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M. Phil. Thesis.

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# Tribal Identity among the Santals.

# 1770-1857.

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## Abstract

The subject of this thesis is the historical development of an Indian tribe - the Santals - through the documents that exist in Great Britain. The period taken is immediately prior to the great famine in Bengal in 1770, when British interest first expanded into the sphere of tribal affairs. It is more than a history, it is an anthropological study of the developments in social relations of an aggregate of culturally like people. Owing to the expanding British influence after the famine, economic and political relations underwent radical change. Most important was the development of a tribal identity, that finally crystalised with the creation of the Santal Parganas in 1857, as a result of the uprising of 1855.

The central theme is the study of the development of tribal identity, and its process of crystalisation. This leads to a concern about the nature of the categories tribe and tribal. Other related concerns are with local politics, both tribal and colonial, the interaction of economic spheres, their barriers and conflicts. The process of mediation in political relations plays an important role, along with how this was manipulated and perceived. The Santal uprising is analysed in detail as a revitalisation movement and its concommitants of relative and absolute deprivation.

The aim of this approach is to organise the material sytemically. Political, economic and cultural relations are structured into a pattern and the developments in this are analysed. Thereby the relations between a tribal people and early British colonialism is understood. The other side to this study is to look at social change as an ongoing process

of historical development. This also provides an historical perspective on the numerous studies of the Santals made in the early twentieth century. As such it is an exercise in the methodological relations between the disciplines of anthropology and history.

## Acknowledgements

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## Chapter 1.

## Introduction.

### Section 1.

The problem with trying to outline one's own interest in a subject is to separate the bias that the individual gives to his material from the changes that the material has wrought in him. By the time research has been completed the relationship between the researcher and the material has become a very intimate and private matter and almost beyond analysis. The fact that the researcher continually discriminates in selecting his material has a very important effect on the end product, and this bias should be known. I would be the first to admit that there are many different ways in which I could have approached the subject, and also that I might have chosen different material to satisfy the interests that I had at the start.

Initially my interest was in that section of anthropology that deals with messianic movements, which lie within that wider sphere of study called social change. Here there was a wealth of material that concentrated on social processes and their manipulation in a crisis. It is a point at which the processes and cultural value loadings of a society are under heavy stress and subject to a strong degree of polarisation. The fact that under such conditions certain processes occur that can be called messianic movements seemed only to obscure the more real events of history that gave rise to this reaction, which is summed up by anthropologists in religious terms. This implies that under a situation of social stress, when a polarisation of values takes place, the

resulting ideology can only be seen to operate within a nexus of religious ideas. However my feeling was that this nexus was only a thin veil used by the actors to integrate a new and different mode of behaviour with an existing set of norms that had been traditionally established, but were now being challenged by force of circumstance. To look at these factors under the guise of a religious movement might misrepresent the important social undercurrents. If they were seen without the veil of messianism, they would appear as more than historical events lumped together under the category of messianic movements. This would then provide certain penetrating glimpses into the processes of society that would prove fruitful and interesting at the level of the second-hand viewpoint that is required in library research.

At this time I became familiar with the material on the Santal Uprising of 1855, which seemed excellent for such an analysis. There was an almost repetitive excess of writings on the material conditions of the uprising by such authors as Fuchs, K. Basu, W.J. Archer, W.G. Culshaw, K.K. Datta, N. Datta-Majumder, W.W. Hunter and P.C. Roy Chaudhury,[1] all of whom were valuable in their own way. However the only attempted analysis was made by Edward Jay in a very brief paper entitled Revitalisation Movements in Tribal India.[2] This paper is discussed in some detail in chapter 6.

Despite this wealth of material on the uprising, there was

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1. Fuchs, 1965.
   Basu, 1934.
   Archer and Culshaw, 1945.
   Datta, 1940.
   Datta-Majumder, 1956.
   Hunter, 1872.
   Roy-Chaudhury, 1959.

2. Jay, 1961.

a tendency to concentrate on the more practical aspects. Although this provided a coherent pattern, there was little attempt to look at the social formulations that made the practical situation problematic. It became more and more evident that it would be necessary to study the structure of social relations. They would both give a background to the history and also outline the problematic, so that insight could be achieved.

Although the statement that the uprising was a messianic movement suggests that one should look to cultural factors for an explanation, it soon became clear that this was one of the weakest aspects of the material. It was necessary to look into the rationale of social organisation as the motivation for a cultural upheaval.[1] A messianic movement, as a cultural upheaval, most be seen as a real and adequate response to a set of social relations, and not some form of socio-cultural aberration that should be studied for its own peculiarities. The lead for this approach was given by Worsley's and Lawrence's studies of the Cargo Cults.[2] These were seen as efforts to solve new needs and demands, and as attempts to benefit from the invasion of European culture without being controlled by it. Such movements must be seen as rational attempts by a society to deal with and manipulate a given situation. In order to interpret them in this light it is then necessary to research into and to understand the events and structure of the social relations which led up to the rational conclusion.

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1. Bastide, 1961.

2. Worsley, 1970.
   Lawrence, 1964.

This in itself is a statement of the close relationship between history and anthropology. Yet, in the body of this thesis I am not so concerned with this relationship, as with the actual analysis of the historical situation, and in coming to terms with the problems involved in that relationship.

## Section 2. The Theoretical Approach.

### History and Anthropology.

In modern India the Santals consist of some two and a half to three million people, who are scattered over a very wide area of India. Some are agriculturalists or migrant wage labourers, while others are permanently employed in industrial jobs, and live in large towns. Although their economic life is very different from what an anthropologist would call tribal,[1] Martin Orans finds it possible to call them a tribe, with a tribal tradition.[2] He makes an implicit equation between tradition and indigenous history. It is the Santals' history that enables them to see themselves as a tribe today. This history is, therefore, an integral part of the structure of thier society. "More generally", Lewis says, "historical data are not merely relevant, but are quite decisive in evaluating a given society's own view of its past. Peoples' view of time, and their own ethnocentric 'history' are very much part of the picture which even the most particularistic anthropologist seeks to delineate."[3] Historical perspective is a very important

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1. See chapter 2 section 1, and Bailey, 1960, and Sinha, 1965, p. 55-83.

2. Orans, 1965.

3. Lewis, 1968, p. xvii.

parameter in the discussion of the basis for a common identity of any social grouping. Many of the books on the Santals acknowledge this with a very brief section on their historical background.[1] Unfortunatd y this brevity only tantalises the reader. From it quick conclusions are made that act as assumptions for what is to follow.

The old hostility among anthropologists, that resulted from the evolutionary approach to history, is now dead. The coup de grâce was given by Evans-Pritchard in his well known paper.[2] Here he says that the two disciplines of history and anthropology are "indissociables".[3] However in doing this he makes some very interesting points about history and its methodology in connection with anthropology.

Evans-Pritchard is right in stating that "History is not a succession of events, it is the links between them." But the tasks of recording the events and analysing the links must be separated and considered as essential parts of the whole story. He has overstressed the importance of the links, for he says,

> "No events are unique. The Battle of Hastings was fought once, but it belongs to the class 'battle', and it is only when it is so considered that it is intelligible, and hence explicable, for, for the historian, intelligibility is explanation; and this, I suppose, is why Cassirer calls historical knowledge a branch of semantics or hermeneutics."[4]

If I had taken Evans-Pritchard's approach I might have considered the Santal uprising of 1855 as a messianic movement without understanding the subtleties of the social forces that

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1. Orans, 1965, and Datta-Majumder, 1956.
2. Evans-Pritchard, 1961.
3. Ibid., p. 21.
4. Ibid., p. 3.

formed a more important part of that event than the fact that it belonged to that general and more intelligible class of events called "messianic movements". In order to avoid merely lumping non-unique events into preconceived categories I suggest that it is more rigorous to treat each event as unique. When this is looked at first as part of a succession of events and then in relation to its contexts and concommitants, it becomes intelligible. An overview is obtained of the event, which in many ways makes it more unique, as it is then connected with other such events. My point is that intelligibility of the event is not acquired through comparing 'x' with another 'x'. It might even be oversimplifying these events to assume that they are both of the same category.

My approach is to treat each event as unique, if we are to gain any new understanding of it. However in doing this convenience and expediency are major considerations that inevitably constrain me. If I were to consider all events as unique, I would spend my time in a quagmire of minute detail, and be incapable of making any general statements. It is therefore necessary to have certain general categories so that the events can be summarised. This makes it necessary to accept a certain level of adequacy of explanation. Whenever words are being used to describe an event certain universal categories of explanation are used, which themselves destroy the uniqueness of the event. As Weber put it, the moment an intuitive understanding of the material is attained - "verstehen" as he called it - some level of ideal type is resorted to in order to utilise that understanding. Here I would agree with Evans-Pritchard. Nevertheless one must always remember, as a matter of principle, that historical events are

unique, if one is to gain any greater understanding from their study, despite the constraints imposed by the inadequacy of human communication.

Then there is the theoretical and methodological link between anthropology as a study of social continuity, and history as a study of the links between the events. What validity can the anthropologist give to the historical accounts of earlier chroniclers, whose overview is often very different from ours? This is discussed further in the last chapter.[1] But at this moment it must be said that history has its place in the discipline of anthropology as the essence of continuity of a society up to the present day. I am therefore primarily concerned with the ongoing process involved in the development of the Santals for the insights it provides. This involves tracing the development of social relations through the relevant documents. The events recorded in them have been accepted on the basis of probability that if, after compilation, they fit into significant trends through time there is little that can be done but to accept them. They are then a valid distillation from a mass of unique events and documents from which generalisations and conclusions can be made.

My interest is therefore in tracing out the process of developments of social relations through the study of historical documents. In this manner of combining history and anthropology, historians might reject me for not being sufficiently critical of my sources. However I am not so much concerned with the validity of individual documents, as with the manner the re-

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1. See chapter 7, section 1. Here it is stated that in both history and political science, it is the isolation of continuity and long-term trends, that is the vital parameter in using recorded material.

corded event relates to the totality of events. In this respect the role of the anthropologist is more than that of a recorder, who is centrally concerned with the validity of a description. The anthropologist is concerned with relationships through time and the quality of the passage of time. The discipline is firmly rooted in the study of the present, even if it is only the anthropological present, and any attempts at historical concern must clearly relate to this.

An important feature of the difference between history and anthropology is that the latter is concerned with both the form and the content of a given relationship. As Evans-Pritchard points out, in studying other societies, "we have to know not only what it is, but also how it came about."[1] Here we are concerned with the process of political and economic developments, whereby British and other European national interests have spread across the world. The British, due to their overarchingly dominant presence, have played a very important role in effecting the social organisation of those other societies. Involvement in an historical approach must therefore be concerned with the internal history of other societies, the relationships with the imperial ones, and the effects that this had. Not only must the anthropologists be concerned with this relationship, but also he will find it difficult to avoid when studying the history of India. This brings me to one of the major limitations that is imposed by an historical approach.

Limitations.

In relying on historical evidence the anthropologist is nearly

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1. Evans-Pritchard, 1961, p. 6.

always restrained by the lack of indigenous material and the bias with which it has been preserved and documented - in this case by the British. It has been almost impossible to find out any details concerning the early culture and way of life of the Santals. Moreover the indigenous attitudes to the events of history can never be verified. This paucity has meant that I have been deeply indebted to the little indigenous material that has been recorded by such people as administrators and missionaries. Also it has been necessary to use material that was not consciously recorded as historical documents. Here I am referring to one of the most valuable references that there is on the early life of the Santals. This is a novel by I. Carstairs, called Harma's Village, A Novel of Santal Life.[1] It is the tale of Harma's struggle to avoid or solve the social conflicts that were developing, and finally led to the Santal Uprising. Although it is full of what could be excellent historical detail, I have only used it to illustrate points which are otherwise known to be true. It is for these reasons that I have had to concentrate on material of British origin and that I am therefore constrained in my analysis. The resulting bias is towards an analysis of social relations at the level of politics and economics. And even here there is an emphasis on the larger scale relations between groups at the ethnic level rather than at the local one of inter-village relations. This is a limitation that can only be accepted.

Santal cultural features have to be taken into account in establishing what was the form of that group of people. It has therefore been necessary to extrapolate from material

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1. Carstairs, 1935.

written in the 1870s, the 1950s and 60s, in order to make any significant statements about the way of life of the Santals immediately before the great famine of 1770, which is the starting point. There is little that can be done to either establish, or disprove the validity of these statements; as a result they are of a very general nature. However I believe that it is useful to attempt the little that is said. Most of it appears to be validated by the events that took place later. But this only has the status of induction, if what is said of the early period is to contribute as the base for development of the later period.

Methodological Concepts.

Essentially I am concerned with that sphere of anthropology that sets out to study social change. For the historian the approach to social change is to trace the succession of events and understand the phenomena that link them together. This is done by looking into the material in detail and understanding the motives and goals that lie behind the continuity of events. The sequentiallity can then be explained in commonsense terms. However as an anthropologist one must look into the logic of those events and come up with generalised theoretical ideas as to the system that lies behind them. Theory and historical description must remain closely linked; the problem being to steer a careful course between them. The interest is in the structural implications that arise from, or are the basis of the continuity of events. The nature of the sequence of events will disclose the structural implications, and then these implications can be studied in order to understand the form of social and societal change and dynamism. A logical process then becomes apparent. But to

do this it is necessary to construct a framework within which to organise and consider certain categorical units of reality - in fact a methodology must be stated.

Owing to the nature of the material it is not possible to look in depth at the internal cultural changes in Santal society. The concern is therefore almost entirely with political relations at the local and inter-ethnic-group level. As such this is a study of social relations, the interfaces between groups that these represent, and the ever changing nature that those interfaces reflect on the form that the social relationship takes. These relationships exist within a system, or context, of other intricately interwoven relations that must be considered as a whole that can be isolated for discussion at some level of convenience. My approach is therefore a systemic one.

My interest is in Santal society, and this includes the social relations within the bounds of the society as well as the wider context within which the Santals operated. This latter is the whole complex of political and social formations in West Bengal. But I am only directly interested with those elements in West Bengal that played some part or other in effecting the internal form of Santal life. This section or system of elements I call the Santal sphere of activity, which can only be defined pragmatically. That is it simply refers to any significant party that interacted either directly or indirectly in the affairs of the Santals. It is totally fluid and open to suggestion for the inclusion of more or less elements within it. In this sense it is an open system.

In organising this sphere of activity I will be referring to the structure of relations, more specifically in the Damin-

i-koh. This was an area designated by the British for the protection and civilising of tribal peoples. Within it there was a very specific system of administrative regulations that differed categorically from the ordinary regulations that were set up by the government in India. It was largely in this protected area that relations between the British and the Santals developed. The structure of relations refers to the overall network that existed within the distinct politico-economic elements that operated in this area; that is the specific pattern that social interaction developed there.

One vital feature of this sphere of activity, that developed with the passage of time, is that it was a continually expanding sphere; so, in that this sphere is a system, it is an open and expanding one. To some extent this means that the horizons of the Santals receded with the process of modernisation. As time passed they came to know elements in west Bengal that they had not experienced before. In the way that I have organised the material, and particularly in the diagrammatic representations of the sphere of activity, and the structure of relations in it, the expansion that took place appears to show that an increasing degree of complexity developed alongside the social expansion. But that is not what I wish to imply. I am sure that the Santals saw their sphere of activity as very complicated long before the British arrived. It is merely that in the material that I have, which was chronicled almost entirely by the British, complications developed as the Santals and the British came into closer and closer interaction. The complications are therefore not absolute, but in close correlation with the amount of knowledge available about the Santals at any given time. And as one comes closer to the present the quantity

increases. Expansion, therefore, here refers only to a social expansion. It is within the dimension of social distance that Bogardus propounded.[1] But in the historical context of this study the expansion and change in social distance and the sphere of activity is qualified in time by changes in the speed of communication and relative geographical distance. This means that the Santals were unlikely to include within their sphere of activity elements that were geographically remote. But with the development of better communications this remoteness receded. So expansion in the social sphere of activity should not be assumed to have purely social variables. But in discussing this expansion those non-social variables areassumed, and taken for granted. The expansion of sphere is seen to be taking place pragmatically, and the interest is with the effects that this had. It therefore takes on the role of a model around which to organise the material.

The idea of the Santal sphere of activity is seen as a system - a set of relata, or elements in relationship to each other, which function as dependent variable s within that system.[2] The structure of relations is the patterned interaction of those variables. Within this system there are the two lesser spheres called the internal and the external. This is a categorisation whereby inter- and intra-group relations are set apart. Although we are concerned with the internal sphere in discussing Santal tribal identity, it is only possible to elicit changes in it through analysing inter-group political and economic relations in the external sphere, owing to the lack of material. Both these spheres mutually affect one another.

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1. Bogardus, 1950.

2. Angyal, 1969.

The system with which I am concerned is therefore an expanding and open one. But nevertheless it is continually delimited by convenience and availability of material. For instance I have made hardly any reference to the East India Company. It would have been possible to research into the decisions made by the council and governors of the company, and particularly the concern that the 9th Earl of Dalhousie showed for the Santals. However I have limited this study to the sphere of activity of the Santals.

Empirical Categories.

Some brief introductory comments and caveats must be made about the units that make up the structure of relations. I will be referring to such social categories as Paharias, Santals, Bengalis and British, and within these to certain elements such as the East India Company, the Collectors and Commissioners, the zemindars or landlords, the mahajans or traders and money lenders, the amlahs and darogas who were the police and courtofficials, and lastly the naib sazawals, or rent collectors. I am interested in these elements because of their specific role as administrative positions in the spectrum of political relations that the Santals experienced. The category that is called Bengali is really very vague, as it is difficult to make any close distinction between Bengalis, Biharis, Oriyas, Banias or any other group that made up that broad category of persons who were not tribals, but were peasants in all the broadest social, religious, political, and economic and caste orientated sense of the word. It would obviously have been better to make more subtle sub-categories of the Bengalis, However this was impossible due to the very vagueness of most of the material when referring to those people

that I have categorised as Bengalis. In the material they are often referred to separately, and often at the same time, as Bengalis, Hindus, Bengali Hindus, Bhunyahs or Banias, low-landers, plainsmen, ryots, or tenants, Indians and 'dikus', which is the Santali term for them. At certain times they are even referred to as 'Hinduised tribesmen'. It has not been possible to distinguish between the many different terms that have been used and therefore I have had to use the one which appears most often. I have therefore classed them all together as Bengalis.

One fact has emerged since the completion of the major part of this study. It is one that I had realised all along might endanger the significance of any conclusions that this thesis will make. I was aware of it while writing, and the subject is brought up later.[1] However there is little that can be done but to mention it at this stage. The whole of this study is written with the assumption that the Santals had a relatively similar experience of history, and that they all went through a similar expansion of their sphere of activity. On this basis any conclusions that are made apply generally to all Santals. However it appears that the population that I call Santal do not in fact include all of this category. This problem of the ability to define a population closely is always a major one in anthropology, and particularly so when attempting to make general statements from historical records that are inevitably incomplete. I have had to rely largely on Government records for my sources. In doing this I have concentrated on material from that area which was known as the Santal Paraganas, while also attempting to track down information

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1. See page .

on Santals that were outside the parganas, ~~or the area that later became known as the Parganas.~~ Owing to the lack of statistics as to the whereabouts of the Santals during the period this was not easy. However the only figures that I was able to find were encouraging. These were given by W.W. Hunter,[1] who states that in 1851 there were 83,000 Santals inside the Damin-i-Koh and only 10,000 outside it. On this basis it was presumed that the large majority of the Santals had migrated into the Damin-i-Koh, an area set up by the British for the protection of the tribes, that was later included, along with other contiguous areas of land, in the Santal Parganas. It therefore appeared as if the large majority of the Santals had experienced the political changes that were conditioned by the special relationship that developed between the British and the Santals in the Damin. Moreover I assumed that during the uprising of 1855 the large majority of the Santals had experienced conditions that led them to support the movement. However this now appears to be not entirely true.

Dr. Suresh Singh, who has done extensive research on the tribes of Bihar and Chotanagpur,[2] and has been able to look at material in local archives in India, tells me that there was a large contingent of Santals in Monghyr. This is the administrative area to the west of the Damin-i-Koh (see map opposite page 6a). These Santals were apparently ryots to the local zemindars, and although they may have suffered under an equivalent oppression to those Santals in the Damin, nevertheless they did not in any way support the uprising in 1855. In fact he tells me that they handed in all the arms that they had, and totally dissociated themselves from the uprising. Any statements that are made to

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 234.
2. Singh, 1966.

the effect that the uprising was the first time that the Santals engaged in a concerted action with unified political aims must now be understood in a slightly different light.

However despite the fact that there were many more Santals outside the Damin than was thought, and that they dissociated themselves from the uprising, it would appear that even they had gained a great degree of internal identity as a result of the events that led up to the uprising. They do at least appear unified in their dissociation from the Santals of the Damin. And they do seem to have been subject to social change in that they were not the diffuse and acephalous aggregate of villages that the Santals had formerly been. However little more can be said about these Santals until a great deal more research is done. It is a great shame that this fact came to my notice so late, as it might have added a great deal to the analysis that is made here.

## Section 3. The Relevance of the Study.

The importance of this study to the large body of anthropological material on the Santals is perhaps best summed by the truism, "Il faut réculer pour mieux sauter". Let me then briefly describe the body of material to which this is yet another contribution. In this way the necessity for the study will become clear.

As a result of the Santal Uprising of 1855 these people gained for themselves a renown that is rare among the tribes of India. The uprising, that came just two years before the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, heralded, if only indirectly, another stage in the development of the history of India. Despite the fact that the Santal Uprising was in no way directly connected with the Sepoy Mutiny, it was the first signs of the negative

feedback under the new domination of India by the British. As such it therefore commands a significant position in Indian history. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the Santals came under the dominion of the British very early. They were one of the first tribal peoples to be subject to the British policies of indirect rule, so that the lessons learnt here may have been instrumental in the creation of a policy that was later to attain great significance in the manner that Britain administered parts of her empire. The significance of this is that the name 'Santal' has now become a permanent feature of all the maps of India since the creation of the Santal Parganas as a result of the uprising in 1855. In this respect the Santals are somewhat unique.

The Santals played a more important part in the development of the modernisation of India under the presence of the British than did any other local tribe. Not only were they first to experience the presence of the British, but they were first to become one of the major sources of wage labour in India. This is perhaps why Hunter[1] is so deeply concerned with the Santals as compared to any other tribe in Bengal. Due to the fact that they were not subject to the strictures of caste, nor were they peasants tied in an integral village economy to the land, but were rather individual families who farmed the land as independent family units, they were among the first to leave the land and become involved in wage labour. Thus they were the first people to flock to the plantations, to the road and railway construction camps, and later to the mines. Thus they were introduced to the development of modern India earlier than any other tribals, and as such they command

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1. Hunter, 1872.

a position of special interest. However despite the fact that their tribal way of life began to collapse at such an early stage, and they were more widely scattered over India than any other group, they nevertheless retain tenaciously their tribal identity today, as Martin Orans has set out to study in his book The Santals, A Tribe in Search of A Great Tradition.[1]

As a result of the uprising the Santals attracted the attention of writers earlier than any other tribe. They almost became cult figures as those who had first taken action against the oppression of the era, and R. Carstairs' novel about the Santal Uprising, according to Orans, has become a very widely read book.[2] The Uprising also brought their condition to the notice of the missionaries at an early date; Santali was one of the first tribal languages for which grammars were written, and it was transcribed into Deva Nagri script. Here such names as Skresfurd, Bodding, and MacPhail are important.

By the middle of the twentieth century numerous ethnographic monographs were written on the Santals that concentrated on their cultural heritage. They attempted with one exception to describe just the social organisation and cultural artefacts of the Santal way of life. Biswas, Culshaw, and Datta-Majumder[3] all concentrate on the 'cultural inventory approach' to studying them, and what they have done is invaluable. Only Orans really goes outside this. He analyses the bases for tribal solidarity among the Santals.

The emphasis of all these studies has either been on the ethnographic present, or else there has been an interest in

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1. Orans, 1965.

2. Carstairs, 1935.

3. Biswas, 1956.
   Culshaw, 1949.
   Datta-Majumder, 1956.

culture change. However there has been no analysis of social change as an ongoing development. The role that this study has in the material on the Santals is to try to fill this gap. Datta-Majumder although concerned with change has taken a very different perspective to the one in this book. Not only is he concerned with the changes that occurred after the uprising, but his interest is focused on the cultural inventory viewpoint. He sets out to record Santal culture at two separate moments in time, and then he compares the two and comes to his conclusions as to what changes have occurred. By contrast in this study I have traced the continuous process of the development of the Santals from the period immediately prior to the great famine in Bengal of 1770 to the creation of the Santal Parganas in 1857. The conclusions, which are concerned with the degree to which a common Santal identity crystalised among what had previously been a non-united body of people, could only have come out of such an approach. The relevance of this is that it has provided an insight into what in all the other material is an assumption made by the authors, that the Santals have always been a tribe in the full political sense of the word - that is, that they have been a united body of people with a tribal polity.

This study is also relevant from the historical viewpoint. There has been no historical analysis of the Santals that can act as a building block for all future studies. The brief histories that are provided by Orans and Datta-Majumder only go into the most general detail. The most thorough history, which is given in the 1965 Bihar District Gazetteer of the Santal Parganas, does not have a theoretical or analytical viewpoint. It is an excellent record of events, but it does not establish the sociological understanding of social change

and development that is so badly needed. As such this thesis attempts to be a social history from which an analysis can be developed. Indeed it would be possible to continue it through the Kharwar Movements of the 1870s up to the Jharkhand movements of the present day.[1]

Lastly this study has relevance to the discipline of anthropology for the role that it plays in combining the historical and the social viewpoints, and in particular the state of affairs that once existed between the social life of tribal peoples and the empire building activities of the European societies. As Morris-Jones states,

> "The consequences of Westernisation are many and complex. The central feature that concerns us here is that so long as alien rule prevails the impact of Westernisation on the political system is well nigh complete whereas the impact on society is partial and uneven. This is at any rate the Indian experience. The incoherence of polity and society is fully disclosed only with the start of an independent polity. Moreover, in such a polity the incoherence is unstable and from both sides forces move in to establish consistency. This is the process that gives rise to many of the fascinating features of Indian society today. It also provides a strong and special reason for believing that without attention to social forces the study of such politics is peculiarly partial and misleading."[2]

However it is equally true that through the complete change in politics, we can see the partial changes that occurred in society. I have here studied the development of an independent polity among the Santals, and the attempts of people to create consistency in unstable conditions.

By studying the conditions of inter-group and political relations certain fascinating correlations have been understood. By analysing the existing material the inside story has been uncovered, and this in its ~~one~~ own way alters the viewpoint that

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1. I believe that John Mac Dougal is at present studying the rise of the Jharkhand Movement among the tribes of Chotanagpur.

2. Morris-Jones, 1964, p. 50.

one must take of the material in its raw form. Again Morris Jones sums this up well when he says,

> "The observer of political life in India can quickly form the impression that the main thing that he has to learn is that nothing is ever quite what it seems, or what it presents itself to be. Any person attempting to understand India will have to attempt to understand a new idiom. However one of the major features of India is that it was itself ruled for some time by another people, who were themselves attempting to do just this. The modern interpreter must therefore wear two pairs of spectacles at the same time. One to see how others understood the Indian idiom and another to attempt to understand it him self."[1]

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1. Morris-Jones, 1964, p. 51.

Chapter 2.

Historical Beginnings.

Section 1. The Tribe - Caste - Peasant Continuum.

One of the major problems in this study is to establish a suitable set of categories and concepts for that grouping of people that came to be known as the Santals by the 1860's. Today they are known as a tribe. But it would be a mistake to accept this term as having been unaffected by the passage of history. We must look in detail at the conditions that pertained immediately prior to 1770. Accepting the inevitable incompleteness of the material at such an early date and the necessity for a certain degree of conjecture, certain concepts must be established to form an analytical baseline from which to work.

Today the Santals number some two and a half to three million people, who are scattered over Orissa, Bihar, Bengal and North Eastern India. Many of them are leading lives that are far from tribal. Despite this they are called a tribe (1) because of certain historical precedences, which, in combination with various cultural and structural features, make it possible to distinguish them from the caste population of India. I have no intention to go into a definition of tribe as opposed to caste in modern India as this thesis is concerned with historical material. And so I must point out that certain terms, which are used in a very specific manner for analysing the situation today, cannot be taken for

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1. Orans, 1965

granted and applied indiscriminately to an historical situation. In modern India it has become an important feature in politics and administration to distinguish between tribes and castes in some absolute sense (1). However in pre-British India there was no such necessity: the distinction is purely of academic interest. There was no linguistic recognition of tribes at that time except by such epithets as "junglee", that referred to the wildness of their way of life. Also such an academic distinction need not be of so rigid and absolute a nature as would be needed by an administrative authority, where a rigid system of labels is necessary.

Firstly I must point out that the manner in which I am going to use the term tribal has only a nominal relation to any terminology used by the Government. I use the term at an adequate level of description to distinguish the tribes from the caste population of West Bengal. In brief it is an expedient term of heuristic description (2) on the level of a nominal definition (3). Initially the Santals were tribal, in the sense that their way of life can be described as having been distinct from that of the Bengali castes. However this is a definition by external differentiation. To say that they had a tribal way of life is not stating that they could be called a tribe. Their way of life may indeed have been tribal, but they may not have had sufficient internal likeness and cohesion to be called a tribe that was distinct from all the other tribes in Bengal

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1. Ghurye, 1943
2. Gerth and Wright Mills, 1946
3. Spiro, 1966

and Chotanagpur. This is a distinction that is more difficult to state, and at the stage of history that I am concerned with more so than it would be in modern India. In fact, during the total period that I will be discussing, one of the major trends was a development among the Santals of identity crystallisation and a tribal polity. The note upon which this thesis ends is the moment at which the Santals acted for the first time as a concerted body of people with a unitary political aim. In view of this development of the identity of a tribe it would be a mistake to make an over definite statement at this moment as to whether the Santals were a tribe or not. In this sense any definition must remain somewhat loose at the pragmatic level.

The question of whether a certain people can be called tribal, caste or peasant has for long been a subject of debate among those concerned with Indian society. The first systematic discussion was broached by F.G. Bailey in 1960 (1). In his study of the Konds of highland Orissa he largely divests the material of cultural considerations and is concerned with the structure of the interaction process in reference to political and economic organisation. His approach is very similar to the one that is taken here due to the confines of the historical material with which I am dealing. The parameters that he uses will be considered in some detail. Bailey suggests most sensibly that we cannot say that some societies are castes while others are tribes, but rather that certain societies are more or less castelike or tribelike. He says,

"The only solution to the problem is to postulate a

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1. Bailey, 1960

> continuum, at one end of which is a society whose political system is entirely of the segmentary egalitarian type, and which contains no dependants whatsoever; and at the other end of which is a society in which segmentary political relations exist only between a very small proportion of the total society, and most people act in the role of dependants. In the area of Orissa that I have studied, those Konds who were most remote from the influence of the Oriyas would be at one end of the continuum, while the small kingdoms of the Mahanadi Valley and its surrounding hills, where political activity between equals lay only between a very small number of self-styled Rajput families, would be at the other end of the continuum. Just at what point on the continuum tribe ceases and caste begins it is impossible to say, but this does provide a rough and ready way of distinguishing a region and saying whether it is (so far as political organisation is concerned) a tribal or a caste region" (1).

