman Tanr *mauza*, is also owned by forty-four parties belonging to seven villages located within three miles.

The eight families engaged in agricultural labour offer their services to the farmers of four villages lying within one to three miles ; the cultivators of Daman Tanr, in their turn, procure agricultural labour from villages lying within the same range. Some individuals of this village have in recent years gone out even farther in search of jobs—five to Chaibasa (about 75 miles by road) ; one to Tata (32 miles by road) and one as far as Gondia in Madhya Pradesh (over 200 miles by railways).

The villagers go to the permanent shops at Baghadih (one mile), Gado (1½ miles), Balarampur (2 miles) and Bansgarh (1 mile) for the purchase of day to day small scale necessities. For major transactions, such as cereals, cloth, crafts and livestock, they attend mainly the weekly market of Balarampur (2 miles) and occasionally attend the ones at Barabazar (10 miles), Adadih (6 miles) and Urma (8 miles).

The people of Daman Tanr are dependent upon a large number of villages for ritual service. Vaishnab Gurus for the Bhumij families come from five villages lying between one and half and ten miles and their Brahman priests come from Balarampur (2 miles) and Mathia (12 miles). The Brahman, Vaishnab and Tanti families have their separate priests from Balarampur (2 miles) and Chandil (14 miles). But the only Brahman and the only Vaishnab families of this village, due to their "degraded" origin from Bhumij concubine mothers, are not accepted as priest or as Guru by the people of this village or by people in the immediate vicinity.

This village is also served by the Napit and midwife (Sahis caste) of Bansgarh (1 mile), the Dhoba and midwife (Sahis caste) of Chota Gado (1½ miles).

Although the traditional Ghatwali police organization is no longer a living force, in this village, the Ghatwali feels loyal to the Hikim Sahab, the heir to the ex-feudal Chief of the Pargana of Barabhum. The village is also a unit within the recent government sponsored Panchayat organization including four other villages. Jiban Singh Sardar of Daman Tanr is an influential leader of the *Chapra Mazdoor Union* (Lac Labour Union) at Balarampur.

While *Jantal* and *Sarhul* festivals are observed by the villages jointly, *Rohin*, *Karam*, *Jitashtami* and *Karakhunta* are performed *Kulhi*-wise. The villagers also attend *Ratha Jatra* and *Durga Puja* at Balarampur (2 miles), *Ind Parab* at Barabazar (10 miles), *Chata Parab* at Chakultor (15 miles) and *Makar Parab* at Satighata (27 miles) and so on. People from the adjacent villages, lying within two miles or so, attend some of the festivals in Daman Tanr.

As the Brahmans and the Vaishnabs of this village are born, within living memory, out of Bhumij concubines of Brahman and Vaishnab fathers, the Bhumij of Daman Tanr do not extend due caste status to these "fallen" caste members. The Bhumij do not even accept water or cooked food from them and regard these "fallen" members as lower in caste rank to themselves. The former, in their turn, do not accept the assigned low position and also do not take water and cooked food from the Bhumij.

#### B. BARA SUSNI: AN ARTISAN-DOMINATED VILLAGE\*

The village of Bara Susni, lying about six miles to the south-east of Barabazar, has a population of 738 persons (152 families), belonging to eleven castes, among whom the Mahato dominate in number. Covering an area of 775.76 acres, the village has a population density of .95 per acre.

The village is divided into five settlement clusters, which are situated at a distance of one or two furlongs from one another. These hamlets are named after the castes which were the earliest to settle in that particular hamlet: Mudi Kuli, Kumhar Kuli, Mahatodih, Bagaldih and Banumber. These hamlets have been formed mainly for the sake of convenience in agricultural operations.

\* An account of this village has been given by Hemendra Nath Banerjee in "Community Structure in an Artisan Village of Pargannah Barabhum", *Journal of Social Research*, vol. 3, no. 1, March 1960, pp. 68-79.

Within the hamlet, the various domiciles and members of a lineage tend to live in adjacent houses. The caste and lineage composition of this village, on the basis of different *tolas*, has been given below :

TABLE 12

*The Hamlets and their Inhabitants in Bara Susni*

Hamlets	The Ethnic groups in the Hamlets	Names of Ethnic groups	Lineages	Families	Persons
Mudi Kuli		Mahato	2	4	34
		Kora Mudi	1	6	25
Kumhar Kuli		Kumhar	9	57	279
		Moirā	2	5	25
		Kora Mudi	1	2	9
Mahatodih		Bhumij	1	4	24
		Kamar	3	8	35
		Jolha	2	4	11
		Mahato	13	41	202
Bagaldih		Bagal	3	10	32
		Bhumij	1	1	3
		Gorai	1	1	9
		Muchi	1	4	23
Bamunber		Brahman	1	5	27
TOTAL		11 Castes	41	152	738

Thus Kumhar Kuli with 3 castes, 64 families and 313 people is the largest hamlet. The other hamlets may be arranged as follows in an order from large to small : Mahatodih (4 castes, 19 lineages, 57 families and 272 people), Bagaldih (4 castes, 6 lineages, 16 families, 67 people), Mudikulhi (2 castes, 3 lineages, 10 families, 59 people), and Bamunber (1 caste, 1 lineage, 5 families, 27 people). The castes may be arranged as follows in terms of numerical strength :

Ethnic Groups	Families	People
Kumhar	57	279
Mahato	45	236
Kamar	8	35
Kora Mudi	8	34
Bagal	10	32
Brahman	5	27
Bhumij	5	27
Moirā	5	25

Muchi	4	23
Jolha	4	11
Gorai	1	9
TOTAL 11 Castes	152	738

It is said that one Arjun Laya, a Bhumij from 'Nagpur' side (i.e., Chota Nagpur) was the first person to settle down in this village by clearing jungles. Then gradually, the members of the following castes came here in succession: the Kumhar, Mahato, Brahman, Moira, Kora Mudi, Bagal, Kamar, Jolha and so on. The first settlement dates to five generations ago, i.e., nearly 125 years.

Three-fourths of this village is owned by a Oriya Brahman as *Brahmattar*, and the rest is held by a Bhumij through Ghatwali right. The total amount of cultivable land in Baro Susni is about 271 acres out of which only 6% belong to outside villagers while the rest, i.e., 94%, belong to permanent members of the village. The major portion of the cultivable land is in the hands of the Brahman, Bhumij, Mahato and the Kumhar. There are only three sacred spots in the village: the *Jahira*, *Shibthan* and *Hari Mela*. Gopal Laya, a Bhumij, is the priest of the *Jahira*, where religious festivals are observed in *Asadh* (June-July) and *Magh* (January-February) for the entire village community. *Chait Parab* is the most important festival connected with *Shib Mela*. The festivals at *Hari Mela*, however, are limited to the people of Kumhar Kuli and Bamun-Ber. As in the village of Baikunthapur, here too the Muslim Jolha donate subscriptions for these common festivals of the village, though they do not have any active role in these. On the other hand, the Hindu residents of the village also give donations in the major Muslim festivals.

In Bara Susni, we are told that the first formal Panchayat was formed only about 30 years ago in order to settle intra-village disputes. But the Panchayat is now in a moribund condition, while Gauri Shankar Tripathi is the *Mukhiya* of the village council.

These are only two common officials for the village as a whole, namely, the *Ghatwal*, or the village Headman and *Chawkidar*, the village Peon. The *Chawkidar* has to attend to the duties of two other adjacent villages. There are also two sacred officials, i.e., the Bhumij *Laya* of the *Jahira* and the Brahman Priest of *Shib Mela*.

Although Bara Susni is a revenue village or a *mauza* with specified boundaries, the villagers do not have any definite idea about the boundary of their own village. Sometimes, they are



inclined to include some of the nearby *tolas* of the neighbouring revenue villages within the social jurisdiction of their own village. Again, on some occasions, they call the different major *tolas* of the same village as *mauzas* or villages.

Besides accepting the Headmanship of the *Ghatwal*, the people of Bara Susni are also aware of the traditional larger centre of power at Barabazar, the headquarters of Barabhum Raj. Although the political and even land revenue functions of the Raja are now all gone, yet the Raja of Barabhum and his agnates are much respected by the people of Bara Susni who belong to the Taraf Garatali, traditionally under the direct control of the Raja. Recent partition of former Manbhum district, however, has cut a wedge through the former affiliations of Bara Susni. In general administration and land revenue organization, Bara Susni has no longer any tie with Barabazar. Its law and order is now controlled by the police station of Patamda (10 miles), whereas, Revenue Organization is under the jurisdiction of the Block Development-cum-Revenue Officers at Bangurda (6 miles).

Examining the genealogies of all the Kumhar families of Bara Susni, it was observed that although there was a marked tendency for the members of a lineage to live together in a single village, and within that village, as far as possible, in a single neighbourhood, lineage groups and territorial segments of a village are by no means congruous. Not only do we find people of other castes and lineages enmeshed in a neighbourhood dominated by a single lineage, we also find members of a single lineage being distributed over adjacent, as well as widely scattered villages. Out of families represented by nine different lineages of the Kumhar of this village fortyseven families (about 58%) reside in Bara Susni while the rest live in outside villages distributed in five police stations: Chandil, Patamda, Manbazar, Balarampur and Bandyon.