Movement from the tribal to the caste and peasant pole is towards role specialisation, social stratification and ethnic heterogenity in social interaction, involving enlargement and diversification in the network of relations. However, despite the fact that throughout the period that I will be discussing, the sphere of activity of the Santals progressively increased and their network of relations expanded, there was little or no movement by them along the continuum. One feature of the authority of the British in India was their

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1. Bailey, 1960, p.264-265

attempts to establish stable political and economic conditions for the amelioration of trading conditions. Their success was instrumental in expanding the sphere of activity of the tribes of India, and of the Santals. This involved the Santals in a partial monetary economy, and led to an increasing degree of dependance on wage labour as a source of income. In this sense there was an absolute move away from the tribal towards a peasant pole, because wage labour went hand in hand with increasing dependance on others. This was also emphasised by an increasing Santal involvement in a wider degree of political activity. Throughout the period that I will be discussing the Santals became aware of the more complex and remote machinery of political institutions in West Bengal, while the British administration involved them more and more in the processes of these institutions. One of the central themes of this thesis is that this expansion of their sphere of activity, and reduction in the level of social isolation, increased their tribal identity. They became more aware and conscious of the contrast between their way of life and that of the groups with whom they were experiencing increased interaction. Finally conflict developed around this contrast that gave rise to the Santal Uprising of 1855. This action epitomised a hiatus in the development of a separate and tribal identity that was largely revitalistic.

At the same time that the experiences of the Santals were leading them towards a crystallisation of their tribal identity the actions of the administration in Bengal were also working to emphasise their tribal grouping. Primarily this was done by creating a special non-regulation area for the development of the Santals. The form that this took will

be discussed in detail later. It involved different legal and revenue conditions from the areas that were predominantly occupied by the peasant and caste peoples of Bengal. Thereby the polarity between caste and peasant was emphasised.

The historical development was one of a move away from the tribal pole, that Bailey suggests. But, due to other peculiar circumstances, this was characterised by an increasing crystallisation of tribal identity. This apparent contradiction indicates a certain disonance between the concept of an academic tribal pole and its realisation among the indigenous population. This means that while it is possible to say that the Santals were nearer that tribal pole before the advent of the British, the isolation to which they were subjected before this period of a British presence did not provide the cues that were necessary to the realisation and institutionalisation of the tribal group. I will discuss later in great detail this crystallisation of identity through the development of a quasi centrality and territorial unity among the Santals.

Having identified certain problems that arise from using Bailey's criteria for establishing the tribal nature of any group I will now discuss these criteria in relation to the Santals. But while doing this the reader must be aware that a general description is also being given of that group of people that later came to be known as the Santals. This description can then serve as a starting point in history for the developments which will be discussed in detail later. This discussion as to where the Santals stood on the tribe-caste continuum will form an intrinsic part of this thesis. The factors that identify a group's position on the tribe-

caste continuum are not purely synchronic. Historical factors also play a central role in establishing any conclusions that may be made. Before dealing with these historical developments two features must be established. The first is the nature of the Santals, that is where and how were they living at the time. And secondly what is the theoretical framework within which we should analyse the given set of circumstances; that is where do the Santals lie on the tribe-caste continuum.

However before even this can be done it is necessary to 'reculer pour mieux sauter'. The material on the Santals at the early date at which this study begins must be discussed in relation to what it can be used to say. This period can only be described as prehistorical in relationship to the British presence in India and the chroniclers, upon whom I rely. Therefore any statements that can be made are by nature subject to a certain degree of conjecture. The important event that was to bring the Santals into the sphere of the history of the British in Bengal was the great famine of 1770. As a result of the instability that this created in Bengal the British were forced to take firmer political control. At the same time certain objective conditions, which I will discuss later, led the Santals to migrate Northwards into that expanding sphere of British interest in Bengal. Since this migration is of direct interest in the pattern of developments that took place later, my starting point will be the circumstances of the Santals' way of life immediately prior to 1770.

However the earliest first hand mention of the Santals by a British chronicler did not come until 1808, when Francis Buchanan, in a report on the district of Bhagalpur (1) mentions

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1. Buchanan, 1939

that some "five hundred families" of Santals were living in the Dumka division of Bhagalpur. However other writers have discussed the Santals before this period, and taking what is known of their social organisation at later periods certain generalisations can be made that would be true for the period before 1770.

One feature that appears from the lack of early chronicles establishes that the Santals had remained very isolated and this feature fits well their other cultural idioms. W.W. Hunter, who makes some of the most valuable early references to the Santals (1), describes them as a people who desired to preserve a high degree of isolation. He points out that they continually moved their villages away from encroaching Hindu civilisation into undeveloped jungle. He describes them as a people, "who dread the approach of a Hindu toward their village more than the night attack of a leopard or tiger" (2). As a result of this Culshaw states that they were accustomed to continually moving their villages. He says that they were always migrating, "due to pressure of one kind or another. They prefer to move to forest lands where they will have a hard struggle to establish new settlements than to remain where they have to defend their holdings and their livelihood against hostile forces, whether these be wild animals (3), malignant actions directed against individuals or the community from the unseen world, or the oppression of the landlords and moneylenders". (4)

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1. Hunter, 1872
2. Hunter, ibid, p.149
3. Wholesale destruction of villages by herds of elephants appears to have been not infrequent.
4. Culshaw, 1949, p.5

From this idiom of isolation among the Santals we can trace their other related characteristics at this time. This element of isolation, with a continuing desire not to live in close contact with the Hindu peasant community of West Bengal, was paralleled by a continuous slow migration. It was not in any way an institutionalised migration or nomadism, for they never moved within a defined Santal territory, there being no such thing. They appear to have lived in the interstitial areas of undeveloped forest land between Hindu Bengali settlements. As a result of this the Santals have in the past been located in different areas of the Indian subcontinent. However Bodding's statement that they were nomadic has no real foundation (1). Culshaw has looked at the migrations of the Santals in some detail and he states that they have been in south west Bengal for at least 300 years and probably for as long as 500 (2). It appears that they moved from the more hilly regions of the Chotanagpur Plateau into the area of Singhbhum, Birbhum, Bankura, Palamau and Ramgarh, in what is now northern Orissa and south western Bengal. Culshaw traces the existence of one village back for 300 years, but he says that this was probably an exceptionally long period of residence. The form that this migration took was of occasional villages or part of a village simply leaving the site and moving to a new one. This occurred in two ways. Either the whole village uprooted itself, due to some disaster or disagreeable conditions (3); or else a faction, usually a set of brothers, moved off and

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1. Bodding, 1910
2. Culshaw, 1949, p.4
3. Culshaw, ibid, p.4

set up a new community. This was either owing to internal friction, or as a result of scarce resources in the locality (1). Bodding appraises the situation thus:

> "When all is summed up, the result is rather meagre. We may be fairly sure that the ancestors of the race to which the Santals belong were living on the Chota Nagpur Plateau about six hundred years ago, and that they at that time had been living there for many generations. Their traditions and their language make it likely that they have reached this place from the West (South West); and it is not improbable that about two thousand years ago they were on both sides of the Ganges, west of Benares" (2).

For the economic way of life at this period it is necessary to look at Hunter who goes into some detail on this. Once again very little is known at first hand, but is reconstructed from the language of the Santals. Hunter under the heading of "The Wealth-Giving Jungle" (3) goes into some lively minutiae of their hunting and gathering economy at this period. Here he stresses that they had a very close relationship with the forest and that their preference was to live purely by hunting. This close relationship with the forest is also a point that is accentuated by Bompas (4). He quotes folktales in which the Santals are seen to be in close and intimate communication with the animals and spirits of the forests. If and when the forest was plentiful the

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1. Carstairs, 1935
2. Bodding, 1910, p.95
3. Hunter, 1872, p.210-214
4. Bompas, 1909

Santals would rely on its uncultivated produce. This capability left them relatively immune from the famine that hit west Bengal in 1770, so that in the aftermath they became the main agent in re-establishing a population on the plains to the north west of the jungle area in which they had lived prior to the famine. But Hunter also states that the Santals were good agriculturalists. He proves this by showing that they had a very full vocabulary of their own for the processes of agriculture, which contained no Hindi borrowings. Their main crops were rice and Indian corn. As to whether they were hunters and gatherers, or agriculturalists, Hunter suggests that they were very flexible according to the conditions in which they found themselves. But their preference was for living isolated in the forests, and their major ceremonials were organised around the seasons of the hunt rather than of the harvest. We may therefore presume that during the period before the famine of 1770, when they were mostly to be found in the forested hills, they were largely hunters and gatherers - though, as we shall see, after the famine when they began to move down onto the plains, this emphasis changed. Hunter makes the same point (1).

We may conclude that the general characteristics of the Santal way of life before 1770, insofar as is known from the scant material, was that they were predominantly hunters and gatherers, who kept themselves as isolated as possible from the caste Hindu population of Bengal. However any attempt to establish at this period their position on a tribe-caste continuum is not simple. There is virtually no detailed

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1. Hunter, 1872, p.219-221

material on their politics and economics before 1860, which is a century after the period that I am now discussing. And seeing that the period that I am taking for analysis of social change finishes in 1857 it is only possible to conclude that the Santal way of life must by this time have been considerably different. Nevertheless, I believe that it is possible to make certain general statements about the nature of Santal social organisation that can be presumed to have endured the passage of time, and can be used as significant pointers to the tribe-caste position of the Santals. In doing this I must however resort to a rather extreme form of the ethnographic present. We have to establish that the Santals were close to that pole which was characterised by a segmentary egalitarian organisation, that contains no dependents whatsoever. Perhaps the clearest feature of Santal life to back this up is the degree of isolation and self-dependance that they demonstrated. I am not here discussing internal dependance, but stating that they were in no way dependant on the surrounding Hindu Bengali community. The material shows that they abhorred any dependence on the Bengalis. This was carried to such an extreme that even if there appeared to be what was thought of as an unpleasant degree of contact with the Bengalis the Santals would immediately resite their village in a more remote area.

The internal organisation of the Santals also featured an egalitarian lack of dependents. Their largest cooperative grouping was the pargana. This was a grouping of about twelve contiguous villages. It took the institutional form of a council of the respective village chiefs or manjhis. This council met regularly once a year during the main Santal

festival, which was held at the beginning of the hunting season. At this moment the villages of the pargana gathered together for one large hunt, and at the same time the pargana council was called to discuss matters that concerned inter-village affairs. This pargana council, however, could also be summoned at any other time of the year if there was some matter of urgency to be discussed. But to understand the egalitarian nature of the political organisation it is necessary to look at the village. The village was the most important group larger than the family in Santal life. The members were mostly of the same patrilineage. The head of the lineage, and closest descendant of the founding ancestor was usually the manjhi or village chief. If however he was not considered fit to hold the position another man could be appointed. The family unit held all rights over cultivated land, and the family of the founding member usually owned the best land, and also a greater quantity than other families. As a result the head of this family was usually the manjhi. His role was that of the 'primus inter pares'. He administered the village. Intra village disputes were brought to him, and he attempted a settlement by compromise. However if this was not accepted, or if the matter was of importance to the whole village, he called the 'more hor' or 'five people', which consisted of all those that wished to take part. At such meetings, and as a general rule among the Santals, there was a strong emphasis on the idea of consensus. Consensus formed the basis of morality, and was felt for lie in the matrix of the traditional cultural heritage. When moral rules had been tested and needed to be stated, evidence was given and, with the help of the manjhi, the 'more hor' proclaimed what it

saw to be good and true. Their conclusion was taken as the maxim. Thus although the manjhi was the village chief he was not in the position of a superior on whom the rest of the village was dependent. Martin Orans expresses the idea well that it was the voice of the people that was significant, and that the manjhi was equally dependent on this as they were on him for a final settlement in disputes. "The Santals are well practised in giving assent to what appears to be consensus. Thus it is quite proper to move from the minority to the majority viewpoint, not because one ought to be accomodating, or because one has seen the light, but rather because the voice of the people is the voice of tradition - and since the traditional is sacred, it would not be far wrong to say that the voice of the people is the voice of the sacred as well". (1)

This egalitarian rule of the manjhi as a primus inter pares held equally true at the level of the pargana council.

It is more difficult to find out whether or not there were any economic dependents in the Santal way of life. At this period there was no shortage of land. Each family cleared its own plot, and thereby became the owner of it. Land was never sold. And if the right to it was ever taken over by Bengali traders through the kamioti system (2) of debt bondage, the owner usually left it to start anew elsewhere. Each family was almost entirely self-dependent as an economic unit. This was backed up by the village and the lineage acting as agents of mutual aid. The only instance

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1. Orans, 1965, p.18
2. See page

of dependents in the Santal way of life was the occasional presence of Bengali craftsmen in the larger villages. The most common of these were the Kamars. Culshaw states that every moderate sized Santal village had a family of Kamar blacksmiths in it. He says that the Santals have used iron implements in agriculture and hunting for a very long time, but that they have never worked iron themselves. In a similar status in larger villages there were often leather workers, a drum maker and weavers, who were not Santals. They were paid in grain after the harvest and were allowed to own land in the village. They were involved in almost all aspects of Santal life except for the one proviso that there was no intermarriage (1). This was the most extreme degree of economic specialisation among the Santals.

In reference to Bailey's criteria for placing a social grouping on the caste-tribe continuum the Santals must be put close to the polar tribal type. Not only was there very little role specialisation, but, on his criteria of relationship to land which says, "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" (2), the Santals were at the extreme polar tribal end. And if we add that they had only a limited association with the land as they were mainly hunters and gatherers, then they were even more at the extreme of the tribal continuum. Here again there was no element of dependance or role specialisation in the economic structure, other than that on the resident

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1. Culshaw, 1949, p.18-19
2. Bailey, 1960, p14

Bengali blacksmiths. Hunting and fishing was carried out by the males who supplied the food for their own household only. During the large corporate hunts the game caught by the individual belonged to him. The forest was considered to be communal property that did not even belong to a specific village. Within Bailey's criteria the Santals are not only characterised by egalitarian interaction within the society, but externally any potential interaction that might be of a dominant-dependent type was rigorously avoided.

In attempting to create an analytical framework in which to distinguish the tribal from the caste and peasant types of society Bailey has concentrated on the structure of economic and political interaction with minimal emphasis on general cultural features. Accepting that it is useful to recognise a distinction between tribal and peasant types of society on a universal basis, it would muddle the distinction to include cultural differences for the purpose of universal comparison. But in attempting to establish the tribal mode of life among the Santals as the basis for a study of historical development and social change, it is very illuminating to accentuate the cultural differentiation that existed between the Santal population and the Hindu Bengalis. Any concept of a tribe-caste and tribe-peasant continuum is mainly concerned with the process by which tribal people are integrated or not with the traditional civilisation of India. And in the event of analysing the process of interaction over time and the developments that occured, it is necessary to understand both the structural form of the distinction and the cultural content, as this forms the motivational base of many of the events that take place. Therefore I am not

just concerned with demonstrating an analytical distinction but also a very positive cultural opposition. It is my contention that the cultural opposition between the tribal people called the Santals and the peasant Bengalis formed the principle that structured the Santal sphere of activity at this period in time.

Section 2. A Brief Ethnography.

What then was the conspectus of cultural differences that set the Santals' social existence apart from that of the general culture of India? In answering this it is not possible to draw the distinction closely. But having already stated that the Santals were close to the tribal pole, one can give a brief ethnography and draw from this certain threads that particularly distinguished them.

I have already outlined the ecological and economic isolation that the Santals were so eager to preserve. The homogeneous and unstratified quality of Santal life has been established. These are good indices for drawing an analytical distinction. But other factors such as language, kinship, religion, myths of origin, a lack of ethical religion and a puritanical asceticism, a closeness of the human, natural and supernatural worlds, and an endemic disassociation from the great tradition of Indian culture go together to create a cultural barrier in terms of both objective reality and subjective awareness. And as we will see later these factors contributed to a conscious awareness, that was stated by the Santals, of the differences between themselves and the Hindu Bengalis.

One of the most important factors of Santal life to the anthropologist is that there were very few corporate activities or institutions that overtly bound them together, or gave them any form of centrality. But certain features of the political organisation distinguished them from the caste-peasant population, although they were not politically organised into a separate unitary community. As Orans says, "as far back as historical records extend (to the early nineteenth century), the Santal have not been politically unified,"[1] and, "the clan, like the tribe, is both acephalous and non-corporate,"[2]. As an organisation they were not distinctly unified into a known isolable grouping from the Bengalis, but were unified by the cultural distinctions that existed. Let us then look at those observable cultural distinctions.

A common origin and a common historical experience that is distinct, is an obvious basis for an awareness of a separate identity. The Santals appear to have hived off from the tribes of Chotanagpur, and moved down to the 'junglee' hills of western Bengal, where they were commonly cultivators, gatherers, hunters and bandits.[3] Racially they shared common physical features with the tribes of Chotanagpur.[4] But what made these features socially significant was their realisation in mythical form. It was the very acephalous nature of Santal society that rendered their common myth of origin such a highly emphasized element of their culture, so that Bodding writes,[5]

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1. Orans, 1965, p. 10.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
3. L.S.S. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteer: Santal Parganas, Calcutta, 1910, p. 90-95.
4. Ibid., p. 91-101, and Biswas, 1956, p. 158-213.
5. P.O. Bodding, Bengal District Gazetteer: Santal Parganas, edited by L.S.S. O'Malley. Calcutta, 1910, p. 92.

> "The traditions (the myths) have been handed down from 'guru' to 'chela' from generation to generation. They differ in minor details, but all have certain fragments of song in common, which record the main events ..... One indispensible part of the ceremony (at which the myth of origin is repeated) is that the 'guru' recites the tradition, beginning with the creation and ending with how they came to their present home. In this way the traditions are kept up to date, and they possess a real living interest for the people, enough to give them more than a mythological value."

This formed the most enduring Santal institution. It placed the individual within his own distinct cultural heritage and social context. It was a reminder of the personal possession of a unique membership of a grouping through ascription. Hunter says that, "Legends almost word for word the same are told from North to South."[1]

The allegorical content of the myth is unimportant here and may be found in almost any book on the Santals.[2] As Burridge writes, "Really what a myth ' is about' or 'is telling us' or its bearers is a secondary consideration, a byproduct of the main point at issue, the structure of articulate thought."[3] Here it was serving to validate a common origin and thereby to bolster the uniqueness of Santal society as a distinct social grouping.

The myth of origin does not merely state the common origin of the Santals, but also the kinship ties and the basic reference points around which kinship was manipulated. This kinship system made them utterly distinct from the Bengalis. It isolated the Santal from the Bengali in that marriage was impossible between them. Then it was the feature of their society that differentiated them on a caste-tribal continuum from the Bengalis, insofar as the organisation of kinship operated as a

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 149.

2. Orans, 1965, p. 4-6; Datta Majumder, 1955, p. 22-23; Culshaw, 1948, p. 65-68.

3. Burridge, 1967, p. 100.

mechanism of political organisation. Other than the common features of religion and language, kinship was the most important factor by which any Santal related to any other Santal in everyday life. The entire body of Santals, however acephalous or diffuse, fitted into the clan system. And through this system all relationships could be qualified in a segmentary and egalitarian way.

The myth of origin tells how the two geese, which were created by the Great Lord 'Thakour', gave birth to 'Pilcu Haram' and 'Pilcu Budhi', (literally the first old woman and the first old man). In turn they gave birth to twelve daughters and twelve sons, who married in couples, and whose offspring formed the twelve clans that made up the Santals kinship system. It was decided that the members of each clan should not intermarry. However by 1961 Orans was only able to find nine clans.[1]

Clan membership was determined patrilineally, and the clan was largely a putative kinship unit. Apart from bearing a common name to which some writers have attached a degree of totemism, while others say that any totemic associations were redundant, the clan was not a corporate unit and had thousands of members. But nonetheless, as Orans puts it,[2]

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1. Orans, 1965, p. 10. The reports of the number of clans varies considerably in the literature. Bodding, 1910, says that only seven sons and seven daughters were bom initially. However all but one pair were destroyed. This original pair than gave birth to seven pairs, and later five more clans were created, of which one has been lost. Different writers have found different numbers of clans at different times and places. Datta-Mjumder, 1956, finds ten clans in one area and eleven in another. Man, 1867, finds the full twelve clans. Dalton, 1872, finds eleven, while Sir H.H. Risley, 1891, notes twelve clans. In certain areas subclan names appear to have been mixed with clan names. However there is an overall correspondence between the names of the clans in different reports. For the best summary of these variations see Datta-Majumder, 1956.

2. Orans, 1965, p. 10.

> "The clan is an exogamous social entity which serves as a reference point establishing kinship relations among all Santals. Santals unable to trace 'actual' common relatives can establish their kinship via the clan; for example, a non kin of the same sex and same clan might be regarded as a brother, or an older man of one's mother's clan might be regarded as a mother's brother."

The clan did play a small religious role in that its members performed specific religious rituals to clan deities.[1]

Traditionally each clan was divided into twelve subclans, often called 'Khuts'.[2] However in 1942 there were many more than twelve each. Gaudsal[2] lists two hundred and seventy seven subclans in the Santal Parganas alone. This was also complicated by many subclan names being found in more than one clan. But Culshaw says that, "These subclans do not affect the rules governing marriage outside the clan, and while it is unusual for the member of one subclan to marry a member of a corresponding subclan in another clan, there is no absolute barrier preventing such marriages."[3] He goes on to say that, "Each of the subclans possesses a distinctive myth and also customs that differentiate it from the others, while the same is true for the clans. These customs affect life at many points. Apart from marriage, the taboos determine in some cases the types of ornaments worn, the types of houses that may be built, and the kinds of food that may be eaten. They are also linked with the worship of spirits, for there are special clan and subclan sacrifices." Like the clan the subclan was patrilineal and exogamous, though the rule of exogamy was much more strictly upheld.

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1. Culshaw, 1949, p. 71

2. Gaudsal, 1942, p. 431-9. However Orans, op. cit. p. 11, says that this is a misnomer, which can only be used in reference to ceremonial circles, and indirectly to the local lineage, "those who worship at a single circle".

3. Culshaw, 1949, p. 71.

Within the subclan were the local lineages that formed a patrilineal group of male kin, who lived within a few miles of one another. This was the largest corporate kin group, which gathered for such occasions as funerals and marriages. The local lineage shared 'house deities', 'field deities' and ancestral spirits, while each had their own distinct ritual practices, which were kept secret. Occasionally they gathered as a complete unit to celebrate these rites. The period varied from two to six years. Orans[1] says that field worship was inextricably bound up with funerary rights, the ancestral element in both being a common factor. Among the Northern Santal, representatives of the local lineage made a long journey to the Damodar river, where certain bones of the deceased were left. This involved considerable cost to the local lineage. However several deaths may have accumulated before this ceremony was performed. This funeral service has formed an important role in giving the Santals unity. It was necessarily a function of the local lineage, and Orans says: "Thus their very great fear of living exclusively among non-Santals is often expressed by saying, 'If we live among others, who will be there to bury us'."[2]

Although the local lineage was not an economically corporate unit it did serve for mutual aid. "To deny food and lodging to members of one's local lineage, while not strictly speaking unthinkable, would be the greatest of social offenses, and if food and lodging are available, something that no sane Santal would contemplate."[3] Also loans were made almost interest free within the local lineage.

1. Orans, 1965, p. 14.
2. Ibid., p. 16.
3. Ibid., p. 16.

One of the most important features of the Santal way of life, the village, was also dominated by kinship relations. Typically the founders were members of the local lineage, and held a powerful stake in that village. They owned the best land and resources, and usually held the offices of Manjhi or chief, and Ojha or priest. And although the villagers could hand any of the offices except that of priest on to any other member of the village, the kinship relations tended to restrict this choice, sothat primogeniture was the norm.

The village normally consisted of ten to thirty households along a single street and surrounded by its fields. It seldom grew any larger, as people were continually hiving off and starting new villages. Members of the local lineage would leave the old site and search for a new one. The new site was chosen on grounds of convenience, but there was a strong degree of religious ritual attached to it; both to find out if the site was good in the eyes of the ancestors and to give it the necessary religious sanctions.[1] The leader of this lineage then became the headman or Manjhi of the new village. His role was that of a 'primus inter pares', who administered the affairs of that village. Intra-village disputes were brought to him, and he attempted a settlement by compromise. The new village had no relations with the pargana of the founder village but joined the pargana that was formed by the villages that were closest to its new site. The Manjhi sat on this pargana council that dealt with inter-village disputes.

But despite the appointment of a Manjhi the members of the village were always the final authority; the officials selected

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1. Carstairs, 1935, see chapter II, the Pioneers, that described the setting up of a new village. See also Biswas, 1956, p. 14.

were only to represent them. However the concept of 'the people' was not such an ephemeral idea as it may sound. In the hot season the men from a large number of villages gathered together for the huge annual hunt - the great moment of the Santal year. After the hunt they met as a large body under the presidency of a special leader, who was appointed for this occasion only. At this meeting matters of general concern were discussed, and the voice of the people was heard. Individuals might be excommunicated,[1] and Manjhis and Parganas brought to justice if necessary.

So the politico-legal institutions of the Manjhis and Parganas, and village and pargana councils unified the moral consensus of the Santals, which was said to be diffused through the people, by representing it in an organised form. In fact the people embodied the institution rather than the institution embodying the people. It is this element of Santal society that emphasised its egalitarian content and placed it close to the tribal pole.

The net effect was that kinship and political organisations were closely, but not rigidly, inter-related. The significant feature was that the Manjhi was usually the head of the local lineage in the village, so the Pargana, the head of the pargana council was frequently the head of the first local lineage to settle in the area. Although we may say that the Santals were acephalous, this system ran coherently through the entire population. There was therefore a diffuse unit of Santal society that could have been called upon at a level greater than the immediate one of the pargana.

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1. Sachchidananda, 1969, p. 281-288. Bitlaha is the institutional complex that surrounded excommunication from the group.

I have discussed kinship and the role it played in political organisation, and the degree of comprehensive structure that it gave to the Santals, with their macro-system in view. But kinship also played the vital role in the microstructure of family life as the economic unit of everyday existence. The nuclear and the extended family were the basic units of day to day life. The family remained together as a household until the death of the father, though it was possible for a married son to force a division of this economic unit before the father's death. Apparently this was very common when Martin Orans made his study. He reports that in one village only 15% of the households were extended families, while the rest were nuclear ones.[1] Not only was the family an economic unit holding land, but it also had a ritual unity. In each house there was a small area, that was set apart, called the 'bhitar', or 'inner room'. This was a small shrine to the patrilineal ancestors, where small oblations of rice beer were offered. But even at this micro-level a form of total unity was expressed, as the universally recognised deity of the Santals, called 'Maran Buru', received offerings at the same time.

The family household was an integral part of the village as well as being the economic unit, and the fount of the more intimate everyday behaviour in the village. The Santal village was a very important part of life and performed many corporate activities through its function of being the seat of the local lineage, and because it was, at this period, a relatively isolated community in the jungle. Although land was held by the family unit and was not saleable, it also belonged in some respects to the village. If it was not being used or the

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1. Orans, 1865, p. 23.

owners had gone away, it reverted to general village ownership until someone needed it and was prepared to farm it as a member of that village: for individuals never owned land outside the village in which they lived. In many respects the village was the largest territorial unit in the Santal sphere of activity. The Santal had a strong attachment to his land. It had been cleared by his ancestors and formed a vital part of his social and economic heritage. And the land that the villagers cultivated was protected by the 'sima bonga', or boundary deity, in the form of stones. These marked off the village land from the surrounding jungle.

The Santal village, dominated bythe local lineage and a uni-ethnic unit, was self-sufficient in all the elements of social life, except for the occasional presence of Bengali craftsmen in the larger units. Headed by the Manjhi, as its adjudicator and representative, it also had a 'paranaik', who acted as the Manjhi's deputy. There was also the 'joj manjhi', whose role is difficult to define. He appears to have been a kind of 'censor of morals' and a guardian of the young men, while his wife was the equivalent for the girls. Culshaw states that the 'joj manjhi' was probably a survival of the dormitory system for the yong that is found among the related Mundari speaking tribes of Chotanagpur.[1]

Most important of all the village was the centre of religious life. In the middle, and usually outside the house of the Manjhi, was the 'manjhistan' - a small roofed dais. It was a shrine to 'Maran Buru', the tribal God, and to the founding fathers of the village. It was here that the inhabitants met for public occasions, such as the meetings of the 'more hor'.

1. Culshaw, 1949, p. 9.

On the edge of the village was the 'jaherstan', or sacred grove. This was a cluster of Sal trees, the presence of which was vital for the setting up of a village. Here were the shrines to the many and diverse spirits or 'bongas'. This grove was the centre of religious life in each village. In charge of all religious affairs were the two 'naiks', or priests, who were essential to the welfare of the village and its inhabitants. They were not appointed by the villagers but when one of them died, he was succeeded by whoever was possessed by the relevant 'bonga'.[1]

But despite the village being a distinct unit it was structurally connected to other villages. Firstly there was the quasi politico-legal institution of the pargana, or group of contiguous villages with its group head, also called the Pargana. But although in theory the village was made up of families from any clan or lineage, in fact most of the members were close kin in some way or other. Martin Orans says, "Though not formally so, the village is in practice almost completely exogamous. This is partly due to the close relationship between villagers and to the feeling that if a man's in-laws, and particularly his brother-in-law, are living in the same village, he will have difficulty in 'disciplining' his wife; to put it as Santals do, 'She will run home to her house all the time making trouble between her husband and brothers'."[2] There was therefore a complex network of kinship relations connecting the villages together. So although the Santals had little formalised organisation to bind them together, there were many interconnections diffused through the social structure.

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1. For details see Bodding, 1926, and Culshaw, 1949, p. 85-91.
2. Orans, 1965, p. 20.

And though all their units were not contiguous, those ones that were close together had many interconnections, while a few spread out to more remote units.

I have looked at the institutional complex that unified individuals and groups of varying size with each other. But there were certain features of unique commonly shared likeness, which were less structured, and spread like a sheet to cover the entire grouping of Santals at a glance. Language is the most obvious, and the most pervasive bond that any grouping can have. It was a bond that the Santals had in common. Although there were dialect differences between the North and the South, they were at all times mutually intelligible.[1] MacPhail describes it as, "the most remarkable possession that this people, exceptionally poor in this world's goods, can boast of. It is a triumph of complexity, with moods and tenses all of its own, a language which can only be learned by living among the people who speak it."[2] It is described by Grierson[3] as a Mundari language, and as with many other cultural features it links the Santals with the tribes of Chotanagpur. Martin Orans calls it, "the basis for intimacy".[4] He stresses the pressures that were put on him to learn the language while he was doing fieldwork, and the great effect that even a scant knowledge made in day to day relations.

One factor that should not be forgotten, as it comes out strongly in all the material on the Santals, is the idea that they have of the good life. There is a general lack of an ethical religion and a puritanical asceticism. This, with a

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1. Grierson, 1903, p. 30-36.
2. MacPhail, 1944.
3. Grierson, 1903, p. 30.
4. ORans, 1965, p. 6.

closeness of the human, natural and supernatural worlds, and an endemic disassociation from the great traditions of Indian culture, serves to set them very positively apart from the peasant characteristics of the Hindu population of Bengal. Martin Orans provides a penetrating observation of this, and even though it was written of the Santals as he found them in the 1960s, it seems worth quoting at length here.[1] The word 'raksa', meaning pleasure, he says is often on the lips of the Santals, and is dear to their hearts.

> "The traditional sense of the word pleasure (raksa) makes it virtually synonymous with dancing and singing, playing and listening to music, eating festively, drinking beer, and implicitly sexual activity; in practice these are the activities of a Santal festival. When a traditional and typically uneducated Santal meets another from a distant region, one of the first questions asked will be, 'How is pleasure in your region?" The reply will focus on the activities mentioned above. Indeed the only occasion in which I observed a fully sober Santal male adult burst into tears was during such a festive event. When I asked the old man why he was weeping at such a time, he replied, 'The sound of the drum reminds me of the pleasure of my youth and of my deceased wife, who shared in my pleasure.' It will be recalled that it was rice beer that enabled the propagation of the Santals in the beginning of things,[2] and if there is one word that is more frequently uttered than any other, more frequent even than the sounds of festive drums, it is the cry of 'handi, handi, handi', (rice beer; from 'handia', Hindi = an earthenware container) ..... As the Santal think of it 'pleasure' is pre-eminently a social phenomenon: it obtains essentially during festivals, which are community events; it derives from a festive atmosphere, which only the assembled community can create; and it reaches its community centred peak as throngs of men and women form a large circle, men and women alternating so that each one has a member of the opposite sex on each side, hands joined together. While I am sensible of anthropological naivete, the remarks and demeanor of the Santals on such occasions leave little doubt that such performances are a potent source as well as a reflection of community solidarity. During the dance and after there is generally great camaraderie, and everyone exchanges cigarettes and rice beer, while moving about from one house to another."

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1. Orans, 1965, p. 7-9.
2. The Santal myth of origin states that the original pair were unable to make love as they were siblings, and subject to the incest taboo. To get round this little problem, Thakour, the Creator God, showed them how to brew rice beer. They got so drunk that all inhibitions were lost and the Santal race was conceived.

Although these festivals were acted out in the village and were therefore most important in creating village solidarity, they did draw Santals together from as far as thirty miles when Orans carried out his study. Many villages staggered their festivals so that surrounding ones could participate, and reciprocity became possible. "Pleasure," Orans says, "as the Santals understand it, is a shared understanding which creates immediate bonds with co-tribals wherever they may be from."

The closeness of the human world and the disassociation from the great traditions of India are also well brought out by Hunter, from whom I would like to quote in order to establish those more subtle differences in behaviour between the Santal and the Bengali, the tribal and the peasant. Although they may not be of great analytical value because of their impressionist manner, they are of crucial importance in outlining the human barrier that correlates with a social barrier. Hunter says,

> "He (the Santal) keeps his respect chiefly for the aged among his own people; and in dealings with outsiders, while courteous and hospitable, he is at the same time firm and free from cringing. Unlike the Hindu, he never thinks of making money by a stranger, scrupulously avoids all topics of business, and feels pained if payment is pressed upon him for the milk and fruits that his wife brings out. When he is at last prevailed upon to enter upon business matters his dealings are offhand; he names the true price at first, which a lowlander never does, and politely waives all discussion or beating down. He would rather that strangers did not come to his village; but when they do come, he treats them as honoured guests. He would in a still greater degree prefer to have no dealings with his guests; but when his guests introduce the matter, he deals with them as honestly as he would his own people."1

Despite the difficulties in giving any precise description of Santal social life before the famine of 1770, I have been

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 216.

able to outline those general features which, although they were mostly recorded at a later date, have remained fairly constant. In doing this I have referred to the unique factors that enable the Santals to be called tribal, rather than caste or peasant. There was a clear emphasis in Santal society on ecological isolation and ethnic homogeneity. And in social interaction the stress was on egalitarianism, with the absence of any elite. The network of social interaction was structured by the institutions of the family, and kinship organisation, in which that vital unit, the village, was dominated by the local lineage.[1]

## Section 3. The Santals - A Tribe?.

At the beginning of the chapter I stated that although the Santals may be considered to have a tribal way of life, it does not imply that they were a tribe. Even if they were, it is necessary to qualify this by stating what was the form of that cohesion that enabled them to be called one. I call them a tribe because it is better to analyse the material with this conceptual framework. I am not giving an absolute or rigid definition to the term tribe. This would only obscure the argument. I am therefore accepting a limited heuristic and descriptive status to the term, which has only a low adequate level of explanation. But within this category of tribe there are many further qualifications to be made that will give the term greater meaning. These qualifications are the degree of identity crystalisation, territorial unity, political centrality and unity, and bases for cohesion through external differentiation and internal likeness.

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1. Sinha, 1965, p. 57-83.

First and foremost the Santals did not look on themselves as a tribe within a pluralist society, and they did not use the word Santal in reference to themselves until the uprising of 1855. Before this they referred to themselves as hor, meaning 'man', and sometimes as sapha hor, meaning 'pure man'.[1] S.C. Sen attaches a great deal of importance to this word.[2] Hor, horo or ho, he says, specifically refers to one's own tribal group, and carries the connotations of the 'pure people'. It can only be understood in contrast to the word diku, that has a pejorative sense and refers to 'those people', the 'outsiders'. However I disagree with Sen that hor refers to one's own tribal group. The word was used in the same sense by what have now become known as very different tribes. In fact Sen points out that it is a term used by all the Mundari speaking tribes of Chotanagpur. The difference between hor and diku would then appear not to be that between a specific grouping of people that later became known as Santals but would appear to circumscribe that general difference between the tribal and peasant populations of Bengal. It is possible then to say that the Santals did not see themselves as a specific tribe at this period, despite the fact that they were referred to by the Diku as Soantal or Soantar, meaning 'the people of Soant', the modern Silda Pargana in Midnapore.[3] The Diku were the people that the Hor raided and plundered and from whom the Santals desired to remain isolated. Hunter describes the Santals as being, "despised by the Hindus, and heartily repaying their contempt."[4] And Culshaw later characterised the relation-

1. O'Malley, 1910, p. 100.
2. Sen, et alia, 1969.
3. O'Malley, 1910, p. 99. "Etymologically there is nothing against this 'al' being a suffix in Hindi to form possessive adjectives and 'ar' doing the same for the Bengali word.
4. Hunter, 1872, p. 226.

ship between Hor and Diku with a short folktale. Though not without a strong element of pride, it shows how the Santal resented the dominance of the Diku.

> "The Diku are very greedy and cunning, and that is why they are called pusi (meaning cat in Santali). Whenever a cat sees that someone else has milk, curds, fish or any bit of food, he roams around with his 'mew mew', and as soon as he sees an opportunity he pounces on the food and finishes it off. The Diku go round like that, looking for opportunities."1

My point is that the Santals had no specific name for that total group of people who shared all the cultural likenesses that were later known to be peculiarly Santal. Although as we have seen from their myth of origin and their kinship system there was an idea of certain people being included as being common, there appears to have been no name for that group as a known and bounded entity, or as a specific tribe. The term Hor by which they knew themselves had meaning only in contrast to Diku. It would appear then that the Santals only recognised themselves at the level of local interaction as being different, that is in face to face interaction with the Diku. There was no idea of a tribe of Santals that was internally cohesive and generically different from the Bengalis. In this sense their sphere of activity was only conceptualised in terms of two groups,and as such there was no structural necessity for a specific identity for the Santals.

Not only did the Santals lack a distinct view of themselves as a tribe at this period, but they had no territorial unity. The village was their largest universally distinct territory. That is it was the largest unit that did not contain any Diku, except the occasional Bengali craftsmen, who formed a marginal group. Obviously certain parganas could be said to have been

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1. Culshaw, 1949, p. 15.

Santal territories in that no Bengalis were living in them. But generally the Santal villages were scattered over a large area of Orissa and Bihar,[1] and the villages were largely located in the jungle clad hills between areas of Bengali settlement. There also seems to be no recognition of a specifically Santal area. The significance of this will be realised later when the British created an area for the protection of tribal people in 1827, and it was rapidly colonised by the Santals.

Another factor which makes it only possible to use the term tribe in reference to the Santals as a broad descriptive category, is the very acephalous nature of their political structure. There were no corporate activities or institutions that overtly bound them together, or gave them any form of centrality. As Martin Orans says, "as far back as historical records extend (to the early nineteenth century), the Santal have not been politically unified,"[2] and "the clan, like the tribe, is both acephalous and non-corporate."[3]

However although it is difficult to find the basis of solidarity that is necessary for the close definition of a group as a tribe, the Santals have, up to now, been given a tribal status and I agree that this label is correct as a broad descriptive category. As the history of the Santals develops, certain very significant changes occur within this label. It would therefore be a mistake to oversimplify the concept of tribe. A tribe is not a merely quantitative denomination of a number of people. It is also a qualitative measure of the nature of its differentiation from other groups, and its inter-

1. See page .
2. Orans, 1965, p. 10.
3. Ibid. p. 12.

nal solidarity and cohesion. This was particularly pertinent when those other people were not tribal but peasant societies. The concept of a tribe is in a dynamic relationship to other non-tribal groups, as is shown by the relationship between the Hor and the Diku. Any changes that are to occur in the relationship between the Hor and the Diku will therefore have a significant effect on the nature of the Santal tribal polity.

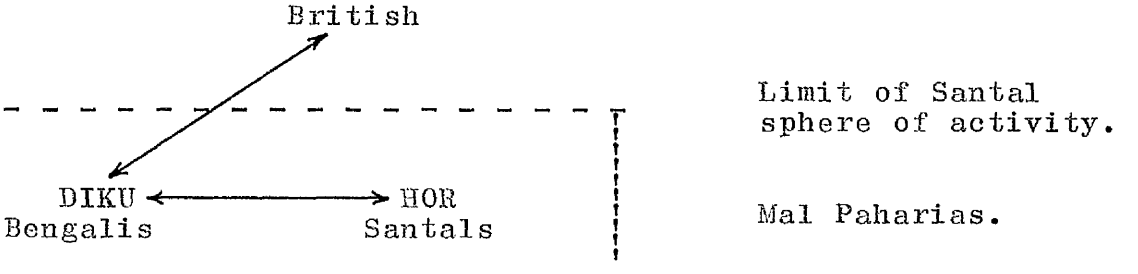
The Santal then were a tribe that was diffuse and acephalous, with few corporate institutions above the village level. ThEre was no overall identity, or territorial unity. However there was a large degree of cultural likeness as I described in Section 2 of this chapter. And any cohesion that was expressed in the idea of hor was through external differentiation.

## Section 4. The Structure of Relations.

Immediately prior to 1770 the structure of relations for the Santals in their sphere of activity was essentially a bipartite one. They were not one group among many, but were just the group in opposition to the Diku. As such there was a definitely emphasized social distance between the two groups, with a Santal desire to remain isolated. This isolation and social distance was made possible at this period because the Santals were still geographically mobile. One can say that because the social distance between the Hor and the Diku was so great, ~~that~~ it was structurally unnecessary for Santal unity and identity to assume any more than an informal nature. Therefore there were no formal institutions that established unity if it had not existed by the bipartite opposition. Even though the Bengalis referred to the Santals at this period as Soantars, they did not see themselves as a tribe among many tribes, but merely

as some kind of solidary association or aggregate of villages, parganas, clans and subclans, who spoke a different language and worshipped different Gods. It was only later, when their external relations had reached out further than this bipartite system, and their sphere of activity had expanded, that they became aware of Santalness as a specific identity.

We can then characterise the Santal structure of relations in the following simple diagram, that will become more relevant as it is compared with later diagrams of the same system as it expanded.




At this period the Santals were unaware of the growing presence of the British in Bengal, though they were rapidly becoming significant for the Bengalis, as I will show in the next chapter. The Mal Paharias, known to the Santals as the Maler later acquire a significant position in the structure of relations. They are a neighbouring tribal group living to the north of the Santals in the Rajmahal Hills (see map opposite page 69). At this period there appear to have been no relations between them.

Within this structure the Hor-Diku relationship, characterised by opposition and social distance, was the vital consideration. This concept is one that will form a central theme of this thesis. It is an enduring feature of Santal existence to the present day, but the qualitative changes that it has undergone will provide a penetrating insight into the changes in the Santal way of life.

Section 5. Summary.

The problem with discussing the Santals of the pre-1770 period is that the material is very thin, so that there has to be an element of conjecture at this stage. But the more authoritative material that exists for later periods will validate much that has been said. Although this may appear* to be conjectural it is not. It means that history moves forward, and that although it is possible to conjecture what went before from what happened after, it would be a mistake to present it this way round. The essential feature of historical analysis is the isoldation of long term trends.[1] And until these have been built up it is only possible to make a very limited analysis.

Accepting the limitation that this element of conjecture imposes certain hypotheses can be stated that form the basis of this thesis and will be materially substantiated by close study of the ensuing historical developments and social changes. In an eagerness to get out of the straitjacket that all studies of the Santals have had of establishing a cultural baseline for a comparative synchronic analysis of social change, all that can be done is to give a set of hypotheses, that is less constraining.

Theoretically I have established one major point, that the Santals had a tribal way of life, that they can be loosely described as a tribe with certain more rigid qualifications. Their external sphere was governed by the Hor-Diku relationship that reflects on the nature of their tribal solidarity.

As was said in the introduction, a gap in the anthropology of the Santals must be filled by outlining the historical

1. See Chapter 7, Section 1, and also Hugo, 1969, chapter 6, Objections, p. 189-196.

developments and ongoing social changes. Many writers have looked at the internal cultural changes,[1] but unfortunately they have missed some very important external reorientations of the Santals. These occur in the external sphere of Santal activity.

The structure of relations is the pattern of interaction in the Santal sphere of activity. As the concern is with the Santals, this study is focussed on those elements in West Bengal that played a part in their development. By definition the totality of those elements makes up their sphere of activity. So the sphere of activity can only be defined pragmatically. It includes any element that interacted either directly or indirectly in the affairs of the Santals, and is open to the inclusion of more or less elements. Later we will see that as the sphere of activity expanded, new elements came in as initially conceptualised in some incomplete form. The instance of the East India Company being known as "Cupni", who was the "Great God that was too far away", is a good example of this.

Given that this sphere had a simple bipartite structure and that the expanding interest of the British in Bengal will shortly be affecting the Santals, as is discussed in the next chapter; what effects is this likely to have on the Santal way of life? Firstly it seems logical that if migration ceases to be easy and isolation cannot be maintained geographically, and/or that greater contiguity with the Bengali arises, the concept of Hor-Diku will change. Previously typified by an informal opposition between the 'pure people' and 'those people', it will become more socially formalised along the lines of

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1. In particular see Datta-Majumder 1956, also Biswas 1956.

Santal-Diku. This process will itself imply an awakening of tribal identity. A self-styling of Hor as Santal would be a critical innovation. Logically it would lead to a move towards an internal change of organisation to present a more unified front, such as the call for a leader, or the creation of a centralised political organisation.

Secondly with the imminent arrival of the British influence in West Bengal this would create changes in the external sphere of the Santals. The internal sphere, being interdependant with the external sphere would also be affected, such that the entire sphere of activity will change. On the basis of what is known it is difficult to hypothesise, but the likelihood is that with the inevitable modernisation and increase in communications, pacification of the tribes, and economic development, then the sphere of activity will become greatly expanded to include new categories. This will no doubt give rise to significant changes in orientation and internal composition of the Santals.

# Chapter 3.

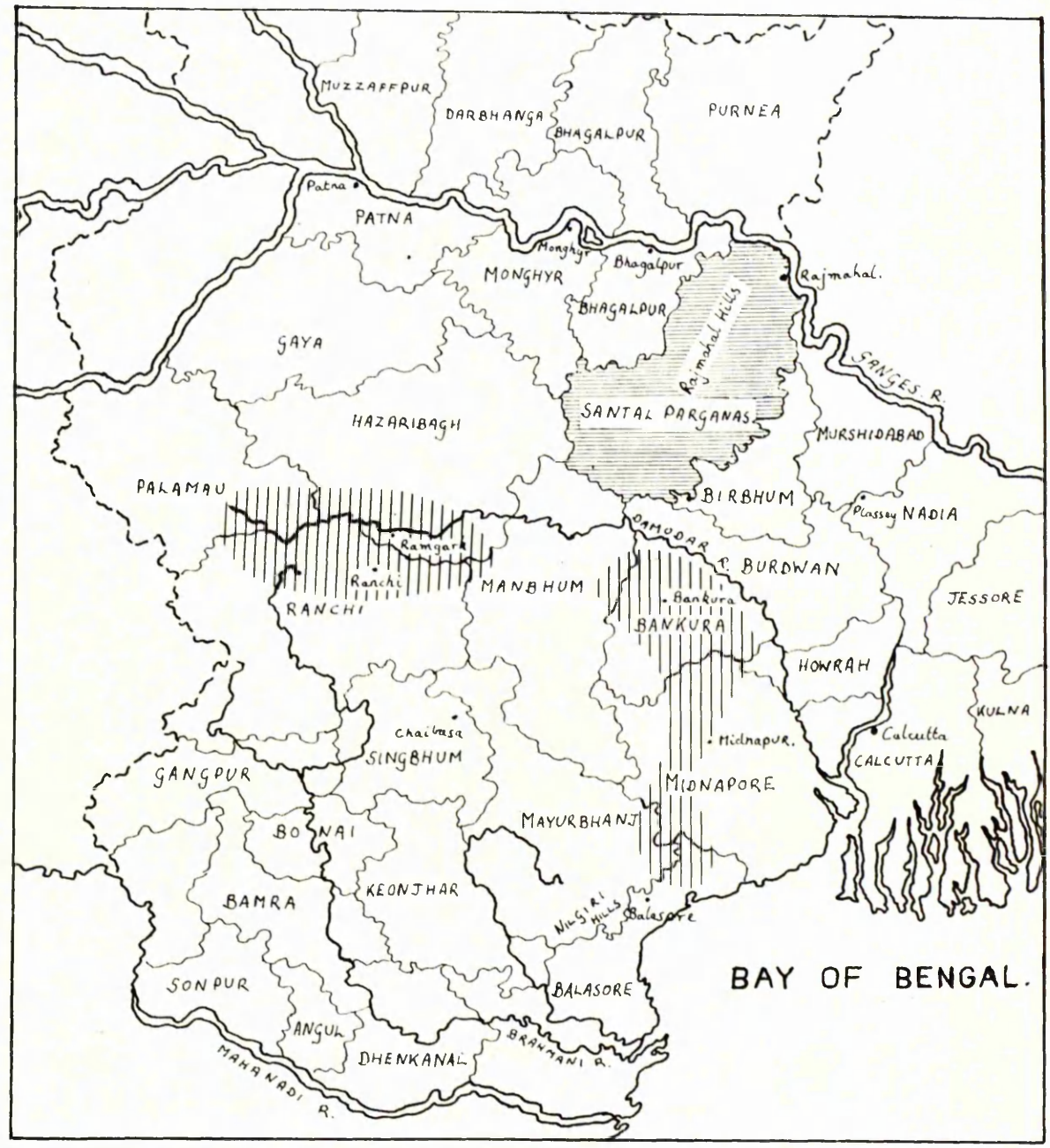
# The Arrival of the British and the Santal Migration.

## Section 1. Introduction.

In the last chapter I discussed the parameters of Santal society, and in doing this identified these people as the subject of this study. The discussion referred to the period before 1770, that is, prior to any contact with the British. The growing British interest in West Bengal after this moment in time was to expand dramatically and have profound consequences on the Santal way of life. Contact between the British and the Santals was not recognised institutionally until the appointment of a special officer for the superintendence of tribal affairs in 1836. But between 1770 and 1836 certain very important precedents were formed and preconditions set in the absence of any direct contact between the Santals and the British, which were to bear on the outcome. Some of the most important of them were set by August Cleveland in his policies for the administration of the Paharias. These were a different ethnic group from the Santals, who were in direct contact with the British at an earlier date. I must therefore discuss this pre-contact period of British-Santal history in some detail. So this chapter is, in effect, the study of two separate communities, the precedents that were set by each, and the development of their interaction.

## Section 2. Geographical Introduction.

Before I can discuss the early history of the British in West Bengal it is necessary to take a look at the topography of the area, so that a picture of their physical movements will become clear as it is described.




## MAP OF WEST BENGAL.

division of Santal Parganas.

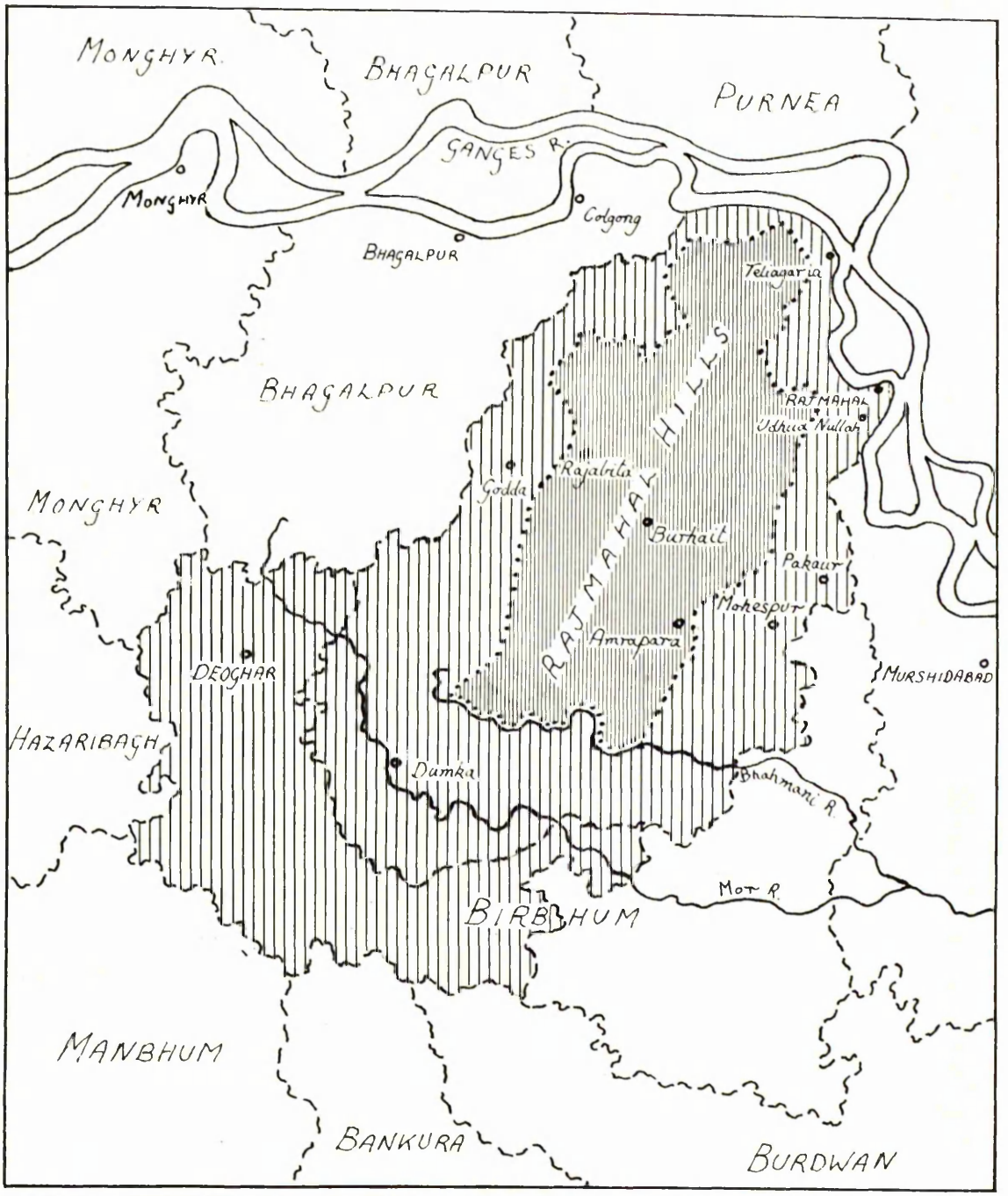
Area of Santal population, pre 1770.

Rivers.

Boundary of division.

Boundary of Bengal.

Imperial Gazetteer Of India. Vol. XXVI. Atlas. Clarendon. Oxford. 1909.




## MAP OF SANTAL PARGANAS AND DAMIN-I-KOH.

Damin-i-Koh created 1823.

Santal Parganas created 1856.

Boundary of districts.

Boundary of Damin.

Rivers.

Towns.

Bihar District Gazetteer; Santal Parganas, Gazette Office, Calcutta, 1965.

Forming the northern boundary of the relevant area is the River Ganges. This was the major trade route from the north of India to Fort William. Along it lay the large towns of Patna, Monghyr, Bhagalpur and Rajmahal. The whole of this region may be described as plains except for the Rajmahal Hills. These stretch north-south, for some 60 miles, from Bhagalpur in the north to the River Bhahmani in the south. They were the last major barrier that the Ganges passes before turning south to its delta region and the Bay of Bengal, and held a commanding position over the Ganges routeway at the northern point. This point is called the Teliagaria Pass.

By the time that the British came to the area the plains were covered by zemindari estates to the west, south and east of the hills. The hills themselves are not very high, with a general elevation of 500-800 feet but with some rising to 1,500 feet. They were not at the time occupied by any zemindari estates, but were the homeland of the Mal Paharias. Like the Santals these people can be described as tribal. Their raiding had led to a large area of foothills and plains, surrounding the Rajmahal Hills, remaining uncultivated and largely uninhabited jungle. This area was later demarcated the "Damin-I-Koh", a Persian name meaning 'the skirts of the hills', by the British and may be clearly seen on the map.

The Santals were in the south of the area. They were found mostly in small areas of hill country that had not been cultivated or come under the control of the zemindari estates. The northernmost outposts were those Santals in the Ramgarh Hills, just south of the River Mor. From here they were found in similar 'junglee' area southwards through Bankura to N. Balasore.

## 3. British Interest, Instability, and Stability.

As Fort William expanded so did its hinterland, and that area of land associated with the Ganges routeway soon came within the sphere of British interest. The Teliagaria Pass with its two forts of Teliagaria and Sakrigali, often referred to as the "Key of Bengal",[1] was of particular interest. Rajmahal had been made the capital of Bengal in 1592, and Akbar was sent there as Governor two years later. He built a palace and set up a mint, which continued there despite the capital being moved to Dacca in 1612. Early in the seventeenth century the British had a trading post at Patna. At this time, when Rajmahal was under Shah Shuja, the British had a representative there in Dr. Gabriel Boughton, who had cured the daughter of the Emperor Shah Jahan. Knowing this the Captain of the Lioness was sent in 1650 to arrange for free trade. His orders said, "You know how important it will be for the better carrying on of trade in these parts to have the Prince's 'pharman'[2], that the company may outstrip the Dutch in point of privilege and freedom."[3] This was granted in 1674 when the court gave the British free trade in the whole of Bengal. With the fall of Shah Shuja the British had difficulties with the new governor, Mir Jumla, who stopped and harassed a number of their boats on the Ganges. However relations improved and in 1676 they set up an agency at Rajmahal in connection with the mint, where the East India Company sent their treasure to be coined as rupees.

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1. L.S.S. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteer, Santal Parganas, Calcutta, 1910, pp. 4 and 25.
2. royal edict.
3. Ibid., p. 30, footnote C.R. Wilson, Early Annals of the English in Bengal, I, p. 26-7.

In 1681 Robert Hedges was in charge of the agency. He later became President of the E.I.C. But in 1696 the rebellion of Subha Singh broke out, the country west of Rajmahal was overrun and Rajmahal was seized from the British. Finally in 1702 Aurangzeb ordered the seizure of all the servants of the company and their effects.

In 1708 an envoy was sent to Prince Azin-us-Shan with Rs. 15,000, that were taken in return for free trade without duties. In october the Prince suspended this unless a further Rs. 50,000 were paid to him and Rs. 100,000 to the Emperor at Surat. The company then stopped all Mughal shipping on the Hooghly River. In return the Prince seized Mr. Calthorpe, the British agent at Rajmahal. Next year, Rs. 45,000 were paid to the Prince for the continuation of free trade. After 1712 confusion followed with the death of the Emperor Shah Bahadur, In 1742 Rajmahal was taken over by the Marathas, and the British were thrown out of the region.

The position at this time was that the Emperor at Surat had delegated the frontier areas of his domain to hereditary Princes. The areas of concern, Rajmahal, Birbhum, Murshidabad and Bhagalpur, were on the extreme edge of an unwieldy jurisdiction, separated from the centre of authority by a long and often dangerous journey. The position of these Princes was somewhat analogous to the wardens of the marches in feudal Europe. They held their territory partly as semi-independent chiefs, and partly on a military tenure from the Emperor, paying a small tribute. Meanwhile they were responsible for the defense of the western frontier of Bengal.

However, as Hunter reports,[1] their power and ability was

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 14.

beginning to fail in the middle of the eighteenth century.[1]

> "In Beerbhoom, an unsuccessful rebellion had subjected the people to double burdens, and a painful disease had prevented several successive Princes from leading their troops in the field. I n the southern district, anciently known as Mala-bhumi, the Land of Wrestlers, but now known as Bishenpore, matters were still worse. Family feuds had wasted the inheritance, and the reigning Prince had sunk beneath an accumulation of misfortunes. In neither district was the hereditary prince in a position to provide security for the people. Bodies of marauders congregated on the frontier, where the mountain systems slope down to the Ganges valley, and in 1784 the evil had grown so far that it required the interference of the British power."[2]

The British, interested in expanding trade in Bengal, were being frustrated by the insecurity of the country in which they were operating. Whilst they had previously tried not to become involved in the internal politics of western Bengal, but merely to trade within the existing political set up, it was now becoming impossible for trade to expand fruitfully if subject to the vicissitudes of the weakening regime of the Princes. In order to stabilise the politics of the area it was becoming necessary either to bolster these regimes with British strength, or to take over control, so that unimpeded trade might be carried on. The motivation for increased economic stability was leading the British into greater and greater involvement in the politics of the frontier territories of Bengal.