Affinal ties link this village with a greater number of villages. Out of 162 marriage cases in all the 57 Kumhar families of this village, only 23 (i.e., 14.2%) were performed within the village and the rest of 139 marriages (i.e., 85.8%) were with 39 outside villages distributed over eight different police stations in the former district of Manbhum.

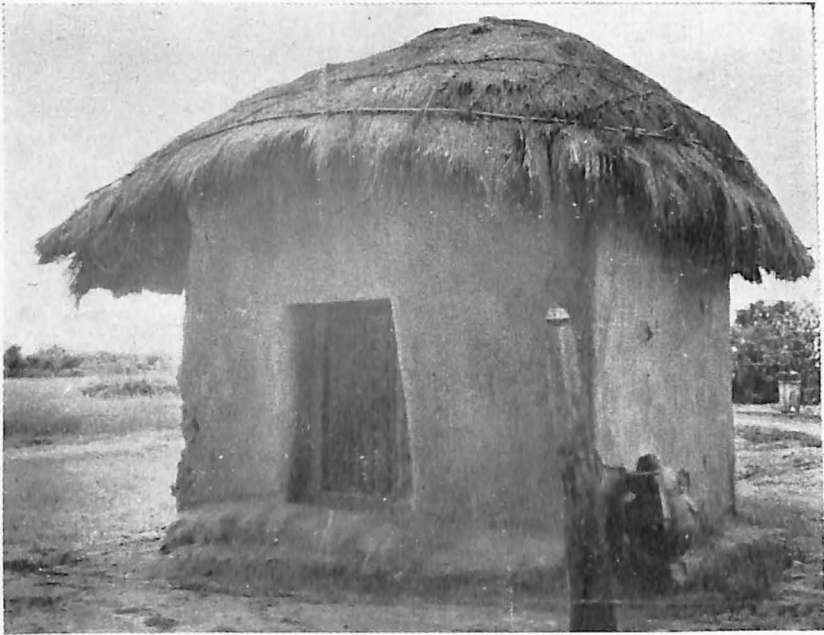
The artisan castes of Bara Susni, namely, the Potters, Blacksmiths, Weavers, and Leather-workers do not limit the supply of their products to the people of this village but also move to outside villages for the sale of their wares. They also visit the weekly market of Barabazar, lying about five miles away.



Hari Mela



A troupe of chhanu dancers rehearsing



Shib Mela situated at an outskirts of the village



Newly built Chaitanya temple at Dhadkidih

As in other villages described before, here too the ritual servants such as the Brahman Priest, the Vaishnab Guru, the Napit and the Sahis (midwife) serve several other villages besides Bara Susni.

The occupation of the various ethnic groups has been given below :

TABLE 13

*Main Occupation of the Ethnic Groups of Bara Susni*

Main occupation of the following no. of families

Ethnic Groups	Agricul ture	Agricul. Labour	Other Kinds of Labour	Craft	Trade	Misc.	Total
Kumhar	32	22	3	—	—	—	57
Mahato	36	3	3	—	2	1	45
Bagal	6	—	4	—	—	—	10
Kora Mudi	1	1	6	—	—	—	8
Kamar	—	—	8	—	—	—	8
Brahman	5	—	—	—	—	—	5
Bhumij	4	—	1	—	—	—	5
Moirā	5	—	—	—	—	—	5
Muchi	—	—	4	—	—	—	4
Jolha	4	—	—	—	—	—	4
Kolu	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
TOTAL	93	26	30	—	2	1	152

It is interesting to note in the above table that with the exception of the Leather worker, Muchi (whose male members now earn their livelihood by working in shoe-making shops in Tatanagar), no member of the other artisan castes in the village depends mainly on their craft. Out of 57 Kumhar families, not a single Kumhar lives mainly on pottery.

In general, the lowest caste groups such as the Kora Mudi, Kamar, Muchi and the Jolha are also among the lowest economic classes, particularly in landholding. But, besides the higher castes like the Brahman and Moira, a number of castes in intermediate and somewhat low position like the Kumhar, Mahato, and Bhumij have a fair share of the "rich" and "substantial class" families in the village. A little over half of the total families of this village belong to the "poor" and "landless" class—while "Ordinary", "Substantial" and "Rich" classes cover 15%, 12% and 21% of the families, respectively.

The Hindus are inclined to leave aside the case of the Muslim Jolhas while assessing the relative rank of the different castes.

The overall picture is as follows: the Brahman at the top followed by the Moira, Kumhar, Mahato, Bagal, Kulu, and the Bhumij in succession. The Moira, Kumhar and the Bagal are usually regarded as "clean" castes, as the Brahman can take drinking water from them. The Bhumij are regarded as a low caste, *nichu jat*, in spite of their being the earliest settlers of the village. Three castes, the Kamar, Kora Mudi and the Muchi are placed at the lowest position for their lowly food habits and social customs such as taking beef, pork, wine and practice of widow remarriage.

### C. DARDA : A LARGE MULTI-ETHNIC VILLAGE

With a population of 237 families and 1,125 people belonging to ten ethnic groups, Darda is a fairly large village in Taraf Tinsays, lying four miles to the south of the town of Balarampur. The major ethnic groups in the village are: the Mahato (87 families: 419 persons), the Santal (81 families: 375 persons) and the Bhumij (37 families: 187 persons). The rest of the seven castes form only 32 families and 144 people. The village covers an area of 1267.96 acres, and the density of population is .88 per acre.

The five hamlets are located on widely scattered patches of barren uplands, leaving relatively the low land for cultivation. The portion exclusively used for cultivation forms nearly 80% of the area of the village. The Mahato, Bhumij and the Santal hold more than 36% of this land, and the remaining portion is held by the other seven castes. About 9% of the village land is owned by the residents of nine other neighbouring villages. The villagers of Darda, in their turn, have some cultivable plots in three other villages.

In matters of share cropping also, this village has interaction with six or seven neighbouring villages with whom they also interchange agricultural labour. Loan of paddy is taken mostly from a few well known paddy lenders in the villages of Kurni, Barabazar and Hurumda.

Darda does not have a common *Jahira* or *Laya* for the entire population. There are three *Jahiras* and corresponding *Layas* in the three hamlets of Darda Bustee, Saldih and Dhaddkidih. The residents of Kashidih Tola take part in the *Jahira* of the adjacent village of Burudih. The existence of three separate *Jahiras* in a single village may partially be explained by the fact of distance between the *tolas*. Partial social segregation of the Santal may explain their having separate *Jahiras* in the hamlets of Saldih and

Dhaddkidih exclusively lived by them. There are, however, some festivals in which the village as a whole participates. Among these are: *Kali Puja* in *Kali Mela*, *Manasa Puja* in *Manasa Mela*, *Chait Parab* in *Shib Mela*, *Namasamkirtana* at *Hari Mela*. A Vaishnab from Tumrasol (Barabazar Police Station) conducts the functions at *Hari Mela*, while a Brahman from Bongapatam (6 miles) conducts rituals at *Shib Mela*.

The Bhumij *Ghatwal* Jaynarayan Singh looks after law and order in the village as a semi-official link of the regular police organization. In this, he is assisted by three *Tanbedars*. The village *Chowkidar* also serves Burudih, an adjacent village. The traditional gathering of the elders is no longer functioning in this village. This has been formally replaced by the Government sponsored Panchayat Organisation in which Darda forms a cluster with 11 other neighbouring villages.

Out of 699 marriage cases, covering all the castes in the village, in only 78 cases (11%) marriages are within the village. The rest of 591 (89%) marriages involve 310 outside villages. Majority of these marriages fall within 9 Police Station areas: Patamda, Balarampur, Barabazar, Chandil, Bandoyan, Purulia, Bughmundi, and Manbazar lying within a radius of approximately 25 miles.

We have already mentioned about the ritual service of the Brahman and the Vaishnab coming from the distant villages in connection with *Pujas* in *Shib Mela* and *Hari Mela*. The villagers require many more such specialists. Thus, altogether 13 Brahmans, who come from 10 different villages of Balarampur and Barabazar Police Stations serve the various castes of Darda on special festive occasions and also in the rites of passage. The Santal and the Jolha do not get ritually initiated by the Vaishnab Guru but all the other castes in the village have Vaishnab Gurus, and this village is unusually generous in patronizing Vaishnabs. About 73 Vaishnabs from 61 villages of Pargana Barabhum are thus connected with Darda. Washermen come from 4 villages. The Nاپit of Darda mainly serve their own villagers and so do the Sahis midwives. The people of the hamlets Dhaddkidih and Saldih, who live at quite some distance from the main *bustee*, get the service of the barber and midwife from villages relatively close to them.

The three Kamar families of Darda Bustee supply iron implements to their own villages and also to the people of the adjacent hamlet of the neighbouring village of Chakulia. On the other

hand, the people of Dhadkidih, Kashidih and Saldih hamlets of Darda get the service of the blacksmiths of the adjacent hamlets of the villages of Burudih, Juradih and Rapkata, respectively.