This finally came to a head in 1763 when troops were sent under Major Adams, and gained a victory over Mir Kasim Ali at Udhua Nullah, a few miles south of Rajmahal.[3] As a result the British gained total control over Rajmahal. Along with Robert Clive's victory at the Battle of Plassey, they now had potential control over the whole of Bengal. And slowly in the forthcoming

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1. See page 91 and Carstairs, 1912, p. 216-219.

2. Hunter, 1872, p. 14.

3. See L.S.S. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteer, Santal Parganas, Calcutta, 1910, p. 285-289, section on Udhua Nullah for detailed description.

years we see this potential being realised. In May of 1785, the collector of Murshidabad, who was in charge of Birbhum, formally declared the civil authorities "destitute of any force capable of making head against such an armed multitude," and he petitioned for troops to be sent to fight against bands of plunderers four hundred strong.[1] A month later the bandits had grown to "near a thousand people" and were preparing for an organised invasion of Birbhum.[2] Accordingly a British civil officer was sent to Birbhum to support the Rajah; to inquire into the grievances of the peasants, and to find out "the amount of revenue which the principality, if relieved of the incidents of a military tenure and brought directly under British rule, could afford to pay."[3] However it was not till 1787 that Mr. Sherbourne was appointed the Collector at Bishenpore and Beerbhum. He resited the capital at Suri and the area finally changed from that of a military fief to a regular British district administered by a collector and his assistants, defended by the Company's troops and in daily communication with Calcutta.

Having gained control over Bishenpore and Birbhum, the British soon took over the Diwanis[4] of Bhagalpur, Monghyr and Hazaribagh. Trading and revenue collection was established on a firm basis and adventurers came in to expand on this. This is shown nicely by Bradley-Birt who describes the minor con-

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1. Letter from E.O. Ives, Esq., Magistrate of Murshidabad, to Gov. Gen. and Gentlemen of the Council of Revenue, dated 15th August 1784. Bengal Judicial Records.

2. Ibid., dated 30th June 1785.

3. Miscellaneous Proceedings, Bengal Records, Committee of Revenue, Fort William, 1786.

4. Revenue division.

tentions that grew up between the administrators. He writes of irate letters between the Collector at Bhagalpur and the Colonel in charge of the military at Monghyr. The Colonel had set up a bazaar as a private venture at Monghyr and was forcing all passing traders on the Ganges to use it. Thus he was taking a large body of revenue from the market at Bhagalpur, much to the annoyance of the Collector, who had to answer to the Government.[1]

In short an ethic of progressiveness and expanding trade relations led the British into the role of protector of the frontier region of west Bengal. This policy was to some degree instigated by the bandit aggression from the hills against the weak Mughal rule in the area. The next phase of the rising ascendancy of the British was the realisation of this policy of protection. This brought them into direct political relations with the bandits and tribes of the hill regions. It was these relations that occupied them for some time to come.

## Section 4. Cleveland creates new relations.

The problem that the British inherited was the old conflict betweenthe Paharias, a tribe living on the heights of the Rajmahal Hills, and the resident zemindars of the plains, which surround these hills and in which Rajmahal itself lies. The Paharias had for years been raiding the plainsmen, carrying away food and cattle to the fastness of the hills. But this was not merely a straightforward situation of antagonism between aggressors and defenders. The Paharia inroads on the plains were often instigated by the zemindars, who offered them a free passage to ravage the land of a neighbour. In this way

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1. Bradley-Birt, 1905, p. 19.

there was a form of symbiosis, whereby a partial truce was established between certain parties. In fact some zemindars had bribed some Paharias leaders not to raid their lands. On the festival of 'Dasahara'[1] zemindars held feasts for the Manjhis and Sardars,[2] and gave them presents.

However with the insecurity that resulted from the attack by Surajah Dowlah on the British, in 1756, this thin bond of trust broke down.[3] In December of that year the zemindars slaughtered the Sardars and Manjhis at the festival of Dasahara. This led to large scale retribution by the Paharias, the partial symbiosis was broken and unimpeded aggression broke out. When the great famine struck in 1770 the situation became critical. The outposts at the foot of the hills, which were manned by 'ghatwals'[4], were abandoned. The Paharias, who were not hit by the full severity of the famine due to their ability to rely on gathering the natural foods of the jungle, were given full rein to plunder the plains. This only worsened the effect of the famine and weakened the power of the principalities. The situation was admirably described by the Judge of Benares in 1808 when he said:

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1. 'Sohrae' the festival after the gathering of the harvest, after which the Paharias would go raiding.

2. The leaders of the Paharia villages. Similar to the Santal Manjhis.

3. In 1756 Surajah Dowlah attacked the British at Calcutta and entered the town on June the twentieth, which resulted in the incident of the "Black Hole of Calcutta". A few days later he returned to Murshidabad, his capital of Bengal. This turn of affairs could only increase the chaos and insecurity in the region, as any success by Surajah Dowlah would mean a return to an unstable and corrupt government.

4. Ghatwals are retired sepoys, who were given rent free estates in return for maintaining law and order.

"At an early period of British administration that tract of country lying between Birbhum and Bhagalpur was in a state of extreme disorder. The inhabitants were in open arms against the Government and its other subjects. A perpetual and savage warfare was maintained by them against the inhabitants of the plains, and they were proscribed and hunted down like wild beasts; so that I have been informed by a gentleman who was at the time Collector of Birbhum, their heads were brought to him in basket loads."[1]

The problem of peace in the area was obviously an important one for the British. This form of permanent and institutionalised banditry could not continue alongside the progressive ideas of the company's servants, who were interested in the protection and economic development of Bengal. The attention of the authorities was particularly drawn by the frequent disturbances to the 'dawk'[2] running through the Teliagaria Pass.

It is this incidence of banditry that turned the attention of the British towards the tribes.[3] To deal with the problem a force was raised in 1772 under Captain Brooke to fight in the hills.[4] All offensive action failed due to the terrain and the guerilla-like tactics of the Paharias, but defensive action continued for six years. Then in 1778 Captain Browne tried conciliation. Following the example of the zemindars he paid the Sardars and Manjhis to protect the dawk. Thannadars and the old Chaukibandi system were set up again in the region.[5] And further

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1. L.S.S. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteer, Santal Parganas, Calcutta, 1910, p. 35, reference given, Fifth Report (Madras Reprint, 1883), p. 767.

2. The 'dawk' is the mail service that ran between the administrative centres in India. Its protection was vital to the government of all areas, and particularly to those more distant from the centre at Calcutta, such as were Bhagalpur and Monghyr who used the Teliagaria Pass.

4. Ibid., p. 35, section on Capt. Brooke.

3. It must be remembered that at this time little or nothing was known of the Santals. Although their bandit activity was probably similar, it had not fallen within the British sphere of activity. They cannot in any way be included in this statement.

5. Thana is the police force. Thanadars are the administrative divisions of the police. See Ibid., p. 232, section on police for details. Chaukibandi is the system of a chain of connected outposts.

to establish British influence, Ghatwals or 'Invalid Jagirs'[1] were given estates at the foot of the hills in the south between the Mor and the Bhahmani rivers, (see map p.69c ) as long as the holder settled there and maintained law and order.

These moves were clearly a success in the manner intended. In 1774 a report states:

> "By the battalion employed in the Jungleterry (as the district was then known) a tract of country, that was considered as inaccessible and unknown, and only served as a receptable for robbers, has been reduced to Government, the inhabitants civilised, and not only the reduction of revenues, which was occasioned by their ravages, prevented, but some revenue yielded from this country itself, which a prosecution of these measures will improve."[2]

In 1779 August Cleveland, who was then a resident at Rajmahal was made the Collector at Bhagalpur. Dacoities and banditry were still common at this time. Cleveland even had his own tents carried off when pitched in a mango grove a few miles outside Bhagalpur.[3] But little could be done until the Rajmahal Hills had been brought under the sole jurisdiction of Bhagalpur. This he achieved in the same year. He then set out to appraise the situation and to formulate a proper policy for the area. In a letter to Warren Hastings he wrote:

> "the inhabitants of the hills would in a short time be forced to submit. We have lately considered these people as our enemies, and treated them as such. It is but consequent with our principles of humanity and justice to use every means within our powers to avoid a state of warfare."[4]

The policy of the British towards the Paharias, which was

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1. See footnote 2, p. 38 ~~op.cit.~~, and Ibid., p.219-221, section on Ghatwals for details.

2. Report from Warren Hastings to the Court of Directors, December, 1774. See Ibid., p. 36.

3. Hunter, 1872, p. 222.

4. Letter from the Collector at Bhagalpur to Warren Hastings, November, 1779. See L.S.S. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteer; Santal Parganas, Calcutta, 1910, p. 37.

developed by Cleveland, became the starting point for the future historical development and social change. Although I am not directly concerned with the Paharias, they are thus a necessary part of the thesis. After 1820 the Santals migrated North and settled alongside the Paharias in the Rajmahal Hills. But since they were not in the area during Cleveland's administration their external relations and sphere of activity did not develop like that of the Paharias.

In 1780 Cleveland wrote in appreciation of his predecessor's policy:

> "The first question that occurs is whether it is for the interest of Government to supply the means of subsistence for a short while or to suffer the inhabitants of the hills to commit devastations on the country as they have done for many years past. Certainly the former. For although the losses which the Government has experienced on this account have been trifling owing to the rigid observances made with the zemindars, yet the suffering of the lowcountry prople are not to be described."

This process of protection for the area and the 'civilising'[1] of the tribes involved capital expenditure for the bettering of trade. The most interesting example of this was Cleveland's earliest scheme for the Paharias, that was later expanded. He initiated a scheme costing Rs. 29,440, whereby the Paharia Sardars and Manjhis should be paid to take responsibility for minor civil and criminal offenses in their respective districts. At the same time a corps of archers, consisting of Paharias, was to be created to operate as Hill Rangers. He wrote of this that,

> "The disbursement and, of course, the circulation of money in the hills by the Government appears to me the most likely bait that will ensure the attachment of the chiefs, and at the same time nothing will be so conducive to the civilising

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1. See page 78, Report from Warren Hastings to the Court of Directors, December, 1774, given in L.S.S. O'Malley, ibid., p. 36.

of the inhabitants as to employ a number of them in our service."[1]

The purpose of these moves was twofold. Firstly to involve the Paharias in the British system of government by making them partially responsible for keeping the peace. Secondly Cleveland was astute enough to realise that money spent onthem in this way would not be wasted, but would involve them in the British economic system.

At this stage only the first part of the scheme was passed by Warren Hastings. The formation of a corps of archers was dropped on account of its heavy expense. But in 1782 Cleveland set out to extend his initial scheme. His plan was to make the Rajmahal Hills self-administrative along British lines as far as possible. They would then act as a buffer region to the British in Bengal. In 1782 he obtained permission to withdraw the Rajmahal Hills from the jurisidction of the ordinary courts and instituted a local system of summary justice under a Court of Sardars. 47 Sardars agreed to this and were given magisterial control over the new judicial area of the Rajmahal Hills. Pensions of Rs. 10 a month were allotted to the Sardars, and Rs. 5 a month to their Naibs or assistants.

In order to further cement this alliance Cleveland succeeded in forming the corps of Hill Rangers as a police force 400 strong for the area. Eight of the most trusted Sardars were put in charge. They each got Rs. 10 a month, while the rank and file received Rs. 3, and every Manjhi was paid Rs. 2 if he supplied the requisite recruits. The annual cost was estimated at 3.2 lacs of rupees.[2]

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1. Letter from August Cleveland, dated 21st November 1780, given in L.S.S. O'Malley, ibid., p. 39.

2. Bradley-Birt, 1905.

A man called Jaurah was put in command, and was the first Paharia to enter Government service.[1] This body of police proved very useful to the British. Cleveland wrote in 1783:

> "Since the establishment of the corps of hill archers, this is the third time that I have had the occasion to employ them against their own brethren. And they have always succeeded in their business. I flatter myself the Honourable Board will not only be convinced of the utility and attachment of the corps, but that they will have full confidence in the general system which I have adopted for the management of this wild and extensive country."[2]

Shortly afterwards the Hill Rangers became a regular force based in Bhagalpur and trained, drilled and armed as sepoys. At this time the force was 1,300 strong.[3]

These combined schemes were a great success in suppressing raids in the southern area of the Rajmahal Hills that was some distance from the centre of British administration. They were put to the test in 1783, when some Sardars from the South rebelled against those in the North. This rebellion was put down by the corps, and the insurgents were tried by the court. The process went smoothly and Cleveland reported:

> "I have the pleasure to note that the chiefs appeared to conduct themselves throughout the trial with the greatest attention and impartiality."

Three death sentences and seven life imprisonments were passed on the rebels. The life imprisonments and one death sentence

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1. Bishop Heber, in the Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, 1828, writes, "This Rob Roy, or perhaps Roderic Dhu of the Rajmahal Hills, was the most popular of all among his own countrymen, and most dreaded by the lowlanders. The choice was fully justified by the event, Jourah having remained a bold active and faithful servant of the company against outlaws in both the Ramgarh Hills and his own country."

2. Report by A. Cleveland to the Honourable Board of Directors, February 1783, given in L.S.S. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteer; Santal Parganas, Calcutta, 1910, p. 40.

3. There appears to be some muddle as to dates and numbers between O'Malley and Bradley-Birt.

were commuted on the understanding that 700 stolen cattle were returned. Cleveland then had the two condemned men executed.

Cleveland, by force of personality, had pushed these schemes through against all odds. He had overcome the Paharias' mistrust of the outsider, but, as Bradley-Birt[1] puts it, "this was a new kind of outsider and they reckoned differently," for he was a European.

The Paharias were now firmly committed to the British interest in the area. The Hill Rangers not only constituted an official force that was not to be reorganised until after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, but it played a significant part in the Santal uprising of 1855. This was more than just a peace keeping force as it became a powerful instrument of social change. The Paharias' political relations with the British had become that of allies rather than antagonists, and a channel for cultural exchange had been institutionalised.

For the rest of his time as Collector at Bhagalpur, Cleveland tried unsuccessfully to get the Paharias to settle in the uninhabited area skirting the plains, that had been a no-man's land at the time of bandit activity. He died in January 1784, at the age of 29. His influence in the region is summed up by the traidtional song that was sung at his death by the Paharias:[2]

"Lo, we have lost a father."

"Yeah - the father and mother of a tribe."

As with other individuals who played a significant part in initiating change Cleveland became a myth as the "Chillimilli Saheb", and was affectionately referred to as such up to 1940.

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1. Bradley-Birt, 1905.

2. Ibid.

And as the Santal Uprising developed it became a frequent cry: "We want another Chillimilli Saheb."[1]

We must now look in some detail at these innovations in the relationship between the British and the Paharias, and outline their social significance. The point is that this special relationship was very different to that of the Santals when they migrated into the Rajmahal Hills.

Firstly it is important to realise that what Cleveland had done for the Paharias did not involve social change. There had merely been the introduction of certain innovations. Cleveland's political schemes created important social and political changes, but at the present they only constituted innovations imposed by a dominant colonial authority on a passive recipient. This means that these innovations may have been accommodated by the Paharias, but they had not become fully acculturated. They would only be acculturated when they have become manipulable in the Paharias' social system. As Barth puts it, a change does not occur until payoffs and allocations have resulted from the innovations that have been introduced.[2] It is these allocations and payoffs that are the efficient causes in the process of acculturation and institutionalisation of these changes.

These innovations were the creation of the Hill Rangers, the special conditions of summary justice in the area of the Rajmahal Hills, the Court of Sardars and the fact that the Paharias were now the paid servants of the Government. The effect was that the relationship between the Paharias and the British, itself an innovation, was now characterised by political participation and reciprocity. This will later play a vital role.

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1. Carstairs, 1935.

2. F. Barth, On the Study of Social Change, American Anthropologist, Vol. LXIX, N.S. 1967.

Not only was the Paharias' external sphere extended to make contact with the British, but this relationship became internalised in their sphere of activity and represented in the Paharia notion of "Chillimilli Saheb." In a very real sense Cleveland was more than just a person. Through the internalisation of the role that he played, he represented an expansion in the external sphere. Therefore we can say that the Paharias' sphere of activity had expanded. Their network of political relations now reached further than before, and the potential payoff was that in a situation of political activity this newly acquired institution could be manipulated in the system. This greater manipulability, or channel for political mediation, will later function positively in maintaining a non-conflicting dynamism. (See diagram 1, on page 129, and 2, on page 132, where this relationship is represented by the direct line between the Paharias and the British and 'sirkar'.)

One effect of Cleveland's policy, that will be of great significance later, was that he had withdrawn the area of the Rajmahal Hills from the usual administrative system in India and given it a somewhat special status. This led MacPherson to say that, although Cleveland can be criticised for extravagance:

> "It was in the long run a financial success, for one of its results was to deprive the adjacent zemindars of even that nominal control that they may have once exercised over the hill people; and thus the way was paved for the separation of the Damin-i-Koh as a Government estate, the development of which has added so materially to the land revenue resources of the district."1

However the full effect of this was not seen until it was formally declared a Government estate in 1823.

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1. Mr. H. MacPherson, given in L.S.S. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteer, Santhal Parganas, Calcutta, 1910, p.42.

## Section 5. Weak Administration, the return of instability, and the creation of the Damin-i-Koh.

After Cleveland's death a number of Collectors at Bhagalpur proved ineffective and Cleveland's schemes lost their bite. The Hill Rangers became "a mere rabble addicted to all sorts of vices and disorders".[1] The Sardars Court became corrupt and capricious. And Cleveland's plans for providing the Paharias with seed potatoes and a stock of agricultural equipment fell through, along with his plan to set up a school. Finally in 1818 when Abdul Basul Khan was the Collector at Bhagalpur the disputes between the Paharias and the lowland zemindars had again become so great that complaints reached the Government. Mr. Sutherland, the Joint Magistrate at Bhagalpur, was ordered to enquire into Abdul Rasul Khan's conduct and the situation in the Rajmahal Hills. In 1819 he recommended that 1. The Government should declare that the tract occupied by the hill people was the property of the Government alone. 2. The level country skirting the external ranges of the hills (later known as the 'Damin-i-Koh') was distinct from the adjoining zemindari estates and was also its property. 3. Measures should be taken for defining the extent of the hills and the hilly tract.[2] These recommendations were accepted by Government and the Honourable Petty Ward was sent to demarcate the Damin-i-Koh in 1823. By 1833 Ward had delimited the Damin-i-Koh with a circle of stone pillars that laid out the Government's property, so that a clear distinction was made between the zemindari estates and the tribal lands, which were held by the Government. As a result inroads on this land by the zemindars were prevented, and the area came under direct administrative control. Then in 1827 Ward, somewhat of a hard-

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1. L.S.S. O'Malley, ibid., page 43.

2. L.S.S. O'Malley, ibid., page 44.

headed theoretician, removed the anomalous legal system that Cleveland had set up. His Regulation I of 1827 repealed that of Cleveland's and brought the area under the direct jurisdiction of the ordinary courts, with the proviso that a committee of Manjhis sat at the trial of all Paharias. Thus they were now under direct jurisdiction, and, unlike other areas, did not have a Moonsiff's Court.

Once again after a period of non-intervention and almost free rule there had been a policy of tightening control and protecting the area. The result was to create a special district set aside for the development and civilising of the tribes. And considering the judicial system for the Paharias and the uniqueness of their relationship with the British, it was an area that had special reference to the Paharias. But these conditions provided a peculiar attraction for the Santals, who were now migrating Northward towards the Damin. In fact Mr. Sutherland, in making his recommendations to Government in 1818, said that he had found them busy clearing the forests around Godda in the northwest of the area (see map). Indeed as early as 1809 Buchanan Hamilton had described a number of them as having settled in the Dumka subdivision in the south (see map), "having come last from Birbhum in consequence of the annoyance they received there from zemindars."[1] Then in 1827 Ward noticed their settlements in the extreme north of Godda.

Section 6. The Santals migrate to the Damin-i-Koh.

It is now necessary to consider the position of the Santals after 1770, the basis for the migration just noted, the reasons

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1. L.S.S. L'Malley, ibid., p. 45.

for their coming to the Damin and their status on arrival.

After the famine of 1770 a large part of Bengal fell out of cultivation, and many ryots,or peasants, left the land. The land tax of the Permanent Settlement Act was squeezing the landlords and making it difficult to reclaim those areas that had fallen into disuse. As a result in 1790 Government pledged itself not to tax reclaimed land for the first three years, and capital soon began to find its way back. Moreover the Santals began to leave the areas dominated by the zemindari estates in Birbhum and make their way onto the plains surrounding the Rajmahal Hills. This clearing of the fertile lowlands brought them into good repute and Hunter wrote: "After the end of the century (C18) they appear in a new light, mainly as valuable neighbours to the lowland proprietors."[1] With the extending area of tillage they were hired as hunters to kill the wild animals and clear the ground. The London Times of 23rd October 1792 even mentioned that "every proprietor is collecting husbandmen from the hills to improve his lowlands."

The Hon. Petty Ward was aware of the number of Santal villages being established around the Damin-i-Koh and was in favour of allowing them to settle inside the region. However this was not sanctioned. The Government policy is best seen in Mr. Bidwell's report to the Secretary of the Government of Bengal on the Uprising.[2]

> "This tract (the Damin-i-Koh) was declared by the Gov. to be its property in the year 1823 and a special officer was for many years entertained to decide and demarcate the boundaries thereof. For several years the culturable lands included in this tract were reserved for the hill people. But in the

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 219.

2. Letter from A.C. Bidwell, late Commissioner for the Suppression of the Santal Insurrection, to the Secretary to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157, B.J.R. See Appendix A.

year 1827, 31st October the Board supported Mr. Ward's recommendation that other classes should be admitted to cultivate these lands; that the clearance of the forest if left up to the hill people would never take place, whereas the Santal race were largely employed by neighbouring zemindars in bringing the forest lands into cultivation and no possible objection existed to employ them in the same manner in the Damin.

The Government however replied that his Lordship in Council was unwilling to depart from the resolution which the Gov. had come to that the Damin lands should be exclusively reserved for the encouragement of the Hill race in agriculture. 'Should the Hill race disappoint these expectations it will then be at the option of the Gov. to change their plan and look to other classes for the improvement of their lands'."

No formal orders of the Government repealing these instructions appear on record; but the Santals gradually located themselves on the Damin lands, and in 1830 the Gov. recognised their existence there by authorising the local authorities to protect them from any demand, beyond that which it is customary for them to pay, by taking a stipulation to that effect from the hill grantees.

After repeated recommendations from the local authorities in favour of encouraging the Santhals to settle on these lands as the only means of clearing the jungle, the Gov., on the 21st Nov. 1836, consented to the appointment of a speical officer for the superintendence of the Damin-i-Koh; and the collector, Mr. Dunbar in his instructions to Mr. Pontet, who was nominated to the office, intimated to him that his duty was to use his best efforts to bring the culturable portion of the Damin lands under cultivation, by means of the Santhals, and that the sooner to effect this desirable object, he should not only afford protection to those already settled in the Damin, but also give every encouragement to fresh settlers upon the unoccupied lands.

"To afford protection to those already settled in the Damin" is a key phrase here, and it is interesting to look at its significance. The fact of the British involvement and inter-

vention in the area was now a sine qua non. Capital expenditure over Cleveland's schemes had led the British into staking an interest in tribal wellfare. As Cleveland put it,[1]

> The disembursement and, of course, the circulation of money in the hills by Government appears to me to be the most likely bait to ensure the attachment of the chiefs, and at the same time nothing will be so conducive to the civilising of the inhabitants to employ a number of them in our service.

Thus the Paharias were given direct jurisdiction. The Rajmahal Hills were reserved for them to cultivate without becoming the ryots, or tenants of the zemindars. More important - as will be seen later - they were given a small part to play in the judicial system. This element of reciprocal protection was a vital part of the relationship between the British and the Paharias. Historically one of the reasons for this development was that initially the Paharias were in conflict with the British interest. Their banditry had necessitated them being pacified, civilised and protected. This antagonistic relationship with the British had resulted in the creation of a cooperative one, and the process of creating this involved the expansion of their external sphere.

The position of the Santal was basically different, though it did not appear so at the time. They had migrated northwards out of the hills of Birbhum into the plains surrounding the Rajmahal Hills as a result of the famine and the tax moratorium. They began to farm the fertile soil of the plains and appear to have been known as industrious and diligent developers of the land. This was in keeping with the fact that they frequently resited their villages. Bidwell's letter[2] shows quite clearly

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1. See page 80, footnote 1.
2. See page 87, Letter from A.C. Bidwell to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157, see Appendix A.

that the British saw the Santals as being useful for increasing the rateable value of their property, as they had done for the zemindars. And so they were allowed freely into the area, but without any of the official protection that was given to the Paharias. Although there were vague statements by the local administrators that it was their duty to "protect the industrious new race of settlers called the Santhals"[1] there was no official sanctioning of a special judicial system for them. No Santal was employed in the service of the Government, and there was no basis for cooperation in a reciprocal fashion between them and the British. Therefore there was no comparable expansion in the Santal external sphere and their sphere of activity. The actual existence of an administrative relationship was necessary to any expansion of sphere. The realisation and potential manipulation that this relationship could provide would form the basis of that expansion. Therefore without the creation of that relationship no expansion could have taken place. Mere awareness of the potential for such a relationship could not, on its own, have enabled any expansion. However the full implications of this will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Section 7. The Bengalis.

What, then, was the position of the Bengalis in relation to the Santals, the Paharias and the British? At the time of the Permanent Settlement Act, 1790, the western half of Birbhum belonged to the Rajah of Nagore. Being a frontier province of Bengal, it had for centuries been settled by feudal chiefs, Ghatwals, or guardians of the passes, and their tenants were kinsmen bound to turn out for police or military duty.[2] That

1. See letter from Pontet to H.J. James, given in Appendix B.
2. L.S.S. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteer; Santal Parganas, Calcutta, 1910, p. 219-221, section on Ghatwali Tenures.

area of eastern Bhagalpur that was not in the hands of the Paharias is described by Carstairs as being held by "the barons of the plains, the Khetowrie Rajahs, with their tenant kinsfolk - aboriginees become Hindoos - whose duty it was to check their forays (the Paharias)."[1] That northwestern portion of Murshidabad, which was later included in the Santal Parganas, was owned by the Rajahs of Ambar and Sultanabad, and was a normal zemindari estate.

Ghatwali estates were tenures granted for the protection of the "Ghats', or passes through the hills. Thus the ghatwals were small hill chiefs who raised levies for their defense and were generally responsible for law and order in the area. Towards the end of the 18th century the Rajah of Nagore was unable to control his ghatwals.[2] In 1790 the Governor-General in Council allowed him an abatement in revenue equal to that received from his ghatwals, and the Collector in Birbhum was ordered to re-engage them as British tenants. By Regulation XXIX of 1814 these estates were permanently settled by the British as part of the zemindari of Birbhum in perpetuity at a fixed rental.[3]

Zemindari estates were ordinary revenue paying estates. Before the permanent settlement acts they were mostly part of the larger properties of the rajahs. However by the time of the Permanent Settlement Act these large properties had passed under the hammer and been split up into units that paid directly to the local British revenue collector.[4] Within these

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1. Carstairs, 1912, p. 216-219.

2. See page 73 , ~~and~~ footnote 2 , and page 76.

3. L.S.S. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteer; Santal Parganas, Calcutta, 1910, p. 219-221, section on Ghatwali tenures.

4. Ibid., p. 88, section on zemindari estates.

zemindari estates were a number of ryots or tenant farmers who paid rent to the zemindar. When Buchanan-Hamilton describes the Santals as, "having come last from Birbhum in consequence of the annoyance they received from the zemindars,"[1] it would appear that the Santal settlements in virgin land, or land reclaimed from the great famine, had again been taken over by the zemindars by fair means or foul, so that the isolationist Santals had become the ryots of the zemindars and 'diku'. Since their economy was a non-monetary one,[2] supported by hunting and raiding, it suffered under the feudal system of paying rents to a landlord. It was on this basis that the formation of the Damin-i-Koh as a Government property, from which all zemindari estates were excluded, made it ideal as an area of immigration and development for theSantals.

## Section 8. The British, the Bengalis, the Tribals, their differences and relations.

The question of differing systems of productions and values attached to resources and their utility was at the heart of relations between the societies and cultures in the area. So far I have assumed that the groups in West Bengal were distinct, and then shewn how each group experienced different historical events, which governed the form of their relationships. Now I wish to discuss certain vital ideological differences, which were not influenced by the events of the contemporary history. They were the basis, or enduring factors, for the different perception of events as they occurred. Each occurrence was subject to interpretive variables or perceptions that conditioned the realisation and internalisation of it. If it is possible to

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1. See page 86, footnote 1.

2. See the economic analysis of the Santals on pages 144 - 162.

understand the nature of this internalisation, then the different perceptions of the event can be compared and one can formulate significant patterns of behaviour for a period of historical and social development.

The three main ideological groups concerned were the British, the Bengalis and the Tribals. These can be distinguished in the same way that the Santals can be called tribal, that is in the Weberian sense of an adequate term of explanation, and as an expedient term of heuristic description at the level of a nominal definition.[1] The British were a colonialist mercantile group; the Bengalis a peasant feudal group, and the Santals and Paharias were tribal groups. Each group differed in its systems of production, in its values attached to resources, and in the use to which it put them. Here we are only concerned with the different ways in which they thought of land.

The Santals were migrating in an attempt to find land, and the zemindars were using them to develop new areas. However the Santal, with his isolationist policy, and the social distance that was integral in the Hor-Diku relationship, preferred to live on land that was his own by the very right of its being farmed by himself. Thereby he did not lose a proportion of the produce to a zemindar or landlord. The Santals, therefore, were beginning to move into the Damin, as it was an area in which zemindars could not hold land. The land was free of tax for the first three years, and at a reduced rent for the next five, when the settlement was finally established. Also, as a direct tenant of the British, the rent was lower. On the other hand, zemindari land was held under a system of multiple sub-

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1. See page 32.

tenures, sometimes running to fifty subtenancies on one holding. In effect this meant that zemindari land had to support more mouths with the same labour than did land under the direct tenancy from the Government.[1]

The British interest in land in this area was based on strategic motives. They were interested in the 'junglee', or wild regions of the Rajmahal Hills in order to secure them as a stable frontier for expanding their interests in West Bengal. However the cost of this had to be covered by additional revenue, so, seeing the potential of this land, they were trying to increase this return, while at the same time 'civilising' the Paharias.