Thus, we find that some of the *tolas* of the village bordering adjacent *tolas* of other villages have more interaction with the latter *tolas* than with the major *bustee* of his own revenue *mauza*.

The dominating cultivating castes like the Bhumij and the Mahato and the minor and the poor castes gave two different kinds of statements regarding the position of the various castes in the village in a ranked order :

Rank	<i>Evaluation by the dominant Castes</i>	<i>Evaluation by the minor and poor castes</i>
1	Brahman	Brahman, Vaishnab
2	Vaishnab	Bhumij
3	Bhumij	Napit
4	Mahato	Mahato, Santal
5	Santal, Napit	Sahis
6	Kamar )	Jolha, Kamar
7	Tanti, Dom, Sahis, Muchi	Dom, Tanti, Muchi
8	Jolha	

The lower castes rank the Vaishnab with the Brahman and place the Jolha as higher than the lowest rung. The higher castes, on the other hand, place the Brahman higher than the Vaishnab and allot the Jolha the lowest rank.

#### D. SINDHRI : A LARGE VILLAGE WITH SOME URBAN FEATURES

The village of Sindhri lying at the border of Barabhum and Manbhum Parganas, immediately attracts our attention for its urban characters, which, however, are not so pronounced as in the cases of Barabazar and Balarampur towns (*Supra*, Chapter IV). The total population of 2,108 persons (364 families) belong to as many as 23 ethnic groups, i.e., four times the average number of castes living in a village of Pargana Barabhum. In population size also, it is nearly five times the size of an average village in this area. There is a fairly high proportion of traders and recent immigrant castes. The village again is the site for an important weekly market, and it also contains 15 permanent shops (compare 107 and 182 shops in Barabazar and Balarampur, respectively). There is also a Tehsil Officer of the Revenue Department posted at Sindhri, and it is the headquarters of a Thana Welfare Officer.

Even with all these urban-like features, Sindhri is an essentially rural settlement. More than half of its population is dependent upon agriculture as the main source of livelihood, and the major bulk of the land tilled by them also lies within the boundary of the *mauza*. The village covers an area of 1231.6 acres and a population of 1.78 per acre (higher density than the villages described above).

Sindhri lies ten miles to the east of Barabazar, the headquarters town of Pargana Barabhum. The river Nengsai running in between Barabazar and Sindhri remains inundated during the monsoons, rendering any communication between these two settlements extremely difficult. Manbazar, the headquarters town of Manbhum Pargana lying only 11 miles to the east of Sindhri, is likewise separated from Sindhri by the Kumari River which is not easily fordable during the rains. The nearest railway station, i.e., Barabhum lies some 21 miles to the west by road. It is thus quite an enigma how a heterogeneous and large settlement could grow in a location with such barriers for communication. A little probing into the local tradition of settlement of various ethnic groups in the village throws some light in the matter.

It is gathered from local traditions that the Bhumij were the first group of people to settle in this village by clearing jungles. The large number of *kusum* trees in this village made it famous as a centre for lac cultivation. It is said that the Moira and the Gandhabanik used to come with bags of salt on the back of bullocks and halt at Sindhri to dispose a part of their stock in exchange for agricultural products. Sindhri was thus situated on an ancient salt trade route and located centrally between two old market towns of Barabazar and Manbazar. The difficulty of fording rivers was not so much of a problem as transport was exclusively on pack bullocks and trade flourished only during the dry seasons. Some of these early traders, particularly the Moira, settled down in the village as they could visualize the prospect for trade in lac with Sindhri as the base camp. In later years, we find the Moira and the Gandhabanik as lac merchants selling raw lac to Balarampur and such other lac processing centres. The above version of the history of settlement is not fully accepted by the Mahato and a number of other lower caste groups. They claim that the Mahato closely followed the Bhumij in settling in this village. They were followed by the Keont, Moira, Gandhabanik, Chhutor, Tanti and the Muhammedans in succession. The Vaidya and the Brahman are known to be the latest settlers in this village.

While the Bhumij claim to be the autochthones of the village,



the other groups may be arranged as follows in an order of antiquity :

8th generation	Mahato
5th generation	Sahis, Tanti, Keont
4th generation	Bouri, Gandhabanik, Bhuinya, Chhutor, Dhonba, Kumhar, Moira, Sunri, Muchi, Marwari
3rd generation	Gorai, Muhammedan, Napit, Vaishnab
2nd generation	Vaidya, Jolha
1st generation	Brahman

It is clear that the major settlement of the village took place about 3-4 generations ago, i.e., about 75 to 100 years ago. The various communities come from widely scattered locations: the Bauri and Tanti from Dhalbhum; the Gandhabanik, Moira and Kumhar from Burdwan; the Bhuinya and Chhutor from Pancha Police Station, Purulia; the Keont and Sahis from Hura Police Station, Purulia; the Jolha and Napit from within Barabazar Police Station; the Muhammedan traders from Gaya District in Bihar and the Marwari from Rajasthan.

More than 90% of the population live in a single compact settlement with the usual linear arrangement of houses on both the sides of straight or nearly straight lanes and bye-lanes. Only 8 families and 51 persons live in the adjacent *tola* of Murgadih. Within the main settlement of Sindhri, however, there are recognized territorial blocks or *paras*, invariably named after a particular ethnic group which either dominates, or used to dominate in number, in a particular territorial segment.

TABLE 14

*Ethnic Concentration in the Territorial Segments of Sindhri*

Sl. No.	Territorial Segments	Ethnic Groups	No. of Families	Total Ethnic Groups	Total Families
1	Murgadih Tola	Mahato	8	1	8
2	Kabiraj Para	Vaidya	1		
		Bhumij	5		
		Gorai	1		
		Brahman	1	4	8
3	Moira Para	Moira	41		
		Kumhar	6		
		Gandhabanik	6		
		Marwari	1		
		Sunri	3		
		Gorai	6	6	63

TABLE 14—continued

Sl. No.	Territorial Segments	Ethnic Groups	No. of Families	Total Ethnic Groups	Total Families
4	Vaishnab Para	Vaishnab	6		
		Mabaro	9		
		Dhoba	2		
		Napit	1		
		Gorai	4		
		Bhuinya	2		
		Muhammedan	1		
		Gandhabanik	4	8	29
5	Tanti Para	Tanti	5		
		Bhumij	10		
		Gorai	4		
		Napit	2		
		Sunri	2		
		Kumhar	1		
		Brahman	1		
		Chhutor	1	8	26
6	Muchi Para	Muchi	12	1	12
7	Bauri Para	Bauri	13		
		Bhumij	4	2	17
8	Chhutor Para	Chhutor	23		
		Moirā	15		
		Gorai	10		
		Mahato	8		
		Kumhar	4		
		Kamar	1		
		Vaidya	1		
		Tanti	1		
		Gandhabanik	1		
		Dhoba	1	10	65
9	Jeley Para	Keot	13		
		Kumhar	2	2	15
10	Hari Para	Sahis (Hari)	11		
		Muhammedan	7		
		Kumhar	3		
		Bhumij	2		
		Jolha	1	5	24
11	Mahato Para	Mahato	92		
		Napit	4		
		Dhoba	1	3	97

It will be apparent from the above table that while some ethnic groups show a tendency to cluster together in single *paras*

(Keot, Muchi, Barui, Chhutor, Sahis, etc.) there are others who are spread out over a number of *paras* (Bhumij, Mahato, Moira, etc.). There is no tendency to segregate the Muslims or the lowest caste groups like the Sahis, in the layout of the settlement.

The population of 2,108 persons belonging to 23 ethnic groups may be grouped as follows in terms of their traditional calling :

TABLE 15

*Traditional Calling of Ethnic Groups in Sindhri*

Sl. No.	Occupational Categories	Ethnic Groups	Families	Persons	Lineages
A	Priestly castes	Brahman	2	15	3
		Vaishnab	6	35	5
B	Artisan castes	Chhutor (Carpenter)	24	142	3
		Gorai (Oil Presser)	25	141	4
		Kamar (Blacksmith)	1	6	1
		Tanti (Weaver)	6	30	2
		Kumhar (Potter)	16	92	4
		Jolha (Weaver)	1	8	1
		Muchi (Leather worker)	12	62	4
		Moira (Sweet maker)	56	371	12
		Sunri (Wine maker)	5	20	1
		Dhoba (Washerman)	4	15	2
C	Castes with miscellaneous traditional occupations	Napit (Barber)	7	36	2
		Keot (Fisherman)	13	65	5
		Sahis (Midwife)	11	48	5
		Vaidya (Doctor)	2	11	1
		Gandhabanik	11	81	4
		Marwari	1	17	1
		Muhammedan	8	78	7
D	Traders				

TABLE 15—continued

Sl. No.	Occupational Categories	Ethnic Groups	Families	Persons	Lineages
E	Others	Bhumij	21	112	4
		Bhunya	2	16	1
		Mahato	117	603	24
		Bauri	13	104	6
	TOTAL	23 Ethnic Groups	364	2,108	102

The following table gives the distribution of major and subsidiary occupation among the people of Sindhri :

TABLE 16\*

*Occupation of the People of Sindhri*

Sl. No.	Type of Occupation	Main	Subsidiary
1	Agriculture	212	66
2	Craftwork	47	6
3	Daily and agricultural labour	35	19
4	Petty Business	26	3
5	Traditional vocations other than craft	20	—
6	Begging	7	—
7	Tailoring	5	3
8	Service	4	1
9	Medical Practitioner	4	—
10	Large-scale Trade	3	—
11	Priestly work	1	—

Thus about 53·6% of the families depend mainly on agriculture, 14·3% on craft work and 10·6% on agricultural or other form of hired labour. Trade, petty or large-scale, is the main source of livelihood of only 29 families, i.e., 8·8%.

Without the post of a Headman of Ghatwal and the lack of importance of the office of *Laya* or Priest of *Jahira* and *Gramthan* held by the backward Bhumij, the village lacks the sense of unity that one finds in a village like Daman Tanr (*Supra* : 1-4). Of the old sacred sites, the *pūja* at the *Jahira* has been given up for the last 30/40 years, while that of *Gramthan* is precariously maintained by the Bhumij *Laya*. Most of the other sites like *Shib Mandir*, *Hari Mandir*, *Kali Mandir* and *Mansa Mela* were established only 50/60 years ago. Rajani Thakur (Brahman) is the priest of *Shib Mandir*, *Durga Mandir*, *Kali Mandir* and *Ganesh Mela*; while the *pūjas* at *Hari Mandir* is done by a Gosai of Painada Goddi and that at the new *Shibasthan* by a Brahman of the village of Turmasol. It is of interest to note that in seven out of nine sacred spots, Sanskritic Hindu gods and goddesses are worshipped mostly by

\* This is based on 328 out of 364 families in the village.

the Brahman. The Muhammedan families do not contribute anything towards the maintenance of any of these sacred spots other than that of the *Gramthan*.

When the State Government sponsored the organization of Panchayat in this village around 1954, the traditional organization of elders, *Shola Ana*, had already decayed quite far. The present Panchayat is in the form of a confederation of a number of neighbouring villages, i.e., Fatepur (one mile), Ayodhyadih (one mile), Silmingara (2½ miles) and Sindhri. Each of these villages is represented by one member. It is guided by an Administrative Head or *Mukhiya* (caste-Mahato) and a Judicial Head or *Sarpanch* (Caste-Moira) and some other members (Moira—2, Mahato—6, Bhumij—1, Kumhar—1). Two Gramasevaks from the village of Ayodhyadih work in close co-ordination with the Panchayat. The whole organization is under the overall supervision of the Panchayat Supervisor at Barabazar (10 miles). It is competent to deal with petty social crimes and civil cases upto the valuation of 150 rupees.

In December 1959, we came to learn that the Panchayat organization had become defunct, and its responsibilities were being shared by the local School Committee. From 1955 upto the end of 1959, 21 cases dealt with by the Panchayat can be broadly classified into the following ten categories :

Nature of Cases tried	Frequency
Petty rioting	4
Stealing of cow and paddy	4
Concerning trees and plants	3
Disputes over common village path	3
Threats with provocative utterances	2
Concerning irrigation in the field	1
Setting fire to houses	1
Divorce	1
Adultery	1
Disputes over landed property	1
TOTAL	21

Twelve of these cases were between members of the same caste, and in eight cases the troubles were between members of different castes.

It appears that there is considerable tension between the Mahato and the Moira. In this factional polarisation of the two major castes in the village, the Gandhabanik and the Bhumij are said to side with the Moira.

The institutions of inter-caste ceremonial *phul* friendship operates as a healer of inter-caste tension. Some 39 different caste combinations of *phul* friends are met within this village. These involve 95 cases and 190 individuals. The caste combinations have been given below :

1	Bhumij	Mahato	=	10
2	Moirā	Mahato	=	10
3	Keot	Mahato	=	9
4	Bauri	Mahato	=	8
5	Mahato	Mahato	=	6
6	Chhutor	Mahato	=	5
7	Gorai	Mahato	=	4
8	Kumar	Mahato	=	4
9	Muchi	Mahato	=	3
10	Vaisnab	Mahato	=	2
11	Bhumij	Moirā	=	2
12	Muchi	Santal	=	2
13	Bhumij	Gorai	=	2
14	Muhammedan	Mahato	=	2
15	Mahato	Santal	=	1
16	Vaidya	Mahato	=	1
17	Marwari	Mahato	=	1
18	Gorai	Kumhar	=	1
19	Bhuinya	Mahato	=	1
20	Moirā	Rajput	=	1
21	Bauri	Vaisnab	=	1
22	Kumhar	Keot	=	1
23	Gorai	Kumhar	=	1
24	Napit	Bauri	=	1
25	Gorai	Tanti	=	1
26	Keot	Moirā	=	1
27	Mahato	Brahman	=	1
28	Bhumij	Muhammedan	=	1
29	Sunri	Baun	=	1
30	Chhutor	Muhammedan	=	1
31	Sunri	Bhumij	=	1
32	Napit	Mahato	=	1
33	Kumhar	Brahman	=	1
34	Muchi	Bauri	=	1
35	Kamar	Mahato	=	1
36	Keot	Vaisnab	=	1
37	Keot	Bhumij	=	1
38	Sahis	Mahato	=	1
39	Mahato	Jolha	=	1
TOTAL				94

It will be noticed that out of 94 cases in only 6 cases we find the *phul* friends belonging to the same caste, namely, the Mahato. In nearly 2/3 of the total cases of friendship, one of the groups is Mahato. A little over half the cases of friendship are with members of the village itself, whereas in 40 cases the friendship relation extends to persons living in 23 villages living upto a distance of about 16 miles.

This naturally leads us to an examination of the nature of extension of social relations of the villagers of Sindhri.

Besides the Brahmans of their own village, other Brahmans coming from 17 different places serve as priests in 245 families of this village. One of them comes from as far as Mirzapur to officiate as priest. Similarly, Vaishnab Gurus hail from as many as 31 outside settlements. Of these the village of Jitujuri lying about ten miles away supplies Gurus for 47 families.

Examining 733 marriage cases in the lineages of 23 caste groups of this village, we learn that only 105, i.e., 14·9%, of the cases are within the village. In 273 cases (38·8%), daughters of Sindhri moved out of the village at marriage and in 355 (i.e., 50·4%) cases brides have been taken in. As a result, Sindhri is in social tie with 270 other villages in 11 districts in the States of West Bengal, Bihar and Rajasthan.

The seven artisan groups of this village, i.e., Kumhar, Kamar, Chhutor, Gorai, Muchi, Tanti and Jolha, besides attending the weekly market of their own village, and also occasionally visiting those of Barabazar (10 miles to the west) and Manbazar (11 miles to the east) also hawk with their products in the neighbouring villages lying within a radius of five miles.

About 210 families of Sindhri also own some cultivable plots beyond their own village. During the agricultural season substantial farmers hire labourers from Kaparra (12 miles), Phuljhor (3 miles south), Babuijhor (4 miles south), Laka (3 miles east), and Fatepur (1 mile east).

Male members of 20 families of this village are currently engaged in earning their livelihood by labour, service or trade in five other fairly distant places. For example: 2 Tanti and 1 Garai families have gone to Burdwan for labour work; 4 Moira and 2 Benia families have gone to Purulia town for petty business; 3 Vaishnab families have gone to Purulia to work as copyist; 1 Benia and 2 Mahato families have gone to Burdwan for service; 1

Muhammedan family has gone to Rourkella for service and 3 Moira families have gone as far as Benares for service, and so on.

The seven tailors of this village belonging to the castes Bhumij and Muhammedan regularly receive business orders from seven villages besides their own. The art of tailoring was introduced in this village by one Gafar Seikh (58 years) whose grandfather had migrated into this village from Gaya District. The fifteen shops of this village, as detailed below, supply the day to day requirements of the people residing about five miles around: grocery—2 shops run by the Benia and the Brahman; Cloth—3 shops run by the Muhammedan; betel, *biddi*, etc.—3 shops run by the Moira; sweetmeat—6 shops run by the Moira; petty stationery—1 shop run by Moira; and hemp—1 shop run by the Sunri.

The weekly market of this village sits on every Thursday. From one day's reconnoitre survey of this market we learnt that 24 different castes came to sell their commodities, and they hailed from villages mostly lying within 11 miles around.

The local junior high school is imparting upper primary education to 154 students coming from 18 different hamlets scattered over a radius of 8 miles.

On emergent occasions, the villagers call on the physicians Annada Das Gupta of Manbazar (11 miles) or Jyoti Modak of Barabazar (10 miles), while the local medical practitioners, in their turn, are called on by the people of Manbazar (11 miles), Barabazar (10 miles), Bandoya (14 miles), and Bangurda (8 miles).