From this brief summary it is already possible to see the different references that land had for the three groups. Paul L. Bohannan argues that the British conceptualised land in a fixed euclidean manner on the grid system, whereby it was an absolute quantity that could belong to anyone and might be used as a market commodity.[2] In certain societies in Africa, and specifically among the Tiv, land had a different meaning. It was a continuous topography over which clans roamed, and it was the position of these clans that gave the land its referents, and thereby a meaningful structure. The fixed points that were used as referents were the clan sites, and these were not fixed like the grid points in the European system. From this Bohannan states that the Tiv did not visualise tenure as a right to a fixed area, but as a right to farm an y adequate quantity of land. Neale puts this well when he says,[3] "Because these units

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1. See details of the revenue system for the Santals in the Damin-i-Koh, given on pages 119 - 121.

2. Bohannan, 1963.

3. Neale, 1969.

of thought (different concepts for organising land) have different ranges of meaning (denotations) and different associations with other units of thought (connotations) in different societies, members of different societies perceive differently the objectives of secular life, how objectives of life fit together, and how they may be achieved."

The situation was somewhat similar among the Santals. Land was utilised on a fair share principle. The jungle did not belong to anybody, but any individual who came along and cleared it, assumed possession of that clearing. The quantity of land that he farmed was sufficient to give him a fair livelihood in the context of his social position and responsibilities. This farm was not transferable in that it could not be sold to another Santal, (though Bengalis often took land in lieu of payment). In fact the Santal often left his land, migrated, and developed new forest land elsewhere. Ownership of land was vested in the ability to work it, and as a resource it could only supply the livelihood of an individual and his family.

For the British in India land was looked on as something to rule or control as an economic resource, and not necessarily to be farmed directly.[1] For the British, political control was vested in public administration and parliamentary politics, Through this they gained control over land, as is clearly seen in the Permanent Settlement Acts and the Regulation Act of 1823, that made the Damin-i-Koh the property of the Government. Having thus gained control of the land it was maximised by improving its rateable value, so as to increase the revenue from it, which meant greater production and better trade. So, for the

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1. This statement only refers to the British who were involved in the government of India and not the adventurers who started tea and indigo plantations.

British, land fitted into their system in this way. Wealth was seen in terms of money obtained through revenue from and control of land. The latter depended on political control. This meant that, as a resource, land was maximised by increasing the revenue from it in order to produce money. Wealth and prestige, in turn, gave political power.

However for the Bengali the situation was different. Neale states that for the Indian land was wealth. The Indian could not turn money into political power, as he could not enter the Government, either under the Mughals or the British. Political power, wealth and prestige all came from control of dominant castes and kin groups, and this was derived from control of land. Bailey describes this well in Bisipara.[1] Here the landowners were the warrior caste. After the Permanent Settlement Acts they got power, wealth and prestige from this position. But the distillers, who were able to make money because of the new trade facilities under the British, were unable to exchange this money for power in local politics. However the owner of land could maximise this power, wealth and prestige in local politics. This was done by using land to increase the individuals following him and maximising the number of mouths that were fed. Thus there was the enormously complex system of zemindari subtenures, whereby a number of people lived off the same area of land. For the Indian the maximisation of land did not involve improving that land for greater economic output. A bad husbandman maintained his land through political power. In contrast the British system was to maximise the net produce of the land and for the Santals land was a simple shared resource for the satisfaction of a consumption profile, while at the same time

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1. Bailey, 1957.

serving as an important social inheritance in that it was closely connected to the individual's ancestry.[1]

The different role that land played in these three groups was very important. For the British and Bengalis it was a marketable commodity with complex political ramifications. While for the tribals it was a non-marketable resource to support a livelihood, and was bound up with the individual's economic and spiritual heritage.[1] However the Santal, seen as a diligent and industrious developer of the land, was potentially a pawn to both the Bengalis and the British. They were both positively interested in him and his ability to develop land. Meanwhile the Santal, attempting to preserve his relationship to the land was migrating from the continual encroachment of the zemindars into the British protected area of the Damin-i-Koh. This move was also backed up by the social isolation of the Santals. So the innovations made by the British, such as the creation of the Damin as a protected area for civilising the tribes, was now beginning to have payoffs. These innovations were being manipulated, and were causing new social development among the Santals.

## Section 9. Conclusion. The outcome and its changes for the Santals.

This chapter is concerned with identifying the role of the British as a new variable in the western frontier region of Bengal, and the way in which they changed certain features among the Paharias and the Santals. At this stage the major social changes that occurred were among the Paharias, such as the creation of an ongoing relationship between themselves and the British. However, although no such positive changes had

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1. For further details on this see page 38.

occurred among the Santàs, other than the migration northwards, there had been certain precursory changes in the external sphere that will become the major factors in what is to follow. Such changes were:

1. The social banditry of the Santals on the Diku had stopped, as the migration northwards and the increased development of new land had taken place.

2. The move away from the existing relationship in the external sphere with the Bengalis, as seen in this migration, heralded an extensive change in the external sphere. These precursory changes can be seen clearly in the new light in which the Santals appeared as diligent and industrious developers of the land. The Santals were becoming indirectly involved with the new variable, the British, in west Bengal. The Santals had been affected by the rent moratorium of the British, and the declaration of the Damin-i-Koh to be solely Government property. However the moratorium was only temporary, while the declaration was more permanently significant.

3. This new recognition of the Santals as developers of the land acted as a precedent for them to be included directly in the protectionist policies of the British, whereby The Hon. Petty Ward made his recommendation that, "other classes should be admitted to cultivate these lands."[1]

4. However, due to the fact that the British had not been troubled by any bandit activities of the Santals, as they were by the Paharias, the Santals were seen to be civilised and * orderly, so that no special provision was made for them as in the case of the Paharias. Protection had not been accompanied by a parallel social change and expansion in the Santal external

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1. See page 87, footnote 2, and Appendix A.

sphere, which might have encouraged the internalisation or acculturation of the more real changes, that had occurred. The significance of this will become clear later.

All this resulted, even at this stage, in a degree of deprivation of the Santals relative to the Paharias.

Section 10. Summary.

The following brief summary can be made of the historical events that led to this situation.

1. The Rajmahal Hills were of strategic importance to the British as a frontier region of Bengal. This is indicated by their being called the Key of Bengal and the early British interest in them.

2. Political insecurity of the Mughal rule resulted in insecure trading and economic conditions. This made it necessary for the British to bolster up the local hereditary Princes by establishing civil officers. Finally this led to the ascendant domination of this frontier area by the British.

3. This domination brought them into contact with the bandit activities of the hill tribes, and specifically with the Paharias. Disorder, as a result of the famine of 1770, made the pacification and civilising of the tribes a major issue.

4. In order to protect the area and create better conditions for all, within the progressive ethic that dominated the policies of Cleveland, capital was expended to involve the Paharias in the process of British administration and government. These policies led to the innovations that involved the creation of the Court of Sardars, the Hill Rangers and the relationship between the Paharias and the British.

5. However, due to weak administration, disorder returned, and the policy of protection was re-activated.

The Damin was demarcated fro the twofold purpose of a) protecting the Paharias from Bengali inroads by strengthening the judicial system through the process of direct control by the British; b) protecting the British interest, whereby the Damin was made the property of the Government and therefore subject to direct taxation for the increase of Government revenue.

6. This direct control led to a special area with protection for the tribes. However the Paharias did not make full use of this, and the British revenue did not increase until the Santals were allowed in to clear the jungle and make the land a taxable commodity. Conversely the speical nature of the Damin and the protection that it afforded from the Bengalis was ideal for the Santals, and immigrants began to flock in, greatly increasing the Government's revenue.

7. However, certain differences in the history of the Santals and Paharias, which led to a different British experience of them, gave rise to different social changes for each of them. As a result the relationship between the Paharias and British, and the Santals and British were not the same.

## Chapter 4. The Santals in the Damin-i-Koh.

### Section 1. The Santals meet the British; the Damin becomes a Homeland; a changing identity.

In the last chapter I discussed what I called the precursory changes in the Santal world. This was a general expansion in their sphere of activity as seen in their new contact with the British and the protection that the Damin-i-Koh provided. However I have only looked at this in its inception. I have discussed the stances, or policies, if they were that explicit, that the three major groups had taken up; and the way that these stances were interrelated and formed a base for manipulation and development. The next stage is to look at the course of this development, and to see the way in which the newly created set of interrelating variables was manipulated.

The efficient causes for the Santals moving to the north have been stated. The reasons for settling in and around the Damin-i-Koh were probably that good cultivable land was available owing to the collapse of some ghatwali estates,[1] while there was an extensive area that had formerly been a no-man's-land between the Paharias and the lowland Bengalis. The only firm evidence is that by 1836 Mr. Dunbar noted some 427 Santali villages inside the Damin.[2] It was the significance of this that led to the appointment of Mr. Pontet as a Special Officer for the Superintendence of the Damin-i-Koh. This was the start of a new era for the Santals, as it led to their active recognition by the British in the form of a parallel administrative relationship to that with the Paharias.

1. See page 91.

2. Mr. Dunbar, Collector at Bhagalpur in a letter of instruction to Mr. Pontet on his appointment, It is quoted in a letter from Mr. Bidwell to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157. B.J.R. see Appendix A.

At the start of their migration into the Damin the Santals were not aware of the British domination there. However, in 1836, when Mr. Pontet offered them protection and encouragement, they became conscious of the British and the protection that was afforded by them. From this moment migration into the Damin increased rapidly. The settling was in the traditional Santal manner of a group hiving off from the parent village and finding a suitable site on virgin land. Carstairs describes this well for the period.[1]

One of the major drawbacks to rapid settlement was the disputes between themselves and the Paharias. Carstairs describes admirably a hypothetical instance of this.[1] When Mr. Pontet was made the special Commissioner of the Damin-i-Koh one of his main functions was to settle border disputes. In 1850 he settled 26 of them. They probably concerned the boundaries of the Damin-i-Koh, in respect of encroachment on the Government estates by local zemindars. In addition "he heard and disposed of 24 cases received from the Hill men (Paharias) through the ... Magistrate as also other petitions of various kinds."[2]

The interesting point is that the migration of the Santals into the Damin was largely autonomous. That is there was no direct relationship between the British and the Santals that gave rise to the migration. Indirectly the British had created conditions in the Damin that made it favourable for Santal immigration. But the Santal decision to migrate there was their own. On arriving in the Damin the Santals occupied an

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1. Carstairs, 1935, see chapter 2 & 3, The Pioneers and A Challenge.

2. Letter from the Collector of Bhagalpoure to the Commissioner of Bhagalpore, dated 18th September 1850, sec. 10.

undeveloped and unpopulated area. The Paharias were only living on and cultivating the hill tops. The Santals settled in the valleys and later the hillsides that were covered with virgin forest. Their migration was therefore of a primary nature, as pioneers of new land. They did not graft themselves onto any existing social or economic organisations. Although relationships were to develop with the British, owing to their interest in the Damin, at the start the Santal migration was carried on unaware of this potential. It was an autonomous move by the Santals. In this sense the British saw the Santals as a distinct group of people, and it is the development of this status that is the particular interest of this chapter.

It has been mentioned how the British were becoming aware of the presence of these new people in the Damin, who called themselves Hor, and, were clearing the jungle and generally developing the region. Their particular autonomous mode of existence was proving very useful to the British. Such was the significance of this that in 1837 a Special Commissioner for the Damin-i-Koh was appointed by the Government to supervise the development. I shall quote again the instructions that Mr. Dunbar, the Collector at Bhagalpur gave to Mr. Pontet. He told him that,

> "His duty was to use to his best efforts to bring the culturable portion of the Damin lands under cultivation, by means of the Santals, and that the sooner to effect this desirable object, he should not only afford protection to those already settled in the Damin, but also give every encouragement to fresh settlers upon the occupied lands."1

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1. Instructions given to Mr. Pontet on his being appointed as Special Officer for the Superintendence of the Damin-i-Koh. Quoted in a letter from A.C. Bidwell to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157, B.J.R. See Appendix A and B.

Under the supervision of Mr. Pontet large numbers of Santals began to flow into the Damin-i-Koh. By following his instructions Pontet became known as the great protector of the Santals. Once a year he would make his rounds on an elephant and visit all the major settlements. Within the Regulation Act I of 1827 he held summary appeal courts to which the Santals brought their complaints and problems. One of his major duties was to settle border disputes between the Paharias and the Santals. As in any area where new settlements had been made, difficulties arose between the different peoples that were living beside each other, so that problems of settling the new boundaries betwen units were inevitable. Previously the Santals had had no one to plead their case, but now Pontet supported them in claims that would have been untenable before. The situation was well summed up by Carstairs when he wrote of the Paharias,

> "Even to 'SIRKAR', the great white King, (the Collector at Bhagapore) they acknowledged but a qualified allegiance; for had not 'CHILLIMILLI', (Cleveland), the great Hakim, (District Commissioner), induced 'SIRKAR' to pay tribute to their Chiefs, and to train their young men for soldiers in the regiment at Bhagalpore? Like the surrounding rulers, (the zemindars) they too (the British) began to bring in these hard-working pioneers to clear for them the valleys of JUBDILand (the Damin-i-Koh); and were angry when 'SUDLUN' (Sutherland) forbade it. When 'PALTEEN' (Pontet) went a step further and gave the HOR folk the valleys to clear and occupy as the tenants of Sirkar, without the leave of the Paharias, the indignation of the Paharias waxed greater; though for all their pride they dared not openly defy 'SIRKAR' and the Hakim. They remonstrated with PALTEEN; he would not hear them."[1]

The Santals now saw 'Jubdiland' as an area that was protected for them, and that they could develop as a homeland. Pontet, or "Palteen" as he was called, became their great

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1. Carstairs, 1935, p. 9. Santali words in capitals are his; bracketed words are mine.

'hakim' and protector. One sees immediately that the external sphere of the Santals had expanded. A relationship had developed with an entity that was formerly outside their sphere of activity. It was over and above anything that they conceptualised as fitting into the categories of the 'pure people' and the 'outsiders' - the 'hor' and the diku'. There was now a further category of the great white Hakim, who was seen to represent, or in some way be a part of an as yet unspecified category called 'Sirkar'. Under this new impetus they began to flood into the Damin-i-Koh. When Mr. Pontet mediated between the Santals and the Bengalis the role that he played was the first relationship that the Santals had had of the British in Bengal. He introduced them to a part of their sphere of activity that was to expand extensively in the years to come.

Another great encouragement for the Santals was the rent system that was imposed on them. Previously uncleared land was rent free for the first three years of cultivation. During the period that a new village was struggling to establish itself, it was relieved of the burden of taxes. After this,

> "a trifling rent is taken for the next three years according to what the Pergumaite (parganait) may consider just, averaging from 3 to 10 rupees per village. The next lease is for five years when the rent to be paid is fixed by a Punchayat of Manjhees (the more hor), who have been holding the village for the last five years, and with my knowledge, Mr. Pontet says, of the length and breadth of the village under settlement as also the number of houses in it, I can generally judge if the assessment has been a fair one."1

The results of the encouragement can be seen in the steady increase in revenue from Santal lands between 1837 and 1855.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1837/38 | Rupees 6682 |
| 1838/39 | 7798 |
| 1839/40 | 10644 |
| 1840/41 | 20074 |

1. Letter from A.C. Bidwell to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157, see Appendix A.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1841/42 | 20997 |
| 1842/43 | 22372 |
| 1843/44 | 25450 |
| 1844/45 | 28002 |
| 1845/46 | 32430 |
| 1846/47 | 36407 |
| 1847/48 | 39905 |
| 1848/49 | 40947 |
| 1849/50 | 43724 |
| 1850/51 | 47665 |
| 1851/52 | 50160 |
| 1852/53 | 51825 |
| 1853/54 | 53455 |
| 1854/55 | 58033 |

By 1851 82,795 Santals were recorded in 1,473 villages in the Damin-i-Koh[1] and 162,560 acres of land were under cultivation.[2]

The larger part of a tribe had lifted up its roots and moved by gradual stages. The new generation of Santals had settled on the Government estates. The Santals, who previously saw themselves as an isolated and 'pure people' living in a world that was bounded by the 'diku' - the hated outsider, from which they set themselves apart - were now being drawn together in amanifestly different way. As was discussed in the second chapter any notion of tribal solidarity among the Santals could only be identified by the most diffuse of parameters. Culturally there was a degree of consistency and likeness throughout all Santali speakers, and they saw themselves as being distinct from the 'diku'. However there was no centralised element to their culture in the idea of a fixed or bounded territory. Politically they were a loose grouping of autonomous paraganas and village units scattered over a very wide and non-contiguous area, so much so that it is only possible to call them a tribe in a loose way. They were seen as being different and distinct in that they were called the Soantars, or the people of Soant,

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1. O'Malley, 1910, p. 44.

2. See also the figures given on page 119, showing population returns and areas that had come under cultivation.

but they only saw themselves as the pure people and not centrally identified except insofar as they were different from the 'diku'. To the remote eye of the anthropologist they can only be described as a section of the Chota Nagpur tribes, whose myth of origin shows that they had wandered through many vicissitudes from that area Eastwards down to the plains of Western Bengal, where they then settled as a culturally distinct group of hunters, gatheres and cultivators who also relied on social banditry. Loosely speaking they were an aggregate of like minded groups living in an alien world with only a minimum of internal tribal solidarity.

However on entering the Government estates of the Damin-i-Koh the nature of Santalness became very different and evidently desirable, as can be seen by the increase in the migration into the Damin after the appointment of Pontet as Special Officer.

What exactly did this mean? The existence of 'Palteen' meant that the Santals were supported in their colonisation of a new area and that they were therefore protected from the grasping hand of the 'diku' zemindar. Formerly, whenever they had colonised and developed new land, the zemindars had soon exerted their authority and forced the Santals to become their ryots. The usual result was that the Santals left that area to settle elsewhere. However in the Damin the Santals had a greater security of tenure. They were the ryots of a new and seemingly greater authority than the 'diku': this was called 'Sirkar', an unknown entity, at this stage, that resided in a far off region called Bhagalpur. And 'Palteen' was the person who represented 'Sirkar' to the Santals. Palteen was their 'Hakim' or District Officer and they saw him as being some kind of tutor to the Santal people. Carstairs in his novel of

Santal life, when trying to describe the role of the 'Hakim', puts these words into the mouth of a Parganait. "The Hakim is like the tutor at the feast. He remains calm when others are excited, and prevents the doing of foolish or unjust things."[1] In the Santal village there are two people called the tutors who are guardians of day to day behaviour. They are usually a respected couple who look after male and female affairs.[2]

At this early stage in the development of the Damin as the Santal homeland, 'Palteen' was seen as the agent of 'Sirkar' who was the overlord at Bhagalpur. However later they were to discover that this 'Sirkar' was only another greater 'Hakim' - the Collector at Bhagalpur. Carstairs describes their conceptualisation of 'sirkar' in a discussion between some 'parganas' and 'manjhis' like this:

"Who is Sirkar? Everyone talks of Sirkar, but has any man seen him?"

"Oh!" said the Pargana, "Sirkar is - he is - m-m ..... And yet no! It's not the Big Hakim at Bhaugulpure; for he too speaks of 'Sirkar' ..... Why Sirkar is Sirkar, and his orders must be obeyed!"

Harma was not satisfied, "Is he a man?" he asked, "Like Palteen or Siklar (Sinclair, the Collector at Bhagalpur) ... Sirkar is not a name."

"Stop though! Yet I have heard it! ... Cup ... Cupni! That's it." (Company Bhadadur was the name given to the E.I.C.)[3]

What we are seeing here is the effect of colonisation by the British in its most direct form. The policies of the British had brought them and the Santals into mutual contact.

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1. Carstairs, 1935, p. ~~92~~ 109.
2. See page 55.
3. Carstairs, 1935, p. 93.

Relatively speaking this contact meant a significant change in the Santal external sphere. This was the realisation of a new and dominant authority over their sphere of activity. At this early stage this new order was internalised under the concepts of 'hakim' and 'sirkar'. Any such new and overriding authority would redefine the internal sphere by a new set of parameters. These parameters were no longer based on the difference between 'hor' and 'diku', and internal cultural consistency. The new definition was in terms of the internal sphere being a distinct element in a larger sphere of activity. The old concept of 'hor', existing on the basis of its binary opposition with 'diku', was now redundant in the new order. With the newly expanded sphere of activity realised, the 'hor' and the 'diku' circumscribed by the greater authority of the 'hakim' and 'sirkar', the internalisation of 'hor' as the pure people was no longer sufficient to represent the new relationship. 'Hor' as the in-group, must now be seen not as existing by opposition but also by cooperation with the great new authority from which it was nevertheless distinct.

The Santlas had migrated into a new and specially protected area and become the tenants of the British, under whose presence their sphere of activity was further expanded. At the same time the very internalised way in which they had expressed their identity underwent a change so that they how saw themselves as Santals while at the same time being 'hor'. As with all such changes a certain degree of cultural lag was inevitable, and the idea of 'we, the Santals' was one that developed slowly. However with the crisis situation of the uprising of 1855, when solidarity and identity became critical, the new concept of the 'hor' as Santals became institutionalised. In an account of the uprising, given by a santal, reference is made continually

to "We Santals" rather than to the 'hor'.[1] Although the idea of a Santal rather than a 'hor' unity did not develop popularly until the later date of the uprising (at least I can find no evidence of it) the organisational base in the expansion of the external sphere was related to this earlier period of the establishing of Santal-British contact, when the political focus was changing. As with all such new interpretations, such as a changing identity, the real change to using a different name was dependent upon the interest given to it. And it was not until the crisis point of the uprising that this interest became manifest and was realised. But my point is that if one sees change as a process of development the basis for this change develops as the focus of political activity changes.

## Section 2. Santal sphere of activity expands; development of political and territorial identity.

It would be an oversimplification to analyse the changes that have occurred by saying that the British froze the tribal groupings. This would imply that the Santals' identity was a variable, which depended on the independent variable of the British presence. The situation was more complicated than this.

What has happened is that the British have arrived in West Bengal, and their presence has initiated change. They have introduced certain innovations into the existing system, which has then adjusted, in order to accomodate or acculturate these innovations. It is the general process of adjustment, and its outcome, that is of interest. In the process of the system's adjustment to British innovations, whereby Santal identity

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1. Narrative of Chotrae Desmanjhi, translated by Stephen Hari Tudu and Mildred Archer, quoted in Culshaw and Archer, 1945, p. 232.

crystallised, the process of freezing was equally a result of British as it was of Santal actions. The outcome was a change of focus away from pure cultural and regional differentiation to some degree of central authority. Taking into account the previous acephalous nature of the Santals, the acculturation of the new external authority provided a radical change.

To explain this it is convenient to break down what has happened into its constituent parts.

1. The British obtained possession of the Damin and made Mr. Pontet the superintendent in order to encourage stability and development there.

2. The Paharias did not respond by developing the Damin.

3. The conditions of protection that had been set up for the Paharias gave great encouragement for the settling of the Santals in the Damin.

4. The Santals then began to settle there and took into their sphere of activity those innovations that had been created by the British for the Paharias, namely the position of Mr. Pontet in the structure of relations, and the status of the Damin as an area protected for tribal development.

5. The Santals accommodated and acculturated these innovations as this was expedient for them.

6. The result of this accommodation and acculturation was a change in Santal identity. The Santals were taking advantage of the innovations that the British had created for the Paharias.

What then was the nature of the change of identity for the Santals? The situation was that Mr. Pontet had given the Santals a degree of quasi-centrality and a homeland by following his

instructions.[1] Along with the structural necessity for the Santals to perceive their identity in a different way due to the expansion in their sphere of activity, they assumed this new quasi-centrality and a homeland in the Damin for themselves. Firstly the new quasi-centrality was a feature of tribal politics no longer acting purely at the level of local activities. The sphere of activity has expanded. Secondly this quasi-centrality was also bound up with the creation of a homeland of tribal territory around which the crystallisation process could proceed. The relationship between these two factors of social change must be explained.

Although it is possible to see in the Damin the formation of a tribal territory for the Santals, this was not finally achieved until the creation of the Santal Parganas after the uprising of 1855.[2] Although the Santals in the Damin saw it as a new homeland and tribal territory, there were large numbers of them living outside the area as tenants of the zemindars. Their migration into the Damin, although very large, was not complete. W. W. Hunter states that in 1851 there were 83,000 Santals inside and 10,000 outside the area.[3] Unfortunately there are no better figures than this apparent estimate, while we have very little information on the difference between those Santals who were inside and those outside the damin.

To say that the Santals in the Damin became the core of

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1. Letter from Mr. Pontet to the Acting Collector at Bhagalpur, quoted in P.C. Roy Chaudhury, Bihar District Gazetteer, Santal Parganas, Patna, 1965, p. 71-72. See Appendix B.

2. The Santal Parganas was finally created by Act XXXVII of 1855. This was an administratively non-regulation division, which included all the areas in which the Santals lived. See pages 202-204.

3. Hunter, 1872, p. 234.

their people is a corollary of the fact that the structure of their relations enabled a degree of quasi-centrality around the role of Mr. Pontet, so that for the first time they had a degree of political unity.' The Santals outside the Damin then looked on those inside as the core of the Santal tribe. The complication here is that although the Damin had become a tribal territory for the Santals it was not one per se. Strictly speaking we can only call the Damin a homeland. Nevertheless it functioned as a tribal territory for most of the Santals by the fact that it made them a politically unified tribe. Therefore, accepting this caveat, it is convenient to refer to the Damin as a tribal territory, despite the fact that it was not so in a demographic sense. In other words there were Paharias in the Damin and some Santals lived outside it.

## Section 3. A new set of relations between the Santals and the Bengalis.

As the relationship between the Santals and the British had become institutionalised so, in a complementary fashion, that between the Santals and the Bengalis also changed. Although it might appear from Mr. Pontet's attempts to remove all Bengalis zemindars from the Damin, that the relation between the two ethnic populations would be curtailed, this was not the case. The increased political and economic stability that the British had developed was increasing trade in the area, as was intended. As a result Bengali traders moved in to capitalise on this new potential. Within Mr. Pontet's recommendation "to make the country healthy to enable any class of people to resort to the resources of the Damin"[1]

1. Letter from Mr. Pontet, See Appendix B.

extensive measures were taken to improve the economic infrastructure. Gradually Mr. Pontet began to create bazaars and markets, which increased the Government revenue and encouraged trade. By 1850 there were 18 bazaars in the Damin.[1] Traders who were formerly scattered in small holdings over a large area were now brought together at commercial centres. To improve this further some 350 miles of track were turned into roads for wheeled vehicles by 1850,[2] so that trade increased rapidly. Whereas there was probably little or none before 1830, Captain Sherwill wrote in his diary for the 23rd January 1851: "I met Mr. Pontet this day at Burhyte (Burhait, the capital of the Damin, and the largest market), and in his company attended the Friday market, that was establishedby him a few years ago. The amount of grain and produce of the valley, exposed for sale was very great; numerous carts from Jangipore were on attendance to carry it away towards Murshidibad, and eventually to Calcutta, from whence much of the mustard that is grown in these hills is exported to England. Besides grain of various kinds, there was a fair display of sugar cane, lac, dummer or rosin, brass pots, bangles, beads and tobacco, sugar, vegetables, chillies, tamarinds, and spices, potatoes, onions, ginger, cotton thread, cloth, and the latter in great abundance."[3]

The Santals had become involved in a partial monetary economy based on the bazaars, which were run by the Bengali mahajans (traders), whom Roy Chaudhury describes as being mainly Bhunyahs (sic), who were Hinduised tribals, but to the

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1. Roy Chaudhury, 1959, p. 5.
2. Ibid., p. 5.
3. Sherwill, 1854.

Santals they were 'diku' and Bengali.[1] The Santals were also paying rent in rupees directly to the British. This was done through the agency of rent collectors, or 'naib sazawals' to Mr. Pontet and the Collector at Bhagalpur. This new involvement in a partial monetary economy is well described by Carstairs in his novel of Santal life.[2]

> "For Harma the great event of the year was the coming of 'Palteen' (Mr. Pontet); and it was this that first brought him in contact with the traders. In Pipra of long ago (his father's village, from which he had hived off) they had no use for money. Such things as they had to get from outside - cloth, molasses, iron tools and earthen pots, - they got by barter. The Government Revenue, however, had to be paid in cash; and to obtain this Harma had every year to take rice for sale in the great bazaar, or trading mart, of Amrapara (see map ~~opposite~~ page 69c). Thanks to Sham Pargana's advice he actually got out of the Shopkeeper for his grain nearly a third of its real value."

Quite clearly the fact of having to pay rent in cash has stimulated the partial use of money.

## Section 4. The Basic Economics of the Damin-i-Koh.

It is now necessary to clarify the economic relations of the Santals, the British and the Bengalis in the Damin-i-Koh. Basically there were three distinct systems of production; colonial mercantile, peasant and tribal. Whereas previously these were only operating with very minimal overlap and interaction, this interaction had now increased. The British saw the economic potential of the Damin and developed it by reserving it for the "industrious new race of the Santhals". Through control of public administration they created a mercantile infrastructure of bazaars and improved communications. This

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1. Unfortunately Roy Chaudhury gives no further information on these Banias. However they were not of Santal origin, and unlikely to have been Paharias. But it is interesting to note that the Santals categorise them as 'diku'.

2. Carstairs, 1935, p. 40.

policy created new and better economic conditions for the development of the Santal tribal economy. Under this protection the economic surplus was channeled into mercantile hands for export, even as far as England. This was done by imposing heavy taxes on all traders not operating in the bazaars, thereby putting out of business the small traders scattered through the Damin, who had been cornering the surplus for large profits within a peasant economy. Thus the Collector at Bhagalpur wrote,

> "When Mr. Pontet took charge of the Damun-i-Koh he found that various Bhunyahs (sic) had located themselves in different parts of the tract and monopolised all the trade. The ryots (i.e. the Santals, as tenants of the British) were eaten up by their exactions and they were so scattered, that little or no check could be put on their proceedings. Mr. Pontet's great object was to make Buzars (sic) in different parts of the tract, especially near high roads, and to induce these men to settle there every year. His measures have been attended with great success."1

This policy of protection redirected any surplus from the tribal economy by the creation of a mercantile infrastructure. It cannot be proved that tribal protection increased this surplus. It is just as likely that a certain surplus had always existed, and had been absorbed by the Bengali peasantry in the past. This was because the zemindars had often taken over the Santals as tenants by fair means or foul, while any surplus may have been absorbed by scattered peasant traders as seems evident from the letter just quoted.

It is clear that the Santals were becoming partially involved in a market economy, and a tribal surplus was being exported. But one cannot state positively that the channelling of this surplus was a quantitative change, because for the

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1. Letter from G. Loch to G.F. Brown, Commissioner of Revenue, dated 18th September 1850 given in P.C. Roy Chaudhury, 1959, p. 5.

first time a surplus was being produced, or a qualitative change, in that an existing surplus was being redirected. But it is clear that these three groups were interacting in a new way. The key to this interaction was the British control of the public administration. And as far as the Santals were concerned this was represented by the office of Mr. Pontet. In him the entire public administration vis-a-vis the Santals was invested, and it was a different system from that which operated for the Bengalis. The system of administration that had been developed in the Damin was unique when compared with that in the rest of Bengal.