Four persons, belonging to the four categories of castes in the village, namely, artisans, priests, agriculturists and miscellaneous low caste groups, were interviewed regarding their notion about the relative rank of the 23 castes living in the village. The responses have been given below:

TABLE 17  
*Caste Hierarchy in Sindhri*

As Judged by:

Ranks	A Kamar (Artisan caste)	A Gosai (Priestly caste)	A Mahato (Agricultural caste)	A Bauri (Lowly caste)
1	Brahman	Brahman	Brahman	Brahman, Vaidya
2	Vaidya	Vaidya	Vaidya	Vaishnab, Marwari



Ranks	A Kamar (Artisan caste)	A Gosai (Priestly caste)	A Mahato (Agricultural caste)	A Bauri (Lowly caste)
3	Moira, Benia	Benia, Moira, Tanti, Vaishnab	Mahato, Moira, Benia, Kumhar, Napit	Moira, Benia, Kumhar, Keot, Napit
4	Napit	Mahato, Kumhar, Chhutor, Bhumij, Gorai, Keot, Marwari, Kamar, Sunri	Vaishnab, Marwari	Muchi, Bauri
5	Kumhar	Muchi, Bauri, Sahis, Dhoba, Bhuinya, Tanti	Sahis, Dhoba, Kamar, Sunri, Chhutor, Keot	Mahato, Bhumij, Chhutor, Gorai, Tanti, Kamar, Sunri
6	Marwari	Jolha, Muhammedan	Muchi, Bauri	Muhammedan, Jolha
7	Vaishnab		Muhammedan, Jolha	Sahis, Bhuinya, Dhoba
8	Mahato			
9	Garai			
10	Kamar			
11	Chhutor			
12	Bhuinya			
13	Keot, Bhumij			
14	Muhamme- dans, Sunri, Tanti, Muchi, Dhoba, Barui			

It will be noticed that the Brahman is given the highest position by all the informants, while the Vaidya occupy either the next or even equal position as the Brahman. The Jolha and the other Muslims invariably occupy a very low position—usually the lowest or very close to it. The other groups of the same rank are Sahis, Muchi and Bauri. The Moira and the Gandhabanik have been given the third position by all, and the Napit is regarded more or less of the same status. The lower caste groups tend to rate the Vaishnab as higher than the Moira and the Benia, whereas some other informants rate the Vaishnab as being a little lower.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE TOWNS OF BARABAZAR AND BALARAMPUR

#### BARABAZAR : THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE RAJA OF BARABHUM

As the bus from Balarampur to Bandoyan moves into Barabazar and stops at the *Chawk*, "the crossing of the four roads", one gets the view of a number of shops huddled together on both the sides of the lanes. One immediately senses that this settlement cluster is more complex than a "village", although paddy fields surround it from all sides. A reconnoitre of the town brings into relief four important sectors of the culture landscape: The partially ruined imposing palace or *garh* (fort) of the Raja and the attached temple courtyard, some multi-storeyed brick buildings of the Marwari traders, some establishments of the government such as police station, post and telegraph office, and the forsaken establishments of the English owned Midnapore Zemindary Company in the *Sahib Para*. Even by looking at the houses one would get the impression that the establishments of the Marwari traders, and of the State and the Federal Governments, have grown at the cost of the earlier establishments of the Raja and his leaseholder, Midnapore Zemindary Company (see Chapter I: 7-8).

Barabazar was the headquarters village of the independent Raja of Barabhum Pargana when the British first occupied the territory around 1767 A.D. The village did not have a single brick-built building then. The earlier group of castes that then clustered around the Raja were the Bhumij, Brahmans (mostly Oriya), Lohar Manjhi, Moira, Keont and Bauri. Later on, with the establishment of British authority and with the coming of Robert Watson Company and their successor Midnapore Zemindary Company, there was a rapid influx of population into the area including the Kayastha, Tamli, Subarnabanik, and so on. One of the last groups to settle in this village was the Marwari. Today Barabazar has a population of 4,183 persons (excluding boarders of two High Schools) belonging to 758 families and 29 ethnic groups (Table 18). With the boarders, the population comes to 4,307: male 2,377 (55.19%) and female 1,930 (44.81%).

It is interesting to note that in this Headquarters settlement of the Raja, the three dominant ethnic groups of the Pargana, the Mahato, Santal and the Bhumij, together comprise only 26 families and 99 persons (that is, only 2.35% of the population). Here the Moira is the largest ethnic group, followed by the Lohar Manji and the Chhattri. The various Brahman groups together form 10.57% of the population.

TABLE 18  
*Ethnic Groups in Barabhum*

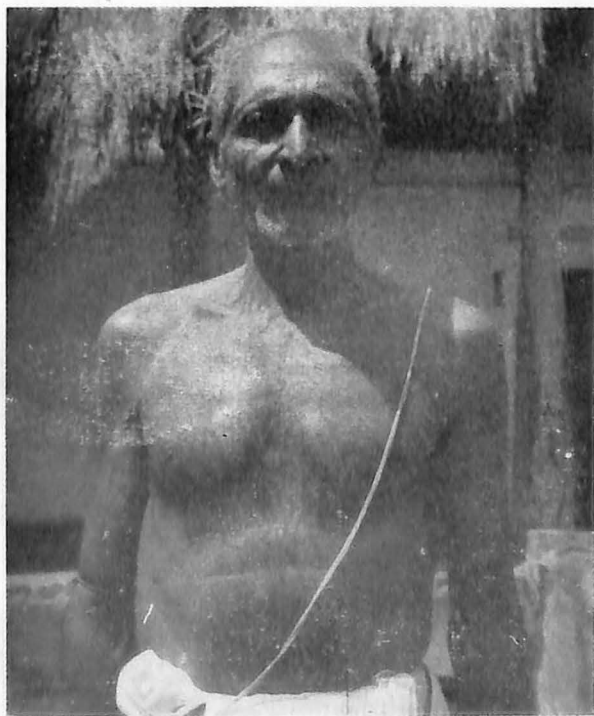
Sl. No.	Ethnic Groups	No. of Families	No. of Males	No. of Females	Total Population	% of Population of Barabazar
1	Moirā	102	342	305	647	15.42
2	Lohar Manjhi	99	237	220	457	10.90
3	Chhatrī	71	214	162	376	8.97
4	Muhammedans	45	147	138	285	6.80
5	Marwari	39	156	118	274	6.53
6	Brahmans (Bengali)	41	116	114	230	5.49
7	Subarnabanik	37	119	104	223	5.32
8	Keot	50	112	93	205	4.89
9	Tamli	29	103	85	188	4.48
10	Brahman (Oriya)	33	97	80	177	4.22
11	Kayastha	21	87	67	154	3.67
12	Bauri	26	72	65	137	3.27
13	Dhoba	21	59	48	107	2.55
14	Sahis	18	56	51	107	2.55
15	Ekadash Teli	16	49	41	90	2.15
16	Bhumij	21	46	36	82	1.96
17	Vaidya	10	41	36	77	1.84
18	Bhuinya	13	36	30	66	1.57
19	Dom	14	27	27	54	1.29
20	Muchi	9	28	24	52	1.24
21	Napit	7	24	18	42	1.00
22	Brahman (others)	4	20	17	37	0.88
23	Gorai	8	18	15	33	0.79
24	Kamar	7	17	19	36	0.86
25	Gope (Bagal)	3	12	8	20	0.48
26	Santal (Christian)	3	6	8	14	0.33
27	Vaishnab	4	6	6	12	0.29
28	Bagti	5	4	4	8	0.19
29	Mahato	2	2	1	3	0.07
	TOTAL	758	2,253	1,940	4,193	100.00

Although the different named sections of the town are not exclusively lived by single ethnic groups, these sections have characteristic clustering of castes. 225 families (about 29.4%) live in Raja Para, the section surrounding the Raja's palace; another 337 families (about 43.7%) live along the two adjacent streets of Namopara and Uparpara. The rest of 206 families (26.9%) are scattered over 10 other sections: Bhumij Para, Teli Para, Bagal Para, Nilmohanpur, Dom Para and Bandoyan Road (Table 19).