## Section 5. Mr. Pontet and the Administration, its Differences for the Santals and the Paharias.

The system of administration in the Damin was inherited from the ideas of August Cleveland. The British, concerned with protecting and civilising the 'Jungleterry' and its inhabitants, had instituted a summary system of administration. Almost all the control over this was vested in Mr. Pontet, the Special Officer for the Superintendence of the Damin-i-Koh, in the terms of his letter of instruction. And it was the manner in which he interpreted these instructions that made the system what it was.[1]

His two main spheres of administrative activity were his judicial role as a settler of disputes that could not be handled by the manjhis and parganas, and his administrative role in the department of revenue. In the former lay the greatest difference from the Regulation system. He was

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1. Unfortunately I have been unable to find this letter. But Mr. Pontet's interpretation of it exists in a letter to Mr. H. J. James, the Acting Collector at Bhagalpur. This letter is quoted in full in Appendix B.

empowered to hold summary courts for all matters that did not involve more than Rs. 100. These were held in an entirely informal manner not dissimilar to that of the Santali village and pargana courts. On his yearly tour of inspection and rent collecting the Hakim held a court whenever some case or dispute was brought to him. No written testaments or formal witnesses had to appear, but Pontet merely listened to the matter as it was put. With the help of his 'daroga', or badgeman, he sent for the other party or made further investigations and finally gave a verdict. All official practices were cut out so that the Santals and the Paharias, who were not familiar with the complicated procedures of the regulation courts, could utilise this system to its fullest. The kind of matters that he dealt with were border disputes between the Santals and the Paharias, and cases where Bengali zemindars encroached on the Damin-i-Koh. There also appear to have been complaints against unfair practices by the Bengali traders. In these instances Pontet used his authority to put the matter right, often to the extent of threatening to expel the trader from the Damin. Other important matters were complaints against unfair rent assessment, which were also put right and the assessment duly adjusted.[1]

Although this system may seem rough and ready and largely dependent on the ability of one person, it appears to have worked very well in the hands of Mr. Pontet. Its main advantage was that it cooperated with the indigenous dispute settlement procedure, which it was able to back up when it could not deal with the recently expanded sphere of political activity,

1. Limited figures for the number and nature of the cases are given in letters quoted in Roy Chaudhury, 1959; see also figures from the same source on page 104.

and thereby augment it. But its greatest advantage was by contrast to the Regulation system. This was highly complicated and could not have worked satisfactorily among a population which was wholly non-literate and only partially involved in a monetary economy. The courts were resident and required an often lengthy and expensive journey, especially if witnesses had to attend. Court fees had to be paid and not infrequently some kind of legal expert employed. The language of the court was also incomprehensible to the average Santal. On top of all this the regulation Moonsiff Courts were run by Bengalis, who would be labelled 'diku' by the Santals, with all the social distance that this entailed. By contrast Pontet's summary court was the Santal's own court, run by their 'Hakim': justice was free and nothing was written down. But the major significance of this non-regulation system was that it was not the 'diku' system, so that the Santals came face to face with the British in this administrative sphere. As Pontet wrote in a letter, "I had the parties before me face to face, and settled the matter due by Punchait (panchayat)."[1]

The same applied to the sphere of rent assessment and revenue collection. Here the basic difference between the system in the Damin and the regulation one was that the Santals were the direct tenants of the British. That is they did not pay rent to landlord or zemindar, who passed on an assessed quantity to the E.I.C., but the villages paid directly to Mr. Pontet in his role as revenue collector. In this he was aided by the appointment of four Naib Sazawals, or Bengali assistants.

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1. This letter is quoted in the letter from A.C. Bidwell to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157, see Appendix A.

Rent was only collected when Mr. Pontet was on tour, sothat he would be at hand. At the same time he settled the rent for the new villages, or mehals (estates). One of the peculiarities was that all new mehals were exempt from rent for the first three years, after which it was extremely low. "We find the average rate of assessment imposed on lands held by the Santals in the Damin to be about one and a half anna per beegah, which considering the fine quality of much of the land in the Damun must be considered moderate in the extreme."[1] As in the judiciary system the assessment was also very rough and ready. Mr. Bidwell in his report to the Government of Bengal said of Mr. Pontet's methods, "considerable credit, I believe, has been given to Mr. Pontet for ingenuity in the indirect means that he employed in ascertaining the quantity contained in each holding, which was by getting them to erect a post in the centre of each village cultivation to serve as defining their boundaries, from which was obtained at the same time a rough calculation of the quantity of the land."[2] Unlike the regulation areas no accurate surveys were made of rateable land. Mr. Pontet describes the manner of assessment as follows. After the first three rent free years, "a trifling rent is taken for the next three years according to what the Pergumaite may consider just, averaging from 3 to 10 rupees per village. The next lease is for five years when the rent is fixed by a Panchayat of Manjees, who have been holding the village for the last five years, and with my knowledge of the length and the breadth of the village

1. Letter from A.C. Bidwell to the Sect. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 10th December 1855, B.J.R.

2. Letter from A.C. Bidwell to the Sect. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157, B.J.R., see Appendix A.

under settlement, as also the number of houses in it, I can generally judge the assessment to be a fair one."[1]

This administrative process was the totality of the Santal - British relations at the time, and was the essence of the new experience which the Santals were having as a result of the expansion of their sphere of activity. However elementary it may appear when described purely as an administrative process, it was the ramifications that have been described in relation to it, which made up social change, not the least of which was the process of the redefinition of tribal groupings. Moreover Santal political activity was now circumscribed by the overriding categories of 'hakim' and 'sirkar'.

The system of administration was not quite the same for the Paharias as for the Santals. Although the position of 'hakim' and 'sirkar' was similar, in that Mr. Pontet was the Special Officer for all the inhabitants of the Damin, the policy of the Government was different towards the Paharias. The main difference was that the Paharias were held to have an inherited right to the land that they had traditionally cultivated. In consequence they were not seen as the tenants of the Government, and they did not pay rent. In 1823 the Government defined its relation to them as follows: "Government can have no desire to interfere with the existing possession of the hill people in the mountains or to assert any right incompatible with their free enjoyment of all which their labour can attain from the soil."[2] The result was that

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1. Letter from Mr. Pontet to Mr. Bidwell, quoted in letter from A.C. Bidwell to Sect. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 10th December 1855. B.J.R.

2. ~~Given in~~ Roy Chaudhury, 1965, p. 483.

the Paharias' lands were never assessed. It would appear that although they had a definite relationship with the British, in that Pontet's judicial role towards them was the same as for the Santals, they were not involved in the economic changes in the Damin. They continued to produce along purely tribal lines, but did not participate in any partial market economy. This assumption, and the fact that they were not involved with the four 'naib sazawals', make it appear that their relations with the Bengalis were unchanged. In fact these relations were probably lessened because of the British protecting the Damin from encroachment by the zemindars. This was in complete contrast to the trend among the 'industrious' Santals. This situation underlines the special way in which the Government saw the Santals' migration into the Damin as an autonomous social migration, and the Santals as a special and distinct class of people for the specific purpose of developing the Damin and increasing the revenue. Due to this attitude they were not seen as being absorbable into the existing system.

## Section 6. The Santals and the potential to manipulate the system.

In analysing the newly expanded sphere of activity of the Santals close attention has been given to the relationships between them and the British, this being the source of all the innovations. But we must now look at the relations between the Santals and the Bengalis, and see how this has been affected. Interaction between the two, while being necessary within the institutional process that the British had created, was kept almost entirely on this formal and institutional level, due to the strength of the interpersonal avoidance inherent in the Hor-Diku relationship, This was also conditioned by the British policy of only allowing Bengalis to live and carry on business

in the bazaars, thereby cutting down Bengali migration into the Damin and discouraging broad based relations within the Damin. As a result Santal-Bengali interaction was confined to the two activities of trading and of administration insofar as the four Naib Sazawals and the Daroga were Bengalis employed by the British in the processes of revenue collection and the judiciary. The traders, however, were mainly responsible for the interaction.[1]

But the newly developed relationship with the British added a dimension to Santal-Bengali relations. Complaints and conflicts could now be dealt with in the British sphere, viz the 'hakim's' court. It was now possible to manipulate Hor-Diku relationships through a third party involving a relationship not characterised by the opposition of Hor-Diku, but by the attributes of Santal-British. Thus the essence of Hor-Diku became of less importance, due to the presence of the British as mediators. The parameters of the relationship, although characterised by the stigma of Hor-Diku, and therefore stating the differentiation of the two units, did not have meaning purely through opposition or contrast. The two units were now distinct and uniquely identifiable. So although individual interaction between Santals and Bengalis was still stigmatised with the attributes of Hor and Diku, that between larger groupings was thought of as being between Santals and Bengalis. This refocussing of relationships affords a penetrating glimpse into the truism that all variables are interdependent. The mediation that the British provided in the increased frequency

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1. The few Bengali castes of blacksmiths and weavers, who were often found in Santal villages, such as Chamars, are discounted from this statement, as they can be seen as integral elements of the Santal internal sphere. See page .

of interaction between Santals and Bengalis meant that there was no longer straightforward contrast and avoidance between them on both the levels of group and individual action.

This can be seen in terms of a simple dialectic approach. A man is not an uncle until he has a nephew and/or is conscious of having one. Likewise a Hor had only become a Santal when the presence of the British enabled a redefinition. The expansion of sphere had helped the Santal to understand more of the whole. This greater understanding gave him an improved ability to manipulate the system in which he lived. The importance of this will become clear later, when the Santal revitalisation movement begins, and they make a conscious attempt to patch up the structural distortion created by the collapse of Mr. Pontet's role as a mediator between the Santals and the Bengalis, (see pages 181 - 186 ).

## Section 7. The Structure of Relations in the Damin; its two phases of development.

To understand the totality of what has occurred it is necessary to systematise the data and construct a schematised model of the events and the situation that had arisen.

The main interest lies with that process called social change. There is no need to look at this from the cultural viewpoint, which centers on changes in dress, agriculture, life style, the family and the village, etcetera, as this has been studied in depth by others such as Datta-Majumder[1] and Culshaw.[2] Taking all this as known we can study the wider relational sphere and context in which these cultural changes have occurred, and attempt to analyse the forces that have led to these changes.

1. Datta-Majumder, 1956.

2. Culshaw, 1949.

In so doing we shall be concerned with the social relations between large groupings, and the political processes that govern them. This will lead us to look at the political nature of the Santal in reference to his external sphere of activity, and the changing base of Santal identity and consciousness.

We have been collating and describing the unique historical process experienced by certain social groupings as they have interacted through time. The uniqueness of these events has demonstrated that a certain pattern has developed through the inter-relating of the events which is as unique as they are. This pattern in the relationships between relata, when seen analytically, produces useful ideas as to the more general and systematised development and nature of social change. For instance, in the period demarcated between 1770 and the establishing of Santal migration into the Damin, the uniqueness of the history of the Santals and the Paharias led to a certain relationship between the British and the Paharias, which did not develop between the British and the Santals. In other words the process of history and social change has resulted in a meaningful structure of different relations between the groupings concerned.

It is useful at this stage to consider in a more abstracted form the pattern and operation of the relationships that have been created: and then to see how this pattern has changed through time and, as a development, has acquired significant differences that are the essence of social change. To do this one must resort to a certain level of abstraction, and select arbitrary and hypothetical moments in time. The two moments that are self-evident in the material are before and after the migration into the Damin-i-Koh, in other words, before and after the realisation of the British influence in the area.

In order to understand this division and show the differences between the parts I will recapitulate briefly what I have said so far.

Before the Santals had begun to migrate into the Damin one major feature governed their relations with thier external sphere. The external world was circumscribed by the concept of Diku, against which the Santals saw themselvesas the Hor. Within this measure of social distance they had isolated themselves as much as possible. Although solidarity and tribal identity may not have been institutionally recognised in any political form, there was free and frequent interaction through many overlapping social idioms within the cultural definition of Hor. The most pervasive of these were language, kinship and religion, as described in chapter two. Village life and the conjoining of several contiguous villages into a pargana was the active centre of Santal life. Each village was largely based on a specific clan and lineage, of which the office bearers were predominantly members. Santal society consisted of an aggregate of politically cooperating units with social and cultural likeness between the units. Contiguity and a defineable political territory played no part in their solidarity at the macro-level. Groups would occasionally leave the parent village and pioneer a new settlement. One of the most important aspects of Santal life was the association with the forests. Hunting was vital to that way of life and mode of production. The greatest ceremony of the Santalyear was hunt at the start of the season. Villages were isolated hamlets, oases of human habitation scattered through the jungle, with which they were in an intimate relationship. This is shown superbly

in Bompas's edition of Santali folktales.[1] Here each tale tells of the relationship between the Santals and the beasts and trees of the forest. Interaction with the despised Diku was kept to an absolute minimum, and whatever did take place was heavily coloured with all the attributes of social distance. The major interaction that is recorded at this time was in relation to the social banditry of the Santals. Arising from this there was probably some cooperation between certain Santal Manjhis and Bengali zemindars similar to that among the Paharias. Bribes were paid to the Manjhis not to raid certain estates, so that neighbouring ones could be attacked. Interaction also existed in the zemindars trying to take over Santal settlements and frustrating the Santals in their desire to be isolated in the forests. Santali villages often moved wholesale to new sites due to the interference in their affairs by the zemindars. Through the system of Kamioti, or debt bondage, traders and zemindars encroached upon the land that the Santals held by hereditary right, and by right of working the soil, and forced them into a ryotwari relationship, that is a tenant-landlord one. This land was then left to the devices of the zemindars to settle with Bengali tenants, while the Santals pioneered new lands. It would appear from the Santal folktales that they were aware of the existence of the Rajahs,[2] such as those of Birbhum and Nagore, and their relationship to the zemindars. However until the Santals began to settle in the Damin there was no relationship to, or specific idea of the existence of the British asan over-riding political entity in Bengal.

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1. Bompas, 1909.
2. Ibid.

This latter fact is in contrast to the situation among the Paharias after 1770. It is possible, then, to assume that their sphere of existence was basically similar to that of the Santals until the arrival of Captain Browne and August Cleveland with their policies of protecting and civilising the tribes of Western Bengal. This did not intrude on the Santal world at the time, as the British were only centrally interested with the geographically important routeway along the Ganges and the forst of Bhagalpur and Rajmahal.[1] Therefore during the end of this period there was a reorganising of the Paharias sphere of activity that did not happen with the Santals. Through Cleveland, the Chillimilli Saheb, ~~was~~ a relationship was developed between the British and the Paharias.[2]

Despite certain changes that were made to the administrative Regulation Acts by Ward and Pontet, the basis of this relationship remained the same until the formation of the Santal Parganas in 1857.

The following is a graphical representation of the main lines of the relationships that the Santals had. It demonstrates the way in which the Hor-Diku relationship formed the main organising process of these relations. It will become increasingly useful when compared, in this concise from, with future diagrams of the system as it developed through time, and as the sphere of activity expanded and became more complex.

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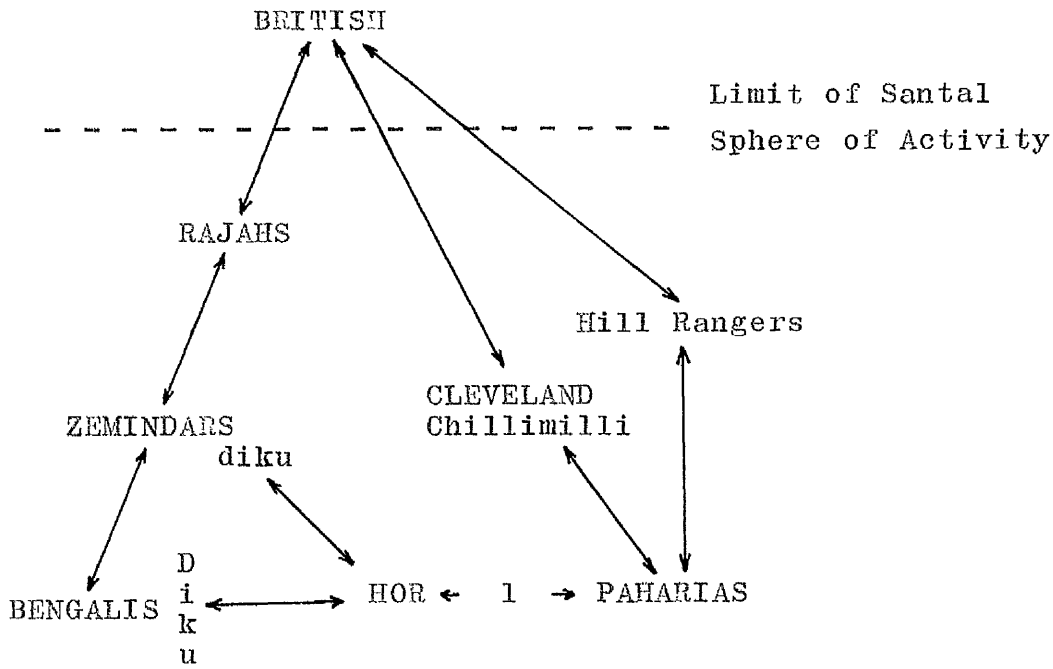
1. See Chapter 3, sections 2, 3, and 4, pages 69-84.
2. See Chapter 3, section 4, pages 75-84 .

DIAGRAM 1.




With the migration of the Santals into the Damin, and their consequent involvement with the British, the system of social relationships and the political focus of the Santals was recognised and their sphere of activity expanded. A change in any one of the relationships that went to make up the whole system, was reflected in changes in the rest of the system.

One of the main reasons for the migration of the Santals was the increased security that the administrative system in the Damin was able to offer. This security and the resulting involvement with the British administration system was the main source of social change and the reorganisation of relationships. This change involved the Santals in an administrative

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1. It is very difficult to discover whether or not there were active relations between the Santals and the Paharias at this period. It is probable that the Santals knew of the existence of the Paharias but the distance between them probably excluded any active relations. See map of West Bengal on page 696.

interaction with the British interest, in a partial market economy, and new economic relations with the Bengali traders. It was concordant with the overall British policy of protection for the economic development of the Damin so that more people could utilise its resources[1] to the advantage of British interests.

Thus the Santals moved into a set of relations not dissimilar to that of the Paharias, but with certain important differences. Mr. Pontet, as an informal adjudicator, gave the Santals a security that had not existed before his alignment with their interests. This protection resulted in greater stability and trade in the Damin. But the Paharias, unlike the Santals, were not paying rent and do not appear to have been involved in any partial market economy. Their isolation from the other recent changes was almost total. They continued the old relationship provided by Cleveland by recruiting soldiers for the Hill Rangers, who were trained in Bhagalpur. Meanwhile the Santals paid rent to the British in cash via the four Naib Sazawals, and there were extensive relations between the Santals and the Bengali traders and mahajans. These relations had been developing from 1836 to the uprising on the basis of British development of the economic infrastructure of the Damin. But the interesting feature of this was that the relationship of Hor-Diku between the Santals and the Bengalis could no longer function as their central ideology for identification. With the new presence of the over-riding authority of the British, as represented by 'sirkar', definition by contrast could not operate in the more complex system of relations. Any new definition had to be specific and individual, and was

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1. Letter from Mr. Pontet to the Collector at Bhagalpur, dated 25th January 1857, B.J.R. See Appendix B.

backed up by the British and Bengali use of the term Santal. This restatement of the tribal grouping as a self-identifying one was one of the most important features of the changes that were occurring.

The above illustrates the idea of a dialectic process in the development of tribal identification and consciousness that goes along with the process that the Wilsons call an expansion of scale.[1] Behind it is the assumption that the nominal units of the interaction system are purely relative in that they are fluid and rely for their referent reality on their whole context. The expansion that the British influence occasioned, gave the Santals a greater ability to comprehend that whole and to see themselves in their wider context. This, therefore, gave their Santalness a greater reality than the mere confines of their opposition to the 'diku'. As a result the British and the Bengalis, having a more expanded sphere than the Santals, always saw them as the people of Soant, rather than the pure people or Hor.

Once again a diagram of the main lines of the relationships will demonstrate this well if it is compared with the previous one.

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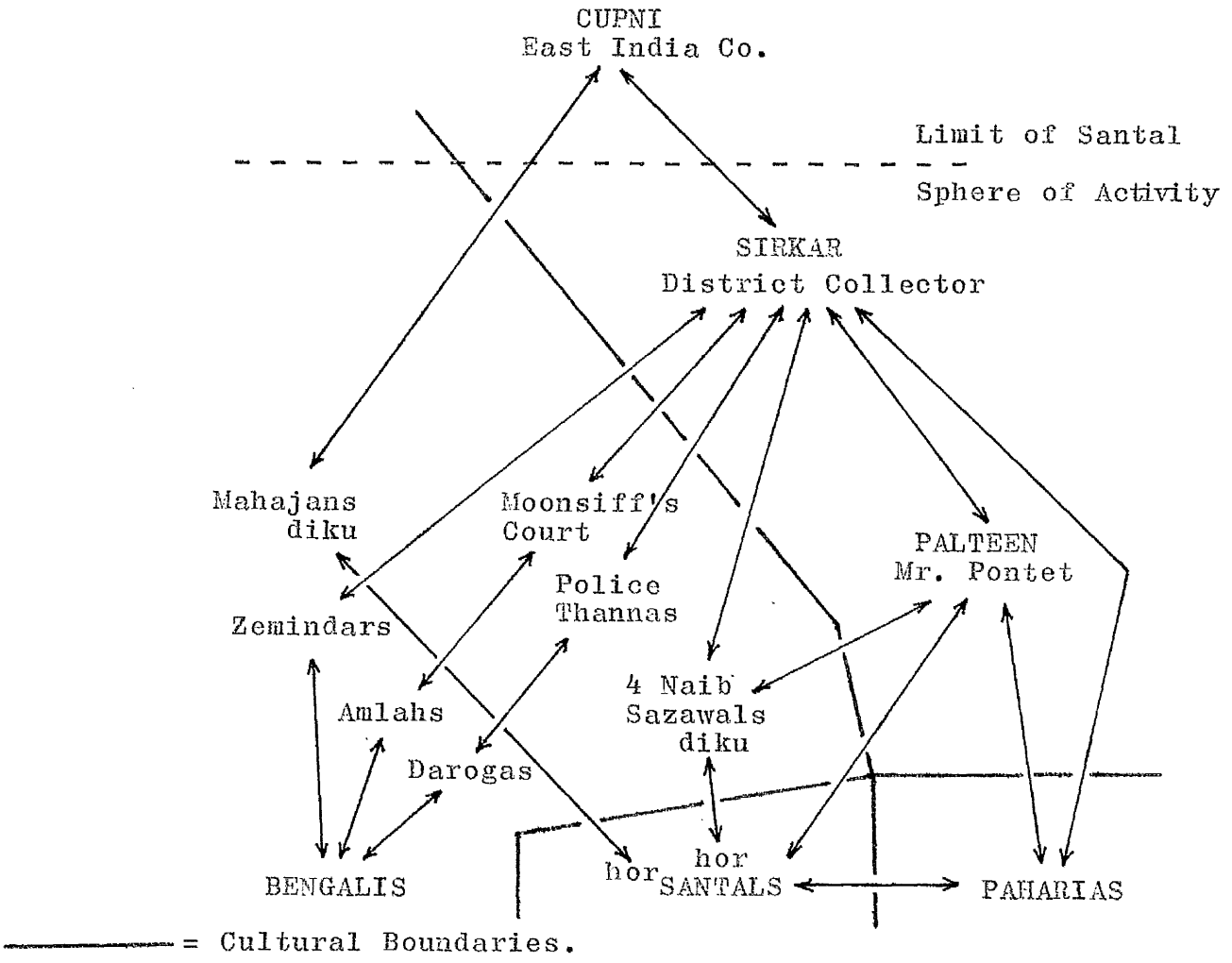
1. Wilson, 1968.

DIAGRAM 2.




This diagram outlines the points of politico-economic interaction in the Santals' sphere of activity. The direct link between the Santals and Palteen represents 'Palteen's' role as Special Officer for the Damin-i-Koh, in which he operated as an informal adjudicator between the Santals and the Paharias, and the Santals and any zemindars encroaching on the Damin lands, in respect of any disputes that occurred. The indirect link between the Santals and Palteen through the Naib Sazawals represents the process of rent collection. This link is characterised in its lower stage by the attributes of Hor-Diku. The common feature of these two

links is that they are integral elements of the political organisation. The political process of the Santals, being organised into villages and their Manjhis, and Parganas with their Pargana officers, has become extended into their external sphere. The fact that they all link in a similar fashion to 'Palteen' affords a quasi-centrality to the political organisation of the Santals which is part and parcel of the developing idea of Santalness as a specific identity not defined purely by contrast.

The direct link between the Paharias and Palteen is the same as for the Santals, but there is still the direct link between the Paharias and 'Sirkar' based on the existence of the Hill Ranger Corps that does not exist for the Santals. The significance of this will appear at a later date.

The relations between the Bengalis, through their personnel, to Sirkar, the British administrative base at Bhagalpur, which was outside the Damin and only on the very periphery of the Santal experience, is included at this stage for the significance that it will have later. The lines that are drawn out are between the Bengali ryots as rent payers through the zemindars to the Collector; the legislative process of the Moonsiff's Court, through the Amlahs or court officials to the Administration at Bhagalpur, which is headed by the collector; and the organisation of the police system. The relevance of these is that the Santals were not involved in this regulation system, but were protected from it by the role of Palteen. It is this role of Pontet's and the non-regulation system of the Damin that was created solely by British interests and policies in the area, that forms the basis for the tribal redefinition of the Santals, and the development of Santalness, as opposed to 'Hor', as the more specific identity of this grouping of people.

In fact, on this very oversimplified diagram the direct link between the Santals and Palteen is all that there is to support it. It must be rememberd that there was no statutory regulation in Bengal that recognised this non-regulation system in so far as it affected the Santals. The non-regulation system and Pontet's official role only applied to the Paharias, as the Damin-i-Koh was still officially reserved for their protection and civilisation. It was only the way that Mr. Pontet's personally interpreted his letter of instruction[1] that allowed the Santals any protection. This was an administratively insecure state of affairs upon which extensive social changes depended. The fact of this insecurity, and that Hor-Diku relations are becoming less important in defining the Santals position in the expanding sphere, affords an interesting perspective on the future.

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1. Letter from Mr. Pontet to the Acting Collector at Bhagalpur quoted in Roy Chaudhury, 1965. See Appendix B.

## Chapter 5. The Development of Conflict.

### Section 1. Introduction.

In the year 1850 the newly expanded sphere within which the Santals were living in the Damin-i-Koh seems to have been working very well. The social changes that were occurring were backed up by a sufficient adaptability to allow for their smooth running. In 1851 Captain Sherwill reported: "The rulers have little to do than bear their honours and collect their rent."[1] Whether this can be taken to show contentment in the Damin or the complacent and blinkered outlook of the British rulers is a moot point. But the fact remains that on the 19th of July 1855, Mr. Richardson, the MAgistrate at Bhagalpur reported that 5-6,000 Santals were collected at Mooderpore. They planned to kill all "natives of influence", and then march on Rajmahal and Bhagalpur.[2] How did this situation arise? Many authors have discussed in detail the material factors behind this turn-about in affairs. Roy Chaudhury[3] quotes in full the report in which the Governor-General of India in Council assessed the causes, which E.G. Man summarised as follows:[4]

1. The grasping and rapacious spirit of the mahajans in their transactions with the tribe.

2. The increasing misery caused by the iniquitous system of allowing personal and hereditary bondage for debts.

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1. Sherwill, 1854.

2. Letter dated 19th July 1855. No. 1-75. From H. Richardson Magistrate at Bhagalpur to Sec. of Gov. of Bengal. B.J.R.

3. Roy Choudhury, 1959. The Report that he quotes is Judicial Department No. 42 of 1856. Our Governor-General of India in Council.

4. Man, 1867.

3. The unparalleled corruption and extortion of the police in aiding and abetting the mahajans.

4. The impossibility for the Santals to obtain redress from the courts.

5. The improvidence of the Santals themselves.

W.G. Archer and W.J. Culshaw[1] add that the main cause was the ignorance and inexperience of the authorities in dealing with tribal affairs. When the Damin-i-Koh was formed it was sparsely populated and the area was important for the defense of the plains of Bengal. The British had come to India mainly for trade, and the purpose behind their policy of settlement was to increase it and the revenue. The Santal's ability to clear and develop virgin land was obviously to be encouraged, while supervision was found to be satisfactory and peaceable when held to a minimum. Unfortunately flocks of traders penetrated the area and bought the produce of the land at low prices for exporting to Calcutta. The traders, finding natural allies in the police, became the virtual rulers of the region. They then heavily exploited the Santals. This led to a great deal of dissatisfaction among the latter. Unfortunately the degree of this dissatisfaction did not reach the ears of the British administrators owing to the minimal level of supervision, so that corrective measures were not taken in time. This is witnessed by the statement of Kanoo and Seedoo to the inhabitants of Rajmahal:[2]

> "The mahajans have committed heinous crimes and all have unjustly. The Amlahs now made the whole rules and regulations bad, and this is the sin of the Sahebs. The Saheb who takes the duties of a Magistrade, he Naib Sazawl is the person who holds investigation, and extorts sixty or eighty rupees by force. This is the sin of the Sahebs. And it is from this that the Thakoor (the Almighty) has commanded me that the land does not belong to the Sahebs."

1. Archer and Culshaw, 1945.
2. Petition Seedoo and Kanoo Manjhis (the leaders of the Uprising) dated 10th Sawreo 1262 to the inhabitants of Rajmahal. Quoted in letter from A.C. Bidwell to Sec. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 14th Feb. 1856, No. 157; see Appendix A.

The Santals perceived that the opportunism of the Bengalis was the root cause, and the misrule of the Sahebs was secondary. They decided to take the law into their own hands because of the inadequate legal system, the extortion of the moneylenders, and acts of oppression by the native revenue collectors.[1] The leaders of the uprising claimed that British rule was over and that a new Santal kingdom had been created in which they would collect the revenue and rule the land more justly. The result was the uprising of the Santals in 1855.

One of the most interesting comments is made by Archer and Culshaw, who were the only writers to look further than the material grounds of the conditions of this exploitation by considering the social organisation of political configurations. The British, they said, desired little more than peace for the amelioration of trade, ~~as was instanced by Cleveland's early policies with the Paharias.~~ They intended the Santals to be peaceful, satisfied and productive developers of the land with a security of tenure, for which Mr. Pontet was made responsible. In this the Santals and the British were united. A central feature of the Santal society was that the land belonged to those who first cleared it, and it was then inherited, through the male line. The Santal was interested in the moral and social survival of the Hor, and this was attained by economic security and by possession of the land, through which he was in contact with his ancestors. This was true for land cleared recently as well as in the past, because the Santal would not occupy an area unless the ancestors had been found to approve of the new site. The land was a spiritual as well as an economic heritage. Although hunger and exploita-

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1. Basu, 1934, p. 186-224.

tion drove them to despair, emotional attachment to the land provided the necessary basis for the uprising. This was shown in the religious nature of the initial call to arms.