From Table 19, we learn that of the 14 *paras*, 5 are lived by 10-14 ethnic groups, 3 by 7-9 groups, 2 by 4 groups, 2 by 2 groups and only 1 by a single ethnic group. The groups that live in Raja



A part of Barabhum Raja's palace at Barabazar



An Utkal Brahmin—the royal priest



Thana Welfare Centre at Barabazar



Homestead of the Ghatowal of Madhupur-Bhangat village

TABLE 19

*Ethnic Groups and Territorial Segments of Barabazar*

## No. of Families Living in Various Territorial Segments

Ethnic Groups	Raja Para	Namo Para	Upar Para	Bhumij Para	Teli Para	Ghosh Para	Hari Para	Saheb Para	Majhi Para	Bagal Para	Nilmo-hanpur	Dom Para	Bandoyan Road	Total
Brahmans	20	4	37	4	2		3	5			1		2	78
Bagti	5													5
Bauri	14			1	7			4						26
Bhuinya	8	4						1						13
Bhumij	2	10						5		3	1			21
Chhatri	66		2	1				2						71
Dhoba	2		19											21
Dom	5							2				7		14
Ekadash Teli				1	15									16
Gope (Bagal)										3				3
Gorai	8													8
Kayastha			1	4	3	7	2	2			2			21
Keot		50												50
Kamar	6				1									7
Lohar Manjhi	37	34	8		15				5					99
Mahato								1				1		2
Muchi				8			1							9
Movra	34	22	12	19	5		4			4	1	1		102
Marwari	13	2	6	13	1	2	1		1					39
Muhammadan		40		1				4						45
Napit			2	2	3									7
Santal											3			3
Sahis	2					1	12				1	2		18
Subarnabanik		33		2			2							37
Tamli		10	6	6	4		3							29
Vaidya			7	1	1		1							10
Vaishnab			4											4
TOTAL	222	209	194	63	57	10	29	26	6	10	9	11	2	758

Para and the two adjacent sections of Upar Para and Namo Para have been traditionally associated with the Raja. The Chhatri people are the agnates or the affines of the Raja ; the Lohar Manjhi, Bagti, Bauri and Dom were traditional attendants of the Raja ; the Muhammedans served the palace in taking care of the horses and, later on, in masonry work ; the Moiras supplied the Raja with sweets for festivals and rituals and also assisted in administration, and the Brahmans still conduct the elaborate religious rituals of the Raj family. The groups traditionally associated with the Raj family still cover more than half the population of Barabhum.

Table 20 gives an idea of the main and subsidiary occupations of the people of Barabazar.

TABLE 20  
*Occupation of the People of Barabazar*

Type of occupation	As main occupation for the no. of families ; percentage of the total no. of families	As subsidiary occupation for the no. of families ; percentage of the total no. of families
Labour (non-agricul- tural)	181 (24·18%)	17 (2·24%)
Craft and traditional occupations	152 (19·79%)	26 (3·38%)
Petty trade	150 (19·78%)	12 (1·56%)
Service	130 (17·15%)	8 (1·04%)
Agriculture	103 (13·59%)	214 (28·23%)
Large-scale trade	11 (1·44%)	—
Begging	7 (·92%)	—
Agricultural labour	4 (·52%)	5 (·66%)
Miscellaneous	20 (2·63%)	2 (·26%)
None	0 (0%)	474 (62·63%)
TOTAL	758 (100·00%)	758 (100·00%)

From Table 20, we find that only 13·59% of the families live mainly on agriculture. Agriculture, however, is a subsidiary source of livelihood for 28·23% of the families. That is, about 41·82% are connected with agriculture as a source of occupation. Daily labour is the single most important source of livelihood and covers 24·18% of the families. Apart from agriculture, there is not much else as subsidiary occupation ; about 67·63% of the families are without any subsidiary occupation. It is also of interest to note that although many members of the artisan and occupational castes no longer pursue their traditional occupation as their main or even subsidiary source of livelihood, there has been very little encroachment on the traditional occupations by outside castes.



An adivasi hostel at Barabazar



Hospital at Barabazar





Church at Barabazar



Ind tanr or the arena for Ind festival

The people of Barabazar may again be broadly categorized into six economic classes (Table 21).

TABLE 21  
*Economic Classes in Barabazar*

Economic Class (occupations)	No. of Families	Percentage
Very Rich (large-scale trading and the Raja of Barabhum)	26	3.42
Rich (petty trading and agriculture and/or service)	50	6.60
Substantial Cultivators	203	26.78
Ordinary Cultivators	24	3.17
Poor (agricultural or non-agricultural labour)	447	58.97
Very poor (begging)	8	1.06
TOTAL	758	100.00

The first group (Very Rich) includes only a few Marwaris and perhaps the nearly bankrupt Raja of Barabhum whose assets are still quite substantial. The Kayastha, Moira and the Subarnabanik mainly form the "Rich" class, while the Bauri, Dom, Sahis and the Lohar Manjhi form the bulk of the "Poor" class. The economic ruin of most of the agnates of the Raja becomes apparent even to a casual observer. Many of them have taken resort to making *bidi* and some have taken to ordinary labourers' jobs with the Marwari traders. While the Raja and his dependents and associates have been economically ruined, the immigrant Marwari traders dealing in export of rice and lac and import of groceries, kerosene oil, clothes and stationeries, dominate the economic scene. Among the earlier inhabitants, only the Moira have retained some economic power.

In 1800, when Strachey wrote his report on Barabhum, there was not a single brick-built house in the Pargana (Strachey, 1800). Even today, 641 families (85%) live in mud houses and 103 have brick-built houses. 14 families have both brick and mud-built houses. Only 17 families live in double-storeyed brick houses. With the exception of two, these are owned by the Marwari traders. The Marwaris also own a bus and a truck service on Purulia-Bandoyan Road.

The Barabazar High School was founded as an M. E. School in 1882, and rose to the High School status in 1942. This now has a strength of 424 students (412 boys, 12 girls). The students come from 32 villages situated 7 miles around Barabazar. In 1956, another High School was started on account of local factionalism,

and this now has 328 students (325 boys and 3 girls) who come from 26 villages lying within a radius of 10 miles.

Literacy among the males today is 44·40%, while among the females it is only 13·5%. There are only 9 persons, all male, with post-graduate degree or with graduate degree in Medicine or in Engineering. Details of the state of education, which is, of course, much higher and more broad-ranged than in the "villages" in the Pargana, have been given below (Table 22) :

TABLE 22  
*Literacy and Education in Barabazar*

Category of Education	M a l e			F e m a l e		
	Persons	% of total men	% of total literate men	Persons	% of total female	% of total literate female
Up to L. P.	443	18·6	42·0	170	8·8	65·1
L.P. to M. E.	273	11·5	25·7	62	3·2	23·8
M.E. to School				27	1·4	10·3
Final	300	12·6	28·4	2	0·1	0·8
School Final to B.A.	32	1·3	3·0			
Post Graduate Education or Medical/Engineering						
Graduates	9	0·4	0·9	—	—	—
TOTAL	1,057	44·4	100·0	261	13·5	100·0

Apart from its high level of ethnic heterogeneity, large population, concentration of wealth in a few families, Barabazar is also unique in the rather wide spatial range of socio-economic connections of its members. Out of 320 agriculturists, if we examine the case of 229 families, we find that only 63 have their lands exclusively within Barabazar Mauza, while the rest of 166 families cultivate lands primarily within a radius of 10 miles and secondarily within 200 miles. These 229 families have in total 21,513 *bighas* of land of which only 980 *bighas* lie within Barabazar.

Members of 17 caste groups in Barabazar are tied to 48 other Indian towns in connection with service, trading and seasonal or permanent labour. The Kayasthas have sent the largest number to outside towns as service-holders. Many petty traders and 7 shop owners of Barabazar visit the weekly markets of Balarampur (11 miles), Bandoyan (16 miles), Dhadka (16 miles), Sindhri (10 miles), and Bamandiha (5 miles) with local and imported commodities. The owners of the local 107 shops purchase their articles on wholesale rates from dealers at Balarampur (11 miles), Purulia

(26 miles), Tata (48 miles) and Calcutta (242 miles). Barabazar does not have some of the essential artisan castes like the Mahali (basketmakers), Jolha (weavers), and Kumhar (potters) within its boundary. Their products are brought to the local weekly market from villages like Rupapaita (7 miles), Parsa (7 miles), Manpur (4 miles) and Bara Susni (1 mile).

On the other hand, Barabazar attracts people from the surrounding villages as a centre for business, administration, politics, education, rituals and "culture". Upto 1952, the zonal office of Midnapore Zemindary Company was at Barabazar. It was a busy managerial establishment controlling five rent collecting circles (*Tahashil*) under it. The 110 persons of different cadre belonged to 36 places in Purulia, Midnapore, Murshidabad and Nadia districts of West Bengal and in Singbhum and Chhapra districts in Bihar. They worked under the direct supervision of an English Manager. The staff of the Midnapore Zemindary Company, predominantly Kayasthas, were responsible for the dissemination of the "Bengali" style of living in the town.

The office of the Assistant Revenue Officer, established on the 6th June, 1958, has the duty of distributing loan to the needy cultivators in Barabazar Police Station. There is also an office of Agricultural Inspector entrusted with promoting agricultural activities by supplying improved seeds and financing irrigation tanks. The Thana Welfare Office was established in 1947 with the objective of welfare of scheduled castes and tribes. It annually distributes 1,000 *maunds* of paddy to the cultivators of Barabazar Police Station at a low interest rate. The office of the Forest Ranger, also established in 1947, has a jurisdiction over the forests of six different Police Stations. The office of the Junior Land Reform Officer, opened on April 8, 1957, deals with matters of land claims and related disputes of all the villages in the four Police Stations: Barabazar, Baghmundi, Bandoyan and Balarampur.

But the most powerful agent of the Government at Barabazar is the Police Station, which began as an outpost in 1862. Its jurisdiction is over 292 square miles and over 76,296 people (as of 1958). The present staff is: Sub-Inspector—1, Assistant Sub-Inspector—2, Constables—9, Rural Chowkidars—32, Tabedars—27, Ghatwals—71, Taraf Sardar—1, Sadiyal—1. The Branch Post and Telegraph Office at Barabazar serves as a distributing centre of all mails bound for five sub-post offices, over a radius of 16 miles. With 107 shops, a weekly market and heavy concentration of trading castes, Barabazar is an important shopping centre for villages all around.