But throughout the literature the emphasis for the preconditions of the uprising is laid on the material conditions, which are excellently documented. However it is interesting to look back over this material and fit it into the developing history of the Santals in order to understand the sociopolitical processes that were operating. The organisation of the political groupings and their differing social perceptions, with all the concommitant features of identity crystalisation, will give an insight into how the uprising took place, and into its sociological basis.

## Section 2. The Santals' and the Paharias' different experiences and the differing perceptions held of them.

This chapter and the last are not studies of different historical periods. They are divided on the basis of the difference between the ideal formalised organisation of the Santal political sphere and the less formal and less ideal one that operated alongside it: but these two aspects were not synchronic. During the initial stages of the Santal migration to the Damin-i-Koh and their early period of becoming established there, the formal and more ideal organisation that was set up by the British functioned adequately, as was discussed in the last chapter. However this organisation was undermined by slow stages until it became less and less adequate to deal with the situation. It would be a mistake to delimit a moment before which all was well and after which all was not well. As far as the British and the Bengalis were concerned all was going well until the outbreak of the uprising. But from the viewpoint of the Santals

there is clear evidence that by 1848 there was considerable reason for anxiety. In August Mr. Pontet states in his yearly report to the Commissioner at Bhagalpur: "This year three villages absconded in consequence of the Mahajans who had gained cases in the Moonsiff's Court from the ignorance of the Sonthals to defend them." "I fully believe," he continues, the whole cases false - certainly as regards the ammount sued for; but in some instances I am sure that the whole debt has been paid tenfold. These poor fellows from not being able to read and write, have no check whatever overy the Bengally giving a receipt when paid in full, or returning the bonds, such a thing is never known."[1]

In May 1851 Mr. Pontet reports that there were, "great complaints against the Mahajans taking exorbitant interest, and using larger measures than those established by me in former years which I had settled with the consent of all parties. This opporession is a hardship, and with the trifling power that I hold can scarcely be rectified. I can only in consequence summon the parties and point it out, threatening them if they don't desist to turn them out of the Damun."[2] All this was an historical development that came to a head in the uprising of 1855.

If one looks back at the diagram on page 32 of the relations in the Santal political sphere, the contrast between them and those of the Paharias is clear. Whereas the Paharias had no significant relations in the political sphere with the Bengalis,

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1. Report from Mr. Pontet to the Commissioner at Bhagalpur, dated August, 1848, quoted in letter from A.C. Bidwell to Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157; see Appendix A.

2. Report from Mr. Pontet to Commissioner at Bhagalpur, dated May 1851, quoted ibid; see Appendix A.

the Santals interacted with the latter for the purposes of trade, rent assessment and collection. This important differential was the outcome of the complex historical developments from the time of August Cleveland and his policies to "civilise" the tribes. Another vital distinction was the different standings vis-a-vis the administration. By the Regulation Act I of 1827 the Hon. Petty Ward[1] had put the Damin under the direct jurisdiction of the Moonsiff's Court. This was the regulation system of Bhagalpur, which was administered by Bengali officials, and the court was held at Deoghar.[2] Mr. Pontet only had official legal powers over the Paharias. The Santals however were subject to the powers of the regulation court system. At the time this only stressed the difference between the position of the Paharias and the Santals in the Damin. It did not become really significant until later.

I have already discussed the different perceptions that the British had of the Paharias and the Santals which led to the latter paying rent while the former were seen to have an inherited right to their own land. This and the corollary that the Santals were then involved in a partial monetary economy constitutes a vital contrast between the Paharias and the Santals. It created greater interaction between the Santals and the Bengalis than between the Paharias and the Bengalis.

Diagram 2 on page 32 shows that there was a difference between the Santal and Paharia experience of the Damin. This led to the development of a different organisation of their political relations. The factor that contributed to this was Cleveland's policy for the protection and civilising of the Paharias. This

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1. See page 85.

2. See map ~~opposite~~ page 69a.

resulted in the Government taking direct responsibility for the newly created Damin-i-Koh. When, however, the intended rate of expansion did not occur the local administration looked to the Santals as developers of the Damin. The officials did this on their own initiative and without recognition from the central Government. This meant that the administrative channels for the protection of the Santals did not follow their establishment in the Damin. They could not be included in those special provisions made for the Paharias due to the socially autonomous nature of their migration.[1] The Santals were thought of as the new developers of the Damin, while the Paharias retained their former identity as 'paharis', meaning 'hillpeople', and their isolation, which grew from their former banditry, continued. They remained in their villages on the very tops of the hills whilst the Santals developed the better land in the valleys. The Paharias in their hill top villages remained isolated and played no part in the rapid development of the Damin. It is perhaps the significantly different ways in which the administrators perceived these two classes of people that was the main factor in the different roles that they both came to play in the Damin. As a result the nature and organisation that developed in their respective spheres of activity differed from each other.

These different perceptions come to light in numerous writings of the period. The Reverend W.T. Storrs writing on his experiences as a missionary among the Santals between 1859 and 1878 sums up the situation neatly.

> "Fourty or fifty years ago the Santals were an almost unknown race: I doubt whether any government official was aware of their existence. They had crept up by slow stages from the jungles of central India, possessing themselves of jungle

1. See page 103.

> land as they passed Northwards, until a large number of them settled in the Damin-i-Koh, or fringe of the mountains, which had been set aside by the Government for another aboriginal tribe, the Paharis of the Rajmahal Hills. Here the Santals occupied the valleys whilst the Paharis made the fastness of the hills their abode."1

Here we not only get the idea that the Paharias were isolated in the "fastness of the hills," but that the Santals were referred to by their specific name whereas the Paharias were merely called the "Paharis" or hill people.

There is also an interesting passage that sums up the perception that the authorities had of the Santals at this time. It comes out in a series of reports to the Government when in 1857 there was a shortlived scheme for it and the missionaries to cooperate in setting up a Santal education authority.

> "The Santals, though equally debased in ignorance and devoid of rational religion with the races referred to in our despatch of 1854,[2] differ from them in one important particular. They do not occupy separate regions or tracts of country, so as to form isolated communities, locally separated, as well as socially distinct from the Hindu and Mussulman populations. They are on the contrary employed freely by zemindars and speculators in land of all classes[3] for jungle clearance, and further agricultural purposes, and are thus located in close vicinity with well inhabited towns and villages, and mix with the general population in many relations and concerns of life."[4]

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1. The Santal Mission, by Rev. W.T. Storrs, from a series of articles titled, "Past and Present by Veteran Missionaries." In the Church Missionary Gleaner, February 1895.

2. Paharias and Khetowries.

3. This may only be referring to Santals outside the Damin. It may refer to their being openly exploited by Bengali traders in the Damin. And yet again it could imply that the British authorities were also land speculators in the Damin.

4. The Church Missionary Record. December 1857, p. 365. This is a report of the Secretary to the Government of India sent to the Church Missionary Society, dated 28th November 1856. It is part of the C.M.S. initial moves to set up missions in the Damin from their centre at Bhagalpur. They were attempting to work with the Government in setting up schools.

There is also another interesting report by G.V. Yule, who became Commissioner of the Santhal Pargunnahs in 1856, which states that,

> "Socially the Santhals are utterly distinct from the Hindu and Mohammedan populations, and from the other wild tribes even. They neither eat, drink or intermarry with them: they won't even serve with them. They pay rent to the Zemindar;[1] they borrow from, and sell their produce to the Mahajuns (traders). This is nearly the whole extent of their dealings with other races, except Europeans."[2]

This unique perception of the Santals was an important phenomenon. Although the Hor were looked on as being a distinct tribe of Santals, their lack of territorial identity and isolationism was leading them into increasing interaction with the Bengalis. The expansion in their external sphere was paralleled by the development of a separate identity in the internal sphere, rather than by simple bipartite contrast with the external sphere. An expansion of the external sphere meant a closing ~~the~~ of ranks and increasing internal consolidation. It is essential to distinguish between these two aspects of a sphere of activity that is expanding overall. The lack of expansion in the Paharias sphere of activity provides a convenient contrast at this point in time.

As the Santal sphere of activity increased so also did their need for protection. A traveller going abroad needs protection in the form of vaccinations and various injections. What then was so foreign in the new areas of interaction and conflicting interest in which the Santals were now involved? Exactly where did they need protection? Unfortunately at this

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1. This can only refer to the Santals outside the Damin, in which, as Government property, the rent is collected by the 'naib sazawals'.

2. Church Missionary Record. Vol. III. New Series, July 1858, page 197-199.

point it is difficult to analyse the conflicting interests owing to the strong bias of the contemporary material available. The material from which it is possible to draw are the post mortem discussions about the Santal uprising in 1855, backed up by a minimal amount of missionary and other non-government material. The major bias is that the causes were seen to be at the economic and micro-political level, while no emphasis was laid on the underlying social conflicts. However it is possible to gain a slight understanding of these points when other material is looked at carefully.

## Section 3. Economics and the Hor-Diku relationship.

First of all one must look at the developments in the Hor-Diku relationship. This outlines the social ideas that were current between the Santals and the Bengalis. Then a clear idea of the economic and local political base can be obtained by looking at the material base for these developments.

The attitude of the Bengalis to the Santals was summed up rather sardonically by the Calcutta Correspondent of the Times: "No prejudice has been excited among the Hindus. They hold the Santal to be about as important as a rat."[1] In the same way the Santals' attitude to the Diku and the economic dominance that the latter held over them is shown in the short folk-tale that was quoted in chapter two,[2] in which the Diku are compared to cats with their sly opportunist approach to life.

The Santals, dependant on the Bengalis for the monetary sphere of their economy, now began to see them as despicable opportunists as well as outsiders. A strong conflict between

1. The Times, 22nd December 1856, Calcutta Correspondent.
2. See Chapter Two, page 67.

economic systems and values was developing in the new situation of economic interaction. This meant that a social barrier was placed between the economic spheres of the Santals and the Bengalis, whereby there was no possibility for cooperation, and no basis for conversion or transformation of values between the spheres. This meant that it became increasingly impossible for the Santals to be involved in a trading economy. At this point there was a block in the way of any British hopes that the Santals might be further 'civilised'.

To understand this fully a detailed examination of the Santal economy is necessary. This can be done from the contemporary material and from more detailed information of a later date, with certain necessary extrapolations.

The Santal economic unit was the household. This consisted of the male head with his wife, sons and daughters, his sons wives and their children. All property was inherited by the sons in equal parts. If no sons were born the property went to the brothers in equal proportions: and failing brothers, the nearest male relative on the fathers side inherited. A surviving widow with small children was entitled to keep possession until the sons were married. The youngest son usually remained at home and inherited the house after the mother's death.[1]

The rule that a daughter did not inherit was sometimes circumvented by the device of having a 'ghardi jawae' or house bridegroom. If a wife's father had a house bridegroom and it was declared at the marriage ceremony in the presence of the village panchayat, that he intended her to be his heir, then on his death the house bridegroom inherited rather than his own

1. Datta-Majumder, 1956, p. 78.

male agnates. The daughter's husband had only a life interest in the property and could not dispose of it on her death. He was obliged to hand it on to his wife's agnates. So in a sense he was only an intermediary for the generation while his wife could not hold the property.

These observations on the ownership of property were made in the 1940s, and it is possible that the values pertaining to whether property was owned personally or communally had changed considerably since the 1850s. However all the evidence points to the fact that land was not regarded as a saleable commodity. Its ownership was based on it being utilised. That is jungle which was cleared and irrigated by ego belonged to him, and rights over water supply were settled communally by the village panchayat. In Carstairs' novel[1] the Manjhi stresses the point that the irrigation system was owned communally by the resident villagers and that for a non-resident to do so would have destroyed the community. So although land was owned privately it was still an integral part of the village community. Also cultivable land was carved out of the forest which was for the free use of all. Archer and Culshaw[2] stress that an important Santal custom was that land belonged to the person who first cleared it. The Santal was interested in the moral and social survival of his tribe and his family, and this was attained by economic security and the land through which he was in touch with his ancestors. Land was a spiritual as well as an economic heritage. A Santal would never clear new land unless the approval of his ancestors was known. The conclusion must be that while land was very closely linked to the community through the

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1. Carstairs, 1935.

2. Archer and Culshaw, 1945.

process of irrigation, it was more than an economic commodity as it embodied the social heritage of the individual and his family. Also it appears that land was not normally in short supply to the Santal. If it were, it was customary either to clear more land or to set up another village. So although rights of usufruct may not have stayed exclusively in the family, it was unlikely that land was sold to other Santals, and less likely that it was sold to a Diku willingly.[1]

There were three different types of land in a Santal village. In close association with the house was the garden plot. Here tomatoes, egg-plants, chillies, and other household vegetables were grown. In the valley bottoms, where the soil and irrigation was best, the staple crops were grown. The major crop was rice, and it was possible to get two crops a year off this land in a good season. Also grown in the valley bottoms, but in smaller quantities, were Indian corn, mustard and cotton. Other fields, on higher less fertile land on the valley sides, were planted with these staples. However this land only produced one crop a year, and in a bad one this crop did not always mature.[2]

The rice was threshed and stored, and along with dal and vegetables provided the staple diet. Mustard was pressed for oil, while cotton was grown to make cloth for house consumption.

Animal husbandry had a low priority. Cows, oxen and buffaloes were kept in shed adjoining the house, and taken by the male children to graze in the forests. They were only used as

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1. All land in the Damin in fact belonged to the Government. If a Bengali gained ownership of Santal land, it was only in the nominal sense that he claimed ownership of the produce from it. The actual land was an inalienable right for the Santals, Bengalis were forbidden to own land in the Damin.

2. For details of sowing to reaping ratio and prices fetched see Datta-Majumder, 1956, p. 72.

draught animals. Pigs, goats, fowls and pigeons were allowed to scavenge around the village. They were only eaten on festive occasions; while pigs and chickens were sacrificed to the spirits. Attached to each village was a sacred grove, or 'jaherstan', of Sal trees. At the foot of each tree were small stone altars to the relevant spirit. And in the house there was a small shrine to the ancestors at which the men would hold sacrifices.[1] Some of the larger houses had dove-cotes, in which wild doves were kept for the occasional meal and for exchange with neighbours.

By far the most important economic and social activity for the Santals was hunting, fishing and gathering. This was integral with their close association with the forests,[2] Biswas states that hunting was "one of the earliest methods of the Santals for the search for food."[3] The great annual hunt after the harvest formed the main event in their year. It had strong magico-religious associations and was the major gathering in which many Santal villages cooperated. Politically it was the time for the gathering together of the pargana and the discussion of all the important extra-village issues.[4] Hunting too was a male sphere. After the harvest, from December to May the whole village would organise cooperative hunts two or three times a month.[5] They would combine to surround a large area of forest which they flushed out, killing any animal that crossed the line of beaters. Using bows, arrows and clubs they

1. See Biswas, 1956, p. 18 and see above p.50.
2. See page ~~81, op. cit.~~ 127.
3. Biswas. 1956 ~~Op. cit.~~, p. 29.
4. For details see Sachinanda, 1969.
5. For the best details on hunting and its social role see Culshaw, 1949, p. 32-36.

killed hares, porcupines, squirrels, rats, snakes and birds. Some of the bag was shared out, cooked and eaten on the spot while a portion was taken back to the village for the family.

Trapping and snaring in the forest near the village also supplied a minor source of food. However of the game captured out hunting only doves, caught by decoys, were sold outside the village.

Between August and May the men would go on combined fishing trips. They netted the fish in the streams with small bamboo baskets. Here it was customary for the men to keep all his catch and take it back home for consumption.[1]

There was little craft specialisation in the village. Each household threshed its own rice and pressed the mustard for oil. The women of the house spun and wove the home grown cotton into cloth. Another important task for them was making beer from fermented rice. This beer, called 'handi', played an important part in Santal life, and ceremonial activity. As we have seen in the Santal myth of origin the first man and woman, Pilchu Haram and Pilchu Bodhi, were unable to have intercourse until the creator, Maran Buru, had taught them to make handi. Then by getting drunk they overcame their incestuous relationship to give birth to the founders of the twelve Santal clans. Beer played an important part in all the Santal religious ceremonies and was very significant in the process of marriage.[1] Wealth was normally assessed by the quantity of rice harvested. The ability of a wealthy man to extend his hospitality in the form of brewing a large quantity of beer was integral to his prestige.

Gathering was a particular task for the women. The Santal

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1. For details see Biswas, ~~op. cit.~~ 1956, p. 73-88.

were adept at finding and living off roots and berries from the forest. This often meant the difference between survival and starvation after a bad harvest. ~~In it~~ The main source of food from the jungle was the fruit of the 'mahua' tree, known as 'makton'. This was fed to the cattle, made into cakes for human consumption, and brewed into a rather stronger form of beer than 'handi'. Another fruit was the 'peeal', which was dried like a raisin. This was a delicacy, which was often sold.

The only major form of craft specialisation among the Santals was that of the blacksmith. There was a family of Chamars in almost every moderate sized village. They were Bengali craftsmen, who were integrated into village life.[1] In return for their craft skills they were allowed to farm within the community. They were paid annually in kind by all the households of the village. Datta-Majumder reports that in the 1950s they received 1½ sali of unhusked rice each year.[2] Leather workers, weavers and drum makers were also found in the occasional village, and lived in a similar relationship to the villagers.

The other vital part of the Santal economy was the role played by the market. This sphere was particularly significant as it was the meeting place between the Bengali and the Santali economic systems. The local market formed an important meeting place throughout the year for the Santals of different villages and parganas. Culshaw describes the rigamarole that the Santal went through before leaving for the market,[3] and says that it was one of the main meeting places for the young. There is

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1. See page 44 .

2. Datta-Majumder, 1956, p. 76. 'Sali' is a measure basket containing 20 seers, or about 40 pounds.

3. Culshaw, 1949, p. 37.

very little contemporary material on these markets, but we do know what the Santals exchanged at them. Culshaw says:[1]

> "There are cloth stalls and stalls of imported trinkets and ornaments. Potters, weavers, blacksmiths and purveyors of medicine, and many others display their goods. The Santals may have grain in a good year for sale; they sell fowls and vegetables and buy their salt and cooking oil regularly with the other commodities that they need."

Captain Sherwill reports in his diary for the 23rd of January 1851:[2]

> "I met Mr. Pontet this day at Burhyte,[3] and in his company attended the Friday market, that was established by him a few years ago. The amount of grain, the produce of the valley, exposed for sale was very great; numerous carts from Jangipore were on attendance to carry it away towards Murshidabad, and eventually to Calcutta, from whence much of the mustard seed that is grown in these hills is exported to England. Besides grain of various kinds, there was a fair display of pots, sugar cane, lac, dummer or rosin, brass pots and bangles, beads, tobacco, sugar, vegetables, chillies, tamarinds and spices, potatoes, onions, ginger, cotton, thread, cloth, and the latter in great abundance."

Another interesting entry by Captain Sherwill[4] reads:

> "This fruit, (peear or peeal), which is dried like a raisin and considered by the rich natives a great delicacy, sells for eight annas a seer in the markets in Bihar and Bhagalpur, but the Buniahs[5] only give the Santals weight for weight in rice for this expensive luxury. A seer of rice is worth one pice, so that one thirty second portion of its true value is given to the Santal."[6]

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1. Culshaw, 1949, p. 37.

2. Sherwill, 1854.

3. Usually referred to as Burhait. This was the largest town in the Damin. It had the biggest market in the most fertile valley.

4. Sherwill, ~~op. cit.~~ 1854., an entry for 20th January 1851.

5. Banias were the Bengali caste of traders that operated in the Damin-i-Koh.

6. These markets were set up by Mr. Pontet, in an attempt to organise the trade better that had developed in the Damin since the influx of Santals. Mr. Pontet forced the traders to operate only at recognised commercial centres, by imposing very heavy taxes on anyone who did so outside them. (See page 116.) In this way Mr. Pontet created 18 bazaars in the Damin by 1850. (See Roy Chaudhury, 1959, p. 5.)

The Santals mainly sold surplus grain in exchange for salt, sugar, pottery, brassware, medicines, fine cloths and ornaments. It appears, however, that the Bengali mahajans brought vegetables and certain forest products like lac, dummer, resin, peeal and doves. They also seem to have sold certain of their domestic animals such as fowls. Sherwill's mention of the exchange of peeal for rice rather than currency makes it appear as if monetary exchange played a small part in the function of the market. We do know from other sources[1] that the Santals had little knowledge of currency and that their ability to keep accounts was limited to knotted lengths of cord. It is important that the articles for sale were the produce of the household unit and were sold by that unit in exchange for commodities that it required. There was no process of sale and resale in the Santal economy. This will be significant later.

Finally there was the sale of rice to procure currency for the payment of rent to the 'naib sazawals'. This was a vital function of the market place in circumstances where wage labour was only a limited possibility.

Wage labour had already become an important source of currency for the Santals, but was not yet a major source of livelihood. Since the Damin was still protected territory there was little available in the area. But there was an ever growing demand elsewhere.[2]

W.W. Hunter wrote of the early development of a labour market which the migration of the Santals to the Damin provided to the capitalist British:

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1. "All the Santal could produce was a knotted string, in which the knots represented the number of rupees he had received and the spaces between them the years which had elapsed." Roy Chaudhury, 1965, p. 74.

2. Hunter, 1872.

"The division of the population into capitalists and day-labourers did not take place (prior to the Santal migration into W. Bengal) and when the English capital sought investments in Bengal, it found the second element of production wanting..... The system of exacting labour under pressure from the Hindu cultivator had always been disagreeable to most English gentlemen. It now became unnecessary, for the Santal immigrants afforded a population of day-labourers. Indigo exactly suited the hill men..... Many indigo factories in the Eastern districts (the Boona-parah) have villages of these Western highlanders. A family of them makes its appearance whenever manual labour is wanted..... Patient of labour, at home with nature, able to live on a penny a day, contented with roots when better food is not to be had, darkskinned, a hearty but not an habitually excessive toper, given to pig-hunting on holidays, despised by the Hindu, and heartily repaying their contempt, the hill men of the west furnish the sinews by which English enterprise is carried on in Eastern Bengal..... Every winter, after the indigo is packed, numbers of the labourers visit their native villages, and seldom return unaccompanied with a train of poor relations, who look forward to the wages of the spring sowing season as the soldiers of Alaric contemplated the soils of Lombardy."1

Since 82,795 Santals lived with the Damin while some 10,000 were close by but outside it,[2] it is probable that this form of migrant labour procured a large quantity of currency for paying rent to the Naib Sazawals as well as providing a small buying power in the markets. However once again it is unlikely that this currency was used properly, that is as a standard of value, a medium of exchange and a store of wealth. The rupee functioned mainly as a commodity for paying rent to the authorities, and to a limited extent as a medium of exchange.

The units of management in the Santal economy were the households. Their basic problem was to transform their own efforts into a range ofitems that satisfied their consumption profile. Within the village, each unit had equal access to

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 224-225.

2. "Between 1838 and 1851 the population within the pillars (erected by Petty Ward on Damin Border: see p.~~47 op. cit~~.) increased from 3,000 to 82,795, besides 10,000 on the outskirts." Hunter, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 234.
1872

the resources that it needed. And within the village the habits and appetites of each unit, respective of size, were similar. As there was no shortage of land, in view of the continuing possibility of expansion into the forest area or else the hiving off of a part of the community to form another one, these units did not seriously compete for their resources. And so their activity did not effect market prices.[1] Items were produced for the needs of consumption, irrespective of any value measureable in market or currency terms. This is shown by peeal which, although a great delicacy, was only exchanged on a one to one ratio with rice. There were no possibilities in the system for growth. Potential growth is here seen as existing in possible channels for reinvestment. That is, there are no instances of circular or spiral flow in the economy.[2] Each item of production was primarily utilised for consumption, or exchange on a pure barter basis for another item, which was not immediately available. This was even true of wage labour. Wages were only used to pay rent and buy the necessary items for consumption while away from the village, though even then they lived, to some extent, by hunting and gathering. On return to the village a certain quantity of the wages was spent on luxury goods and entertainment. However at this moment in history the small quantity of cash that entered the economy of the village was never used as a store of wealth or a medium of value for investment.

The economy of the Bengalis was in direct contrast to that

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1. See Barth, 1967, where this general idea is developed.

2. Barth, 1963, p. 11. A simple spiral here might be rice-cash - rice - cash. There being a possibility of increasing the return at each stage.

of the Santals. The few of them in the Damin-i-Koh were involved exclusively in some sort of economic or administrative relationship with the Santals. This economic relationship was concerned wholly with their activity in the market places and in one or two other small situations.[1] Theirs was a trading economy consisting of a complex system of management whereby a wise allocation was made of resources which were channelled to maximise the return at each stage in the flow of items. In the markets the main flow was of a spiral nature and concerned primarily with growth. The goods brought were mainly fine cloth, ornaments, pottery, brassware, salt, iron implements and medicines. These were exchanged for cash and more extensively for rice and mustard seed, which were sold in the larger markets outside the Damin for cash at what must have been some considerable profit, if we take into account what Capt. Sherwill says of the trade in peeal. This cash was then used to provide more goods for sale in the Damin markets.

Another feature of the Santal economy that enabled the traders to exploit a growth spiral was that the Santal sold all his surplus grain in a good year. In the years before there was economic interaction between the Santals and the Bengalis the Santals would consume the surplus grain that they produced in any year and merely preserve sufficient seed

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1. This refers to the one or two small coal mines that were worked by the Santals in the Damin. They are probably not of any great significance in the overall economy of the Santals. Captain Sherwill reports these in his survey (op. cit.), thus: "In the village I saw large heaps of coal that had been bought by a zemindar (?) from the Ajye River, distant fourty miles, to be used for burning bricks." (16th Dec. 1850). Captain Sherwill's main interest in the Damin was the surveying of mineral resources. His report is interesting and enumerates 13 outcrops of coal in the Damin. No doubt it was also of great interest to the authorities. He reports that some of the coal was of equal quality to the best Swedish coal and in association with iron ore.

for the next season: while in a famine year their economy was suitably backed up by hunting, gathering and banditry. This meant that the Santals never saw themselves as entirely dependent on agriculture, and was still partially true after they had migrated to the Damin. Only the banditry sphere of their economy was stopped. However this pattern, of not storing grain as a cover for the future, enabled the Bengali traders to develop another potential spiral flow of commodity. After a good harvest the Santals often sold their surplus grain to the mahajan traders, who would then store it for resale in the event of a bad crop the coming year. But the Bengali took this one stage further in the desire to maximise a return on investment and instituted the 'kamioti' or debt payment system.

At this time kamioti was a universal feature of the Bengal economy. W. Robinson describes it thus:

> "You will find it all over the country in one form or another. But in Sonthalia it was very bad. A man borrowed money and gave a bond to work it out, binding himself to work for the lender whenever he was required without pay. The lender of course required his services at harvest and other busy periods, when the debtor could have work and pay elsewhere. As interest was taken in advance the debtor could never work out his debt."1

However it had a particular significance for the Santals in the Damin, where currency played a very small part in the economy. Debts were secured in kind, since, as traders, the mahajans had little call for Santal labour. This often resulted in the land of the household unit being mortgaged to the mahajans. "For a loan of rice the rate of interest was as high as 100%. For a loan of money the rate was from 50 to

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1. Mr. William LeFleming Robinson, I.C.S. who obtained the abolition of kamioti in the Santal Parganas in 1858, quoted in L.S.S. O'Malley, 1910, p. 47-48.

75%".[1] The result was that for two generations a Santal family would work their land for the mahajan to whom they were in debt, merely being allowed to keep a small surplus for themselves. Mr. Robinson reported, "I have had a bond brought to me in which Rs. 25 was originally borrowed by a man who worked his lifetime; his son did ditto, and I have released his grandson from any further necessity; it had been running over thirty years if I remember rightly."[2] Robinson continued:

> "The Santal had also no perfect security in the possession of lands which they made for habitation or cultivation by their clearing of the forests. The new Diku, or non-Santal settlers gradually acquired more and more land from the Santhals by exacting mortgages on them in return for loans... Thus a contemporary writer graphically describes as follows: 'Zamindars ... and other mahajuns and their "mustajirs" or agents, the police, the revenue and court amlahs (officers) have exercised a combined system of extortions, oppressive exactions, forcible dispossession of property, abuse and personal violence and a variety of petty tyranny upon the timid and yielding Santhals'."

He continues in like vein to elaborate on the economic and personal emasculation that the presence of the spiral flow of the 'kamioti' system had on them.[3]

There was here the development of conflict between two distinct economic spheres. The Bengali sphere embodied the market place and the presence of a monetary economy. It was primarily associated with a growth economy characterised by the management of spiral flows of money and goods in the market. The Santal economic sphere was one of non-growth. It only

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1. Datta-Nabendu, 1956, p. 24.

2. Robinson, in O'Malley, 1910, ~~op. cit.~~

3. There is ample discussion of the kamioti system in the material. Extensive illustrations are given of the terrible conditions of exploitation that were perpetuated. Although they are relevant they cannot be given here. See:
   a) O'Malley, 1910, p. 46-48.
   b) Roy Chaudhury, p. 77-79.
   c) Hunter, 1872, p. 229-232.
   d) Carstairs, 1935, Chapter VIII, A New Peril, p. 55-64.

existed for the management of the primary resources of land and labour by direct flow to consumption by the household unit. Land was only seen as a basic resource for the production of a relatively fixed quantity of consumeable products. It did not have the economic value of an investment for increment as there was no spiral flow of the commodities produced from it. It therefore only had value on the basis of being utilised for production. Rights over land were therefore based on the fact that the individual had cleared it and was living off it. And associated with these land rights were the social idioms of the land representing the individual's family and heritage of the ancestors. Land that was not being cultivated was communal property. Within this direct flow economy there was the possibility for direct barter between one product and another.

The Santal and Bengali spheres were also distinguished by the clearly different ethics of the Bengali profit motive and the Santal idea that surplus could be directed toward greater generosity and hospitality.

> "The Santal possesses a happy disposition, is hospitable to strangers, and sociable to a fault among his own people. Every occasion is seized upon for a feast, at which the absence of luxuries is compensated for by abundance of game and liquor made from fermented rice ..... He keeps his respect chiefly for the aged among his people; and in dealings with outsiders, while courteous and hospitable, he is at the same time firm and free from cringing. Unlike the Hindu he never thinks of making money by a stranger, scrupulously avoids all topics of business, and feels pained if payment is pressed upon him for milk and fruits which his wife brings out. When he is at last prevailed upon to enter into business matters, his dealings are off-hand; he names the true price first, which a lowlander never does, and politely waives all discussion and beating down."[1]

A strong moral barrier distinguished the spheres, which arose from their differing cultural associations.