Of the two medical units in the town the Leper Clinic has a roll strength of 224 patients (as of March, 1958) who pay regular visits. They come primarily from 6 villages lying within a radius of 7 miles from Barabazar. The District Board has a dispensary since 1912 which caters to the needs of patients coming from a maximum distance of about 15 miles.

The ruined palace, and especially the temples attached to it, are still a source of reverent sightseeing by the villagers of Pargana Barabhum. The temple courtyard is the site for the famous *Rash Purnima* festival when open-stage theatres, *Jatra*, are held through consecutive nights. The *Durga Puja* festival in September-October, also held in the same courtyard, draws large crowds. *Ind Parab* festival in the month of Bhadra (September) is another important regional festival sponsored by the Raj family and is widely attended (Sinha 1958 : 33-37).

The mosque at Barabazar is said to have been established some 200 years ago by the late Gendu Barkandaj, son of the late Ramjan Sheikh of village Saharghati, Gaya. Gendu was brought as a keeper of horses by the then Raja of Barabhum. The mosque is attended by the Muslims of Barabazar and of neighbouring villages lying within 5 miles.

Christian impact on Barabazar is only recent. The Manorite Mission launched its programme at Barabazar around 1951. It has now a staff of 3 members—a preacher, a gardener and a supervisor—all belonging to the Santal tribe. On each Sunday, about 20 Christians from neighbouring villages attend prayers in the church.

Although we have been referring to Barabazar as a town, it is not officially regarded as a town by the Government. We are merely following the convention of the surrounding villagers who regard Barabazar as a “Bazar” or market town. As a matter of fact, in a number of respects, Barabazar is more complex than any other large settlement cluster in the Pargana other than Balarampur. Its population is over 4,000; its ethnic composition is quite heterogeneous; it has some preponderance of males over females; the literacy rate is high for the area; the population contains a high proportion of traders; agriculture supports a minority of the population; it is an important educational, trade, administrative, and religious centre for the area.

The urban characteristics of Barabazar, however, are not very pronounced. A fair proportion of the population is still depend-

ent on agriculture ; the population size is less than 5,000 ; and the numerical dominance of males over females is only slight.

Barabazar today does not offer a pleasant impression to an outsider. While the ruins of the feudal order, extreme factionalism and the ravages of leprosy stare in one's face, there is not much sign of wholesome growth towards a more lively modern community life. The period after independence has seen the coming of many units of the Government in this traditional town. But as yet one does not find the recent institutions generating a coherent set of social relations and values. The ruins of the feudal system, the cultures of the Marwari traders, of the Bengali Babus of Midnapore Zemindary Company and of the new set of Government officials have not yet gotten together to make a harmonious whole. The minds of the earlier settlers of Barabazar, as also of the surrounding villages, are still attuned to the Raja while they are aware that wealth is in the hands of the Marwari traders, and power in the hands of transient government officers. These government officers, however, like the former employees of Midnapore Zemindary Company, continue to offer token respect to the Raja and his immediate agnates.

#### BALARAMPUR : A SEMI-INDUSTRIAL TOWN

While the shadow of the defunct Chieftaincy of Barabhum hovers over Barabazar, Balarampur is strictly the product of modern contacts. Even in the 1880's, it was an ordinary village, much smaller than Barabazar of those days, and peopled mostly by the Bhumij, the Kumhar and the Keot. With the opening of the B. N. Railways (later known as S. E. Railways) in the late 1890's, lac factory owners of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh became attracted to the railroad-side village of Balarampur as a base for procuring lac resins and raw seed lac. They sent their *Gomasthas* (Revenue Collectors) to Balarampur for this purpose. The few lac concerns that started prior to 1900 by like M/S Bhagat Prosad Jaiswal, M/S Kheduram Mataram (Jaiswal), M/S Chemilac Bhagatram (Marwari), M/S Sadar Smith and Co. (German), developed in this way. Later on there was a boom period for lac business in this area during 1920-21 and again in 1946. The lac trade and industry attracted a large influx of population and led to the emergence of a prosperous trading and industrial community. A network of motorable roads connecting Balarampur to Purulia and Tata, facilitated the growth of trade and inflow of population.

The glory of Balarampur as a reputed centre for exporting lac has been on the decline since 1950. Even in 1949, there were 120

factory owners processing lac, 10 exporters despatching the processed lac to Calcutta, 5 wholesale traders collecting seed lac from neighbouring lac growing villages and 15 brokers selling the same in the local markets. The 120 factory owners belonged to the following castes: Marwari—48, Jaiswal—19, Kumhar—19, Poddar—19, Benia—5, Muhammedan—3, Teli—2, Tamli—2, Moira—1, Napit—1, Mahato—1. At present, there are 13 factory owners, 5 exporters, 3 procurers of lac seed, and 4 brokers. A Lac Merchants' Association was formed in 1943 to safeguard their interests as against those of the labourers. As may be expected, in 1946 the 5,000 lac labourers were organized into a union known as *Chapra Mazdoor Samiti*. This union was under the influence of leftist leaders from Purulia. The labourers are all local recruits belonging to low castes like the Bhumij, Mahato, Santal, Keot, and Dom, Sahis, Deshwali Manjhi, Muhammedans, etc. Previously, the Karigars (persons working at the furnace) were mostly people from Mirzapur; but now-a-days none of them are there.

Balarampur town has absorbed the bordering villages of Sapua, Sunridih and Rangadih to meet the demands of its growing population. The 2,244.00 acres of the town of Balarampur contain 1,515 families and 8,414 persons belonging to 44 ethnic groups. They include trading groups like the Marwari, Jaiswal, Benia and Tamli; artisans like the Jolha and Tanti (weavers), Mahali and Dom (basket makers), Muchi (leather workers), Kamar (blacksmith), Kumhar (potter), and other occupational caste groups like the Moira (sweetmaker), Napit (barber), Dhoba (washerman), Sahis (scavenger and midwife). The Kumhar form the most numerous ethnic group with 169 families and 1,010 persons. The trading communities are represented in the following numbers: Benia—128 families, 618 persons; Tamli—105 families, 668 persons; Marwari—94 families, 731 persons; and Jaiswal—54 families, 326 persons. The population is scattered over 12 territorial segments, some of which are named after predominant caste groups in the locality: Mahato Para, Kumhar Para, Bagal Para, etc.

We get the following picture of the range of occupation on the basis of a sample of 385 families forming about one-fourth of the population (Table 23).

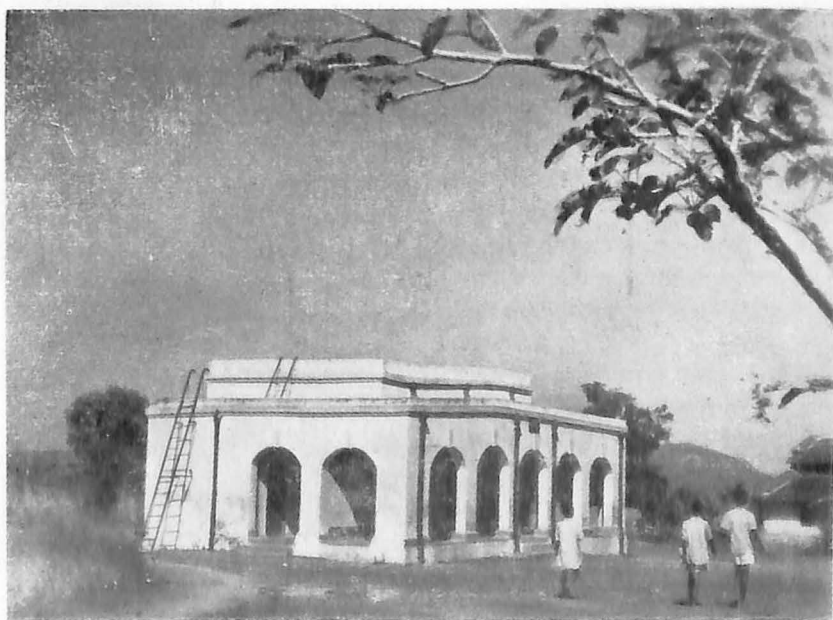
TABLE 23

*Occupation in Balarampur*

Sl. No.	Occupation categories as main source of living	No. of families	% of the total families in the sample
1	Agriculture	96	24.96
2	Petty business	58	15.06
3	Labour (agricultural and daily)	55	14.28



A charming *dharma sala* at Balarampur



Inspection Bungalow at Balarampur





A portion of the present-day Balarampur

Table 23—continued

Sl. No.	Occupation categories as main source of living	No. of families	% of the total families in the sample
4	Service	54	14.02
5	Lac industry & business	39	10.10
6	Labour (in lac)	22	5.72
7	Craftwork	21	5.46
8	Special caste occupations (other than crafts)	16	4.16
9	Miscellaneous	11	2.86
10	Priesthood	3	.78
11	Begging	1	.26
12	Not known	9	2.34
	TOTAL	385	100.00

The above 11 categories of occupation cover 41 distinct vocations. It is of interest to note that even in this industrialized town nearly a quarter of the people live on agriculture, while lac industry and trade involve only about 15% of the families.