It is important to note that these spheres ~~are~~ were distinguished

1. Hunter, 1872, p. 216.

by their different systems of management. Within each sphere goods were freely interchangeable. But with the creation of the Damin by the British and their desire to harness some of the economic output of the area, these two spheres were thrust together. The social interface between the Bengalis and the Santals had increased activity, and exchange between the two spheres became more and more possible. Initially this benefitted the Santals, as the ability to get loans to tide over bad years gave them a greater degree of economic security. On the other hand the opening up of new areas benefitted the Bengali traders. Therefore despite the differences between the two spheres there was no initial barrier that impeded the flow of value and restricted people's freedom to allocate their resources. But the absence of a barrier was not complete, as it was impossible from the start for the Santal to reverse this flow.[1] With the spiral flow in one sphere and the direct flow in another a limit to the freedom of exchange escalated until within a few but unquantifiable number of years the freedom of the flow of exchange was totally restricted to a unidirectional one into the ever increasing Bengali spiral. This happened to such an extent that Hunter says:[2]

> "Not a year passed without some successful shopkeeper returning from the hill-slopes to astonish his native town by a display of quickly-gotten wealth, and to buy land upon the plains. The Santal country came to be regarded by the less honourable orders of Hindus as a country where a fortune was to be made, no matter by what means, so that it was made rapidly."

Barth elaborates on this:

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1. See Barth's similar argument in Economic Spheres in Darfur, A.S.A. Monograph, 6, ed. Michael Banton, London, 1967, p. 164.

2. Hunter, 1872, p. 228.

> "... entrepreneurs will direct their activity pre-eminently towards those points in an economic system where the discrepancies of evaluation are greatest,[1] and will attempt to construct briding transactions which can exploit these discrepancies. The social factors which produce a reluctance to sell land serve as a general impediment on entrepreneurial activity in this field; besides, the profits connected with such transactions are long term..... The problem, when an entrepreneurial adventure consists in breaking through the barrier between spheres, is that of re-conversion of assets without loss - i.e. that of allocating channels that allow a circle of reinvestment and growth."[2]

However the mahajans managed with the kamioti system to overcome the social reluctance to sell land. This resulted in aggravating the problem of the re-conversion of assets, that arose from a more devastating breaking through the barriers.

Logically the resolution of the conflict that arises from the breaking of barriers between economic spheres must either bring the two closer into line, or else the spiralism of the one must be prevented from encroaching on the basis resources of the other. If not, a situation of absolute deprivation will arise as it did for the Santals. The first solution would have been impossible because of the social nature of the Hor-Diku relationship;[3] The second was attempted by Mr. Pontet.

In his report for May 1851 Mr. Pontet noted that,

> "great complaints against the mahajans taking exhorbitant interest, and using larger measures (meaning measures and weights) than those established by me in former years, which I settled with the consent of all parties. This oppression is a hardship, and with the trifling powers that I hold can scarcely be rectified. I can only in consequence merely summon the parties and point it out, threatening

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1. "Mr. Dunbar adds that their (the Santals) produce was generally disposed of at a rate considerably lower than the market price of the day to the mahajans who had given them advances at the commencement of the season, or to dealers who came into the Damun for the purposes of purchasing grain." Letter from A.C. Bidwell, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157, see Appendix A.

2. Barth, 1967, p. 171.

3. See below page 158.

them if they don't desist to turn them out of the Damun."[1]

I will discuss later the barriers that also existed in the administrative complex that prevented the resolution of these conflicts, namely, the weaknesses of the non-regulation legal system of the Damin and its conflict with the regulation system, and the social and cultural constraints that were involved at this level.

The result of this conflict was that the Santals were rapidly subjected to a form of economic emasculation, and a level of absolute deprivation that was not experienced by the Paharias, who remained isolated from these changes. Subject to this the Hor-Diku relationship acquired a different significance over and above what was discussed in the last chapter. It was now even less a feature of cultural contrast between two internally alike but exclusive units that had a minimum of social interaction. The expansion of the Santal sphere of activity with increased social interaction between them and the Bengalis, and the conflict that now characterised it, had brought the Hor-Diku relationship into the more intimate sphere of day to day social relations. It now characterised the difference between the greedy, opportunist man, and the industrious unselfish one. It functioned as an ongoing social idiom to categorise those processes that had developed through social changes in economics ad local politics. The identity of the old Hor, that included all the tribal peoples of Chota Nagpur and West Bengal, no longer applied as a general category in cultural contrast to the Diku Bengali. Identity now crystallised round the Santals, who were distinct from the Pahari Hor. They had a unique history and social position as a tribe unified

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1. Letter From A.C. Bidwell to Sec. to the Gov. of Bengal, 14th February 1857, No. 157; see Appendix A.

around the defence of a territory that was being economically threatened: a territory which had been created by the British administrators but now appeared to be left largely unsupported by British authority and was thus dependent on the unity of the Santal for its continued existence.

## Section 4. The Administration and conflicts in the Revenue System.

It has been more convenient and brief to mention only the economics of the village and the market place in order to analyse the economic spheres, their barriers and conflicts. At every turn in the analysis I have stopped short of discussing the land revenue administration. What occurred in this field follows very closely on what has just been discussed. Although it is subject to a similar analysis it will now be dealt with separately and more briefly.

The system in the Damin was entirely under Mr. Pontet's authority. The area was divided into four sub-areas or 'thannas', in each of which a 'naib sazawal' was in charge of the process of rent collection. Under him were an indefinite number of 'amlahs' or assistants. The assessment and settling of the rent to be paid was done entirely by Pontet himself. A new Santal settlement did not have to pay rent for the first three years while it established itself.

At five year intervals Mr. Pontet reviewed the rent assessment of each village, and informed the 'naib sazawals' what they should collect. The 'manjhi' then collected the rent from the villagers at his own discretion and paid it to the 'naib sazawals' through the agency of his 'amlahs'.

Mr. Pontet was most diligent in his rent reviewing, and, under his auspices, the revenue from the Damin increased

consistently. For instance:

> "During the year (1851), Mr. Pontet granted 45 fresh Pottahs, and resettled 247 Mehals the leases of which had expired, at an aggregate jumma of Rs. 9,387. The actual net increase of the revenue obtained in these cases is Rs. 2,777. All the settlements, except one belonging to the year of the report, had been confirmed by the Collector (at Bhagalpur)."[1]

The results of this can be seen in the figures that I have given on page 106, where the rent is seen to increase from Rs. 6,682 in 1837/38 to Rs. 58,033 in 1854/55.[2]

In 1851 Captain Sherwill's report on the Damin gives some interesting figures comparing the number of Santals to Paharias in the four districts of the Damin. It shows that the Paharias did not pay any ground rent. Also the number of villages not paying rent gives some indication of the expansion, either due to migration or the hiving off of new settlements already within the Damin.[3]

Population returns for the Rajmahal Hills 1851

| Tribe | Local Div. | No. Villages | No. Houses | No. Inhabitants | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mal Paharias | Rajmahal Hills | 921 | 6,756 | 33,780 | pay no tax or ground rent |
| Sonthal | Rajmahal | 385 | 4,185 | | |
| | Diggee | 294 | 3,823 | | |
| | Hurhureea | 181 | 2,127 | | |
| | Doomka | 304 | 3,027 | | |
| | | 1,164 | | | all pay ground rent. |
| | scattered in above not paying rent, not 3 years old. | 309 | 3,493 | | |
| | | | 16,655 | 83,265 | |
| Grand Total | | 2,394 | 23,411 | 117,045 | 103 per sq.mile |

1. Letter from the Secretary of the Board of Revenue of the Lower Provinces to the Sec. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 28th February 1851, No. 124.
2. Given in a letter from A.C. Bidwell to the Sec. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157; see Appendix A.
3. Sherwill, 1854.

Captain Sherwill's figures also provide useful information on the degree to which the Santals have cultivated the Damin, and the proportion of forest to cultivated land in 1851.

Amount of Cultivation, Fallow, and Wasteland in Damin.

| Tribe | Acres under cultivation and fallow. | sq. miles | sq. miles uncleared but culturable | totl. area in Damin. sq. miles |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mal Paharias | 35,840 | 56 | - | |
| Sonthal | 162,560 | 254 | - | |
| | | | 1056 | 1366 |
| Grand Total | 198,400 | 310 | 1056 | 1366 |

Under the aegis of Mr. Pontet and Capt. Sherwill the intentions of the Government were being admirably fulfilled, while Capt. Sherwill brought "to the notice of Government all productions this unexplored tract is supposed to abound in,"[1] Mr. Pontet had been able to, "resume all lands within the Damin clandestinely retained by the Zamindars;" "to introduce among the hill people a taste for agriculture;" "to parcel off Jageers (rent estates) to Sardars, Naibs and Manjhees;" "to encourage more settlers for clearing away the immense forests and thereby to make the country healthy to enable any class of people to resort to the resources of the Damin," and therefore finally "a handsome revenue will be yielded to Government, the race civilised and the tract made healthy."[1] Pontet, however, failed: "to protect the industrious race of new settlers called Santhals who have been driven by oppressive zemindars from their native countries Birbhum and Singhbhum."[1] In fact by 1848

1. Letter from Mr. Pontet to the Act. Col. of Bhagalpur, in which pontet lays down the 8 points that he sees to be his duties as Superintendent of the Damin. Quoted in Roy Chaudhury, 1959, p. 3. See Appendix B.

three villages had once again been driven to give up their homes and had "fled in despair to the jungle."[1]

As we have seen, by 1850 the whole cycle of economic conflict had led to the economic emasculation of the Santals and the belief that a quick fortune could be made in the Damin-i-Koh. This resulted in exploitation of the Santals by the rent collecting officials. This was in turn backed up by the 'mahajuns' who had a further market for lending rupees to the Santals in order to pay rent, and thereby increasing the rate at which the Santals mortgaged their land to the traders. An article in the Calcutta Reveiew of 1856 says of the 'naib sazawals' and their 'amlahs':

> "Where authorised to take some six rupees on behalf of the Sircar (Government) they will lay some six other rupees for their private benefit; or where a rent of 4 annas for a plot and all it contained in the settlement, they take a rupee more for a sapling bamboo clump, or a solitary fruit tree growing thereon."[2]

It is pointless to expand on this, although there is very extensive and more elaborate evidence to be found in the material.[3] The situation was quite simple. The opposition

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 232.

2. Given in Bihar District Gazetteer, Santhal Parganas, 1910,p.76

3. a) Carstairs, 1935. Two Chapters here are very interesting. A New Peril, p.55-64, describes very well how the spiral flow of the Diku economy slowly impinges on the Santal's economy. It then takes it further into a detailed description of the process and methods of exploitation used. Chapter IX, Something Wrong, p.64-73, goes into the reactions of the Santals and the feelings of helplessness that was engendered.
   b) Hunter, 1872, discusses all the aspects of exploitation of the Santals briefly and graphically, p. 229-234.
   c) Roy Chaudhury, 1965, the most comprehensive of the gazettes, gives excellent historical details, p.73-79.
   d) Roy Chaudhuri, 1959, quotes some relevant letters, and discusses the politico-economic factors, p. 13-16.

and conflict that now characterised the Hor-Diku relationship was manipulated by the Bengalis in the Damin to their own advantage. This was a part of the Hor-Diku relationship and helped to exacerbate the conflict that was now inherent in it.

There is one more point to be made. Despite Mr. Pontet's awareness that certain problems and abuses were arising in the Damin, there was no overall awareness by 'Sirkar' and the authorities about what was really happening. Thus Captain Sherwill was capable of saying: "The rulers have little to do than bear their honours and collect their rent."[1]

Section 5. Pontet and the judiciary cannot mediate.

Under normal conditions such open conflicts as had developed in the Damin-i-Koh would have been dealt with in the courts. Unfortunately the expansion that the Santals experienced in their sphere of activity was not paralleled by comparable changes in the judicial system.

As we have seen, the Santals in the Damin were united by the policy of the British to develop the region of the Rajmahal Hills as a stable area that could be largely self-administrative, and form a buffer area on the western frontier of Bengal. Thereby a certain set of socio-political relations was established. As a tribe with an ever increasing degree of internal solidarity and territorial identity, a form of quasi-centrality came to characterise the newly created political unit, namely the Santals. This unity and quasi-centrality depended on the presnec e of, and the role played by the British inthe region.[2] The peculiar feature of this development was that this quasi-

1. Capt. Sherwill, 1855.

2. See Chapter 4, and in particular pages 104, 106-7.

centrality around 'sirkar' was entirely mediated through the position of Mr. Pontet.[1]

Pontet's role was twofold. Firstly he was an administrator, and secondly he had a judicial capacity, to protect the 'industrious race of new settlers'. For the Santals the latter capacity took on an aspect whereby he became more than just a court official or judge. He was their representative, their 'hakim' as 'Chillimilli' had been to the Paharias.[2] In the early years of migration into the Damin all the Santals had contact with Mr. Pontet in his role as rent assessor for each new village, and as a re-assessor at five year intervals. Also he was known for settling border disputes between them and the Paharias, and disputes about encroachment by zemindars. He had given the Santal villages a degree of security of tenure. The continuance of Pontet's role as the 'hakim' was vital at this time, when he formed the central element around which the quasi-centrality of the Santals was crystallising. But he was also the only element in the political structure through which they had access to the overriding authority of the British dominion in western Bengal. It was with this relationship through their 'hakim' to 'Sirkar', and the new idea that the Santals had of 'Cupni', (the East India Company) that they were in any way able to manipulate the political structure. (See diagram 2 on page 132.) Their relationship with Pontet was the only cooperative link that they had with Sirkar. All the other lines of access were through the

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1. This is graphically shown in diagram 2 on page along with the discussion if this diagram on pages 132-4, where the state of Santal unity is dependent on the continued relationship between themselves and Palteen.

2. This refers to August Cleveland, and his role as protector of the Paharias; see pages 78-82. Pontet's role as Hakim and the equivalence that it had to Cleveland's role is described and discussed on page 104.

Bengalis and these relations were negatively characterised by the nature of Hor-Diku. The critical position of Mr. Pontet in this judicial role was essential.

Thus Mr. Pontet's role was essential in the theoretical sense that he was the intermediary in the process of local politics. Above all the Santals needed a protective judiciary to counteract the exploitation that had arisen. However his role in the administration was very weak. His authority was based solely on his letter of introduction, which merely stated that he was to "protect the industrious race of new settlers called the Santhals". There was no legal mandate that gave him any authority as a judiciary for the Santals, as he had over the Paharias by right of Cleveland's Regulation Act I of 1796. The somewhat ambivalent attitude of the Government in not clearly demarcating Mr. Pontet's role is clearly stated in Mr. Bidwell's report on the background to the uprising:

> "For several years the culturable lands included in this tract (the Damin) were reserved for the Hill people (the Paharais), but in the year 1827, 31st October the Board supported Mr. Ward's recommendation that other classes should be admitted to cultivate these lands; that the clearance of the forests if left to the Hill people would never take place, whereas the Sonthal racewere largely employed by neighbouring zemindars in bringing forest lands into cultivation and no possible objection existed to employ them in the same way in the Damun.
>
> "The Govt. however replied that his Lordship in Council was unwilling to depart from the resolution which the Govt. had come to that the Damun lands should be exclusively reserved for the encouragement of the Hill races in agriculture. 'Should the Hill race disappoint these expectations it will then be at the option of Govt. to change their plan and look to other classes for the improvement of their lands.'
>
> "No formal orders of Govt. repealing these instructions appear on record; but the Sonthals gradually located themselves on the Damun lands, and in 1830 the Govt. recognised their existence there by authorising the local authorities to protect them from any demand, beyond that for which it is customary for them to pay, by taking a stipulation to that effect from the Hill grantees.

> "After repeated recommendations from the local authorities in favour of encouraging Sonthals to settle on these lands as the only means of clearing the jungle, the Govt. on the 21st November 1836 consented to the appointment of a special officer for the superintendence of the Damunkoh."1

Even then Mr. Pontet was only given informal instructions as to his duties, without being made fully aware of his legal authority and jurisdiction. Legally he had no powers of jurisdiction over the Santals. Therefore the role that he built up as their protector was not properly founded. In the situation of conflict that had developed between the Santal and Bengali economies, and the exploitation that had resulted, Mr. Pontet found himself powerless to fulfill the role expected of him, so that he failed to break the 'kamioti' system that he detested. The Bengalis were able to take the Santals to the Moonsiff's Court, while he was unable to deal with the situation in the informal court system which he had set up.[2]

> "Year after year the Santal sweated for his oppressor. If the victim threatened to run off into the jungle, the usurer instituted a suit in the courts, taking care that the Santal should know nothing of it till the decree had been obtained and execution taken out. Without the slightest warning, the poor husbandmen's buffaloes, cows, and little homesteads were sold..... Redress was out of the question: the court sat in the civil station perhaps a hundred miles off. The English judge, engrossed with the collection of revenue, had no time for the petty grievances of his people. The native underlings, one and all, had taken the pay of the oppressor: the police shared in the spoil."3

The Santals were totally unable to work within the court system. Once again they were in different and by now completely alienated cultural spheres. Being unable to read and write, they could not produce copies of the loan bonds with which the 'mahajuns' established their claims. Moreover the courts were

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1. Letter from A.C. Bidwell to the Secretary to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157. See Appendix A.

2. See pages 117-119.

3. Hunter, 1872, p. 230.

often a long way from their homes in Doomka and Deoghar.[1] They could neither support themselves for such journeys to bring the required witnesses, pay the court fees or get interpreters.

The result was that they got no protection from the Moonsiff's court which nearly always decided in favour of the 'mahajuns'. Once again barriers between the two relevant legal spheres prevented any free flow of exchange and cooperation.

## Section 6,a. The Structure of Relations in the Damin; the Santals, the Bengalis and the British.

Let us now see the effects that all this had on the pattern of relations in the Santal's sphere of activity. The new feature that was so critically important, in that it changed the entire perspective, was that the direct relationship between the Santals and Pontet no longer worked. Mr. Pontet now had no power over the police administration of 'thannas', or area divisions, and 'darogas' or badgemen, who executed the authority of the courts. He had no legislative authority. That is, the claims that the the 'mahajans' brought against the Santal could no longer be dealt with by Mr. Pontet, but were settled in the regulation Moonsiff's Court. Diagram 3 of the relations in the Santal sphere of activity therefore now looks like this:

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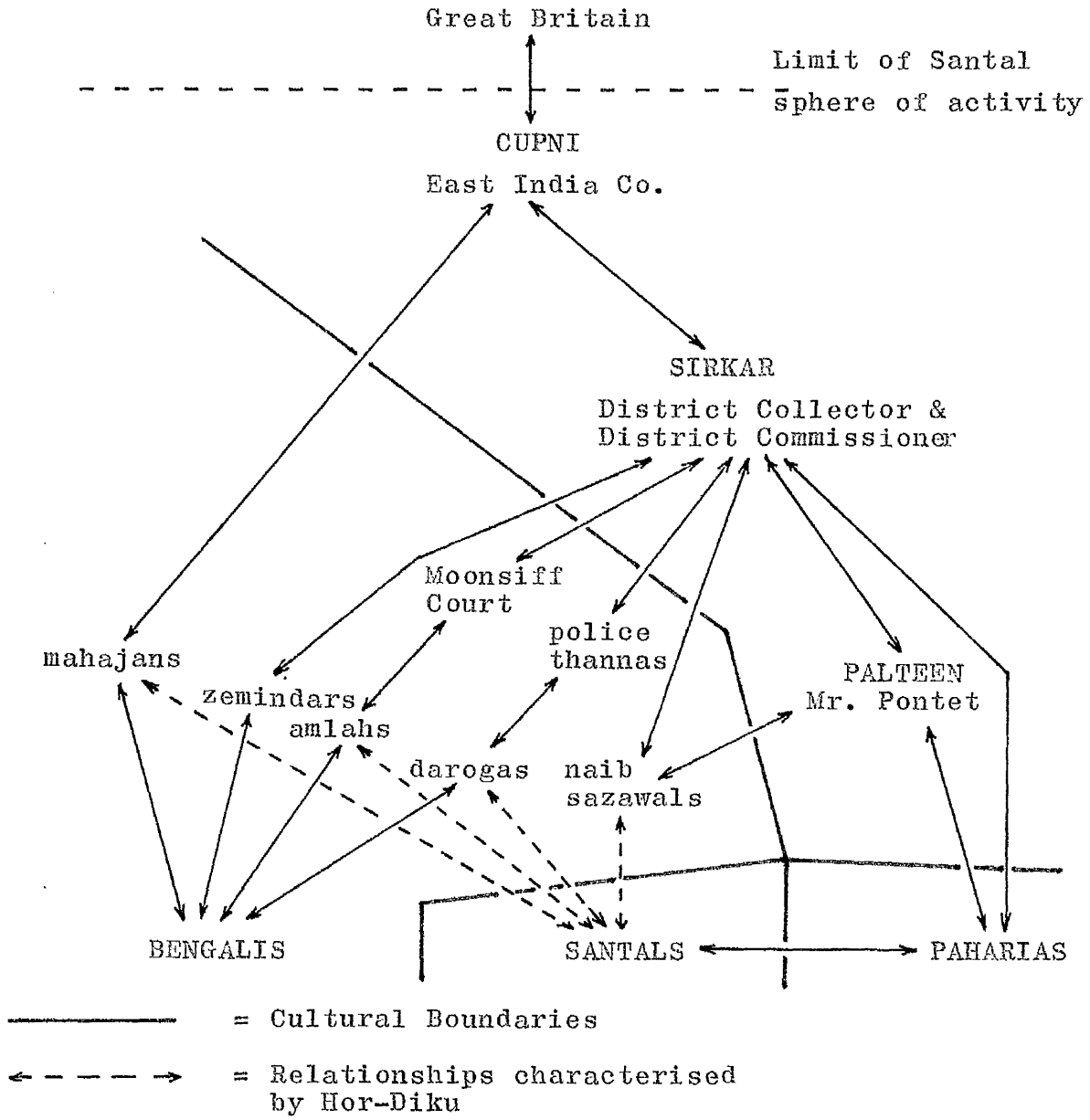
1. See map on page 69c.

Diagram 3.




This diagram makes it quite clear that the 'hor', now more unified as Santals, have lost that one relationship in the political sphere that was responsible both for their unity, their territorial identity and its continuance. Pontet's loss of authority has been replaced by the 'diku' authority over the Santals. Although the latter clearly realised that the

'diku' was an equally valid representative of the British authority in the region, in that they were aware that the British had authority over the Bengalis, they were strongly averse to this new form of authoirty. It was 'diku' authority that they resented, as against that of their 'hakim'. If it was the authority of 'Sirkar' that enabled them to gain a new status then they wanted 'Sirkar' behind them in a direct relationship. In this way the Santal cry grew up that "God is great, but he is too far off".[1] In Harma's Village Carstairs describes the coming together of a large 'panchayat' of Santal leaders who decide that

> "We need a Hakim. Parganas, Manjhis and councils do for settling matters between Hor and Hor; but to stand between Hor and Dikkoo, a Hakim is needed. There is only one sort of Hakim that we can trust - and that is a man like Palteen. We want one Hakim, not many - a Hakim that comes amongst us, and speaks with us face to face as man to man; who can check the Daroga and the badgemen, and do real justice, as Palteen would do if he had the chance -."[2]

Pontet had only been the Paharias 'hakim', not their own. In an attempt to get a 'hakim' they sent a delegation to the Hon. A. Eden, toask for his protection. The reason for this was simple. They needed a leader with authority, behind whom they could unite. Realising their own weakness they looked towards the 'hakims' and 'sahibs' to fulfill this role. At a later date, just before the uprising, a group kidnapped the two year old son of a missionary and proclaimed him King of the Santals.[3] The story that Carstairs tells could well have been true. The Hon. Eden was known to be somewhat of a philanthropist who attempted, like Pontet, to change the Company's attitude to

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 230

2. Carstairs, 1935, p. 121.

3. Letter from Mr. Droese at Bhagalpore to Rev. Stoors, 10th May 1872. (Letters of the Church Missionary Society)

the tribals. Later he was appointed Mr. Bidwell's assistant as Special Commissioner for the Suppression of the Santal Insurrection.[1]

One of the major reasons for the growing Santal unity and common identity around cultural likeness, was that the growing opposition between themselves and the Bengalis was rapidly creating a crisis. This is a situation that is always ripe for the crystallisation of identity, especially when the defence of self is at stake. It is the old maxim that the greater the contrast between units the more absolute is their meaning, and the heavier the value loading attached to them.

Diagram 3 shows graphically that heavy stress was now laid on the Hor-Diku relationship, due to the absence of the Santal-Palteen relationship, and the lack of a third impartial mediator, resulting in a yet heavier value loading. The inherent conflict in Hor-Diku was more heavily emphasised at this particular moment than any empirical exemplification of it can show. The content of the relationship was one of conflict, but with the recent changes in the pattern of political relations, the form that this relationship took to the total system of relations increased that conflict. It is only when seen in this structural sense that the full implications of the Hor-Diku relationship are evident.

## Section 6.b. The Structure of Relations in the Damin; The Santals - Paharias, and Relative Deprivation.

By studying the historical material it is clear that the Santals were being deprived in an absolute sense. But in terms of the coming uprising it is not sufficient to see the situation in

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1. Carstairs, ~~op. cit.~~ 1935., Chapter XIV, A Sonthal Parliament, Chapter XV, "Heen" (this was the Santal name for Hon. A. Eden).

absolute terms. Any Santal reaction to the state of affairs will be based on their interpretation or perception of that state. Such perception as may exist will be related to the social frame of reference, patterns of expectation, and definition of the situation. Therefore one must see deprivation as relative and in reference to an intervening variable, that poses a relative disparity or deprivation.[1]

Through analysign the Hor-Diku relationship in section 5 we have understood the degree of absolute deprivation, and the way in which the increasing opposition between Hor and Diku had led to a stronger and stronger value loading of the two terms and, in parallel, an increased degree of absolute deprivation, By analysing the relationship between the Santals and the Paharias we can understand the state of relative deprivation of the Santals.

As an analytical tool relative deprivation is interesting. It describes an attitude to, or a perception of a social frame of reference. It can be analysed by examining a set of variables to find the basis for the nature of a given relationship. It is a perceptual variable, or as Merton,[2] and Stouffer[3] call it, an interpretive variable. As such it depends on certain other independent variables such as status. For example, a low caste man (status = independent variable) questions the legitimacy ofbeing exploited (dependent variable) because he perceives the situation within a frame of reference (perceptual variable) based on comparing himself with other persons in a higher caste than he is. We are considering individual beha-

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1. S.A. Stouffer, et al., The Amedican Soldier.
2. Merton, in The International Encyclopedia of The Social Sciences, MacMillan Co. and the Free Press, N.Y. 1968, Vol. 4, Edited by D.L. Sills.
3. Stouffer, 1949.

viour within the theoretical frame of reference groups. It is a behaviourist or action theory approach. As such it is an excellent descriptive concept for the nature of such relationships. But it is not a complete explanation. It defines the nature of a certain perception, and states the disparity between the in and out group that is a necessary condition for the initiation of an uprising. However it is only a necessary not a causal condition like absolute deprivation. Nevertheless relative deprivation must be present to initiate an uprising. It is a model structure of behaviour patterns, but it does not explain behaviour. It states disparities of perception between groups but cannot say why. If deprivation is absolute then the disparity can be seen in some material form, as was the case in the economic spheres of the Santals and Bengalis. When discussing relative deprivation it is the cultural relativity rather than the deprivation that counts.

Looking back at Diagram 3 on page 171 we can see how relative deprivation had become an important variable for the Santals in their sphere of activity in the Damin. They had been deprived absolutely in their relations with the Bengalis. Barriers between the economic spheres had led to emasculation. A situation had arisen where the Santals were unable to emulate the Bengalis, but were forced into greater opposition and a hardening of the Hor-Diku relationship (status = independent variable). However in the frame of reference of the structure of relations in the Damin they could compare themselves with the Paharias, who had not been similarly emasculated (perceptual variable). To understand this we must go back briefly to the old relationship that was set up by August Cleveland, when he created the Hill Rangers from Paharia recruits and instituted the special legal system for the Paharias in 1780-82.[1] They

1. See Chapter 3, Section 4, pages 75-84.

were then famous for their bandit activities and were adding to the insecurity of the western frontier of Bengal. In order to subdue this and in some way make the Rajmahal Hills a more ordered area, Cleveland had instituted a policy of protectionism to pacify and 'civilise' the Paharias. To start with their 'sardars' and 'manjhis' were paid to take responsibility for minor civil and criminal offenses in their respective districts, and to hold courts under the supervision of Mr. Cleveland. Then in 1782, he obtained a sanction to withdraw the Rajmahal Hills from the ordinary courts and his scheme was extended. Later he created the Hill Rangers as a military police force for the area. Armed and drilled, the 1,300 Rangers were based at Bhagalpur and paid by the British.

Thus Cleveland had created an ongoing cooperative relationship between the Paharias and the British. With the formation of the Damin-i-Koh, which was specifically set up for the protection of the Paharias and not the Santals, they were given a 'hakim' and were excluded from paying rent. As a result the Paharias remained isolated in the "fastnesses of the hills", and were involved neither in the economic changes nor in the emasculation that overcame the Santals.

The Santals' perception of this is seen clearly in their demand for a 'hakim' of their own, and if Carstairs' novel is true they asked for the Hon. A. Eden. They had seen that for them the East India Company, or 'Cupni', was "the Great God" but he was "too far off". Within this frame of reference they were questioning the fact of their emasculation. They were seeing themselves as being relatively deprived and exploited (dependent variable). Looking at the diagram on page /9/ it was that relationship between the Santals and the Paharias that

had brought this about, coupled with the special relations that the Paharias had to 'Palteen', and through the existence of the Hill Rangers to 'Sirkar' at Bhagalpur. In my terms of reference the sphere of activity, and potential manipulability of the Paharias was greater than that of the Santals, so that the Santals saw themselves as being relatively deprived.

## Section 7. The Development of Wage Labour, and the Scattering of the Santals.

One feature in the development of the Santals that must be mentioned at this point although it does not directly fit into the schema of things as I have presented it, is the way in which they became one of the major pools of labour in West Bengal. This depended directly on the economic conditions of the Santals at this date, and had a direct effect on their tribal and social characteristics. It was the beginning of the dispersion of the Santals over a large area of North Western India in search of work, so that today they can be found anywhere from the steel mills of Jamshedpur to the tea plantations of Assam.

In 1854, when the Santals were suffering great economic hardship, the British began to build the East India Northern Loop Line from Calcutta to Patna. Hunter describes the effect which it had on the Santals:[1]

> "But in 1854 events occurred that completely altered the relation of capital to labour in Bengal. Government had determined to give railways to India, and the line skirted the Santal country for two hundred miles.[2] High embankments, heavy cuttings, many arched bridges, created a demand for workmen such as had never been known in the

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 234-5.

2. The line followed the south bank of the Ganges