Out of 1,515 houses\*, 61 are brick-built. Of the latter, 35 are two storeyed, and the rest are single storeyed. The bulk of the two storeyed buildings are owned by lac merchants. Valuation of land in the town has increased from Rs. 25 per *bigha* in 1905 to Rs. 5,000 per *bigha* today (1958).

Of 2,123 persons in our sample, 484 (22.68%) were literate : 442 (20.72%) from L. P. to less than Matriculates, 26 (1.22%) Matriculates, 12 (.56%) I.A.s, 1 Graduate, 1 M.B.B.S., 1 Artist and 1 B.L.

Balarampur has a number of complex institutions which are typically urban. The Union Committee was formed in 1917 with the local Sub-Registrar as the First Chairman. This committee functions as an agent of the Purulia District Board. The local District Board Dispensary (established in 1928) has a 10-bed hospital and a maternity ward attached to it. On the average 75 outdoor patients daily visit the dispensary. The Police Station, established in 1914-15, has jurisdiction over 168 square miles (93 villages). The High School (started as M. E. School in 1928) has a roll strength of 250 students coming from villages within a radius of about 6 miles. The Settlement Circle Office (as in 1958) has 179 persons working under a Circle Officer. There is also a Thana Welfare Office since 1948. The Country Spirit Warehouse supplies

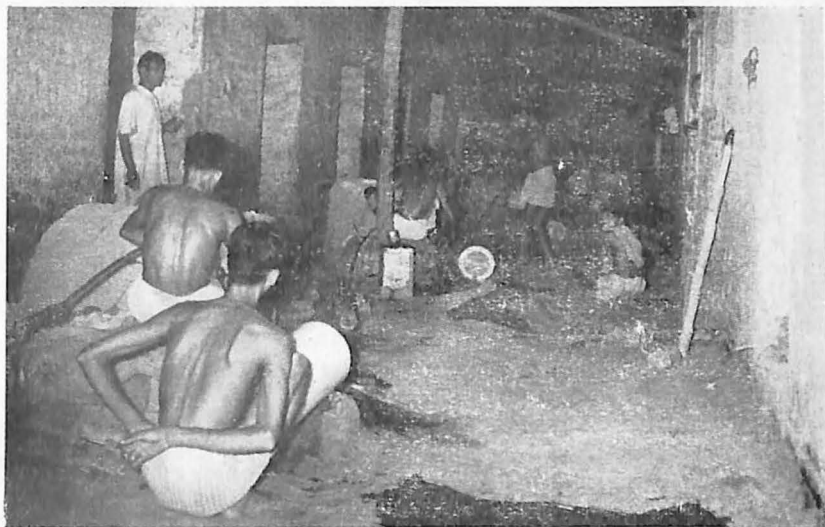
\* Assuming that each family occupied one house, which, however, is not always true.

liquor to license holding dealers; its monthly consumption is 900 L. P. Gallons. A Marwari Newspaper Agent brings 40 copies of Bengali, 24 copies of English and 30 copies of Hindi dailies and weeklies to be circulated at Barabazar (11 miles—3 copies), Bando-yan (28 miles—2 copies), Chandil (13 miles—20 copies) and Balarampur (69 copies). The Railway Station links Balarampur with Purulia, Adra, Kharagpur and Howrah in the east and to Chandil, Chakradharpur and Tata in the west. A 21 member team of officers and staff maintains the Railway Station; only 5 of them belong to Purulia district; the rest come from 13 different places in West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Rajasthan. The Sub-Registrar's Office, established in 1907, is a centre of considerable activity regarding sale and transfer of land holdings.

Before 1901, there were only three permanent shops at Balarampur: a grocery owned by a Marwari, a sweet stall run by a Tamli and a stationery shop belonging to a Muhammedan. Today there are about 182 shops of the following categories: grocery—48, sweets—29, betel and bidi stalls—25, cloth shops—18, tailoring—16, medical shops—10, cycle repairing—6, stationery, goldsmithery and copyists' stall—5 each, hotel and bell-metal shop—2 each, coal fuel wood, hardware, liquor, earthen images, lac, blacksmithery, watch-repairing, narcotics, flour milling, and book selling—1 each. These shops are mostly run by immigrant trader castes; the earlier groups like the Bhumij, Keot, and the Kumhar have very little to do with them.

There are a number of temples in the town, mostly built within the last 40 years or so. The *Kali Mandir* was built in 1904 and *Durgamandir* in 1925 by the public of Balarampur. The *Jagan-nath Mahaprabhur Mandir* was established in 1929 by a prosperous Kumhar, and this is the centre of *Ratha Jatra* festival in the month of Asadh (July) every year. The *Smasankalir Mandir* was built around 1953 at the initiative of a Bengali gentleman. The only mosque of the town was established around 1875 by the late S. K. Haku Mian. There is also a Mission at the outskirts of the town to propagate Christianity among the local people.

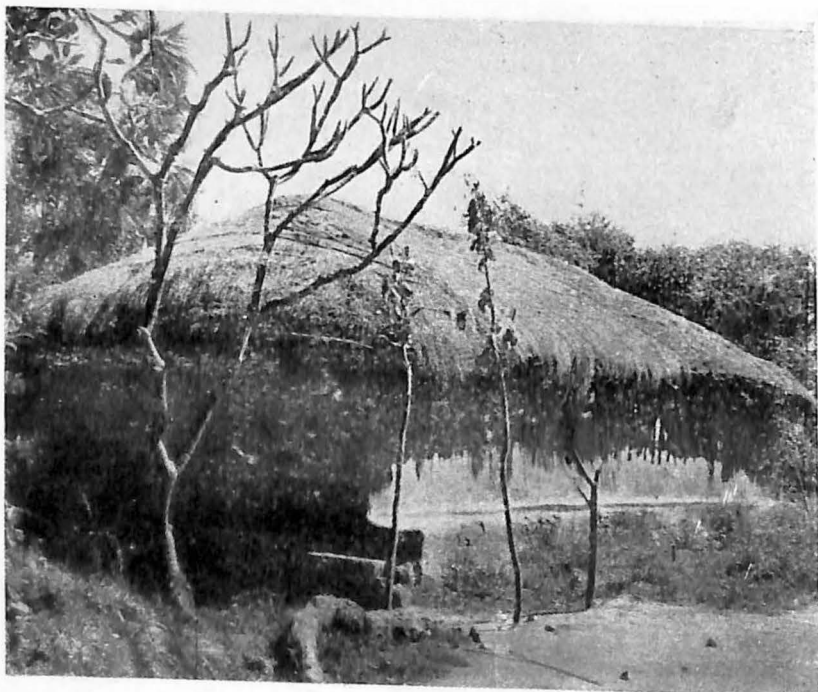
There are three clubs and two libraries in Balarampur. *Durgamela Football Club* was founded around 1938 at the initiative of a Muchi and a Teli student. The present Secretary is Vaidya by caste and the 30 members belong to both high and low castes. The club organizes outdoor games and cultural performances. *Aragami Club* was organized around 1950 mainly as a sporting club. *Rajasthan Club* was established around 1952 and its membership is restricted exclusively to the Marwari community.



Inside of a lac factory



A Santal girl at work in a lac factory



A typical hut used by cultivators and labourers



On the way to market

*Debiprosad Library*, named after the first Headmaster of the local high school, was established in 1957 and contains mainly Bengali books. *Azad Urdu Library* was started by three Muslim students in 1954. The majority of the members are Muslims. It contains 2,200 books—about 1,100 Hindi, 600 Urdu, 400 Bengali and 100 English.

In spite of the sharp decline of lac industry, Balarampur, with its 182 shops of 27 different kinds, many brick-built buildings and the busy plying of buses, trucks and cycle-rickshaws, gives the impression of a busy town, in tune with modern life. With its larger and more hetero-ethnic population, larger volume of trade and industry, greater number of voluntary associations and easier communication with the outside world, Balarampur is more urban in character than Barabazar.

While in Barabazar there is a carryover of the traditional authority of the Raja and the set of rituals sponsored by him, Balarampur is clearly dominated by trade and industry in the hands of recently immigrant trading communities like the Marwaris and the Jaiswals. While a substantial portion of the population of Barabazar regards it as the headquarters of Pargana Barabhum, for the majority of the people of Balarampur, the Pargana or the former Kingdom of Barabhum carry no meaning. They primarily face the outer world connected by modern means of communication. The larger towns of Purulia and Tata are within easy reach. Even Calcutta is just at a distance of overnight train journey.

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# **ETHNIC GROUPS, VILLAGES AND TOWNS OF PARGANA BARABHUM**

**REPORT OF A SURVEY**

**SURAJIT SINHA  
BIMAN KUMAR DAS GUPTA  
HEMENDRA NATH BANERJEE**

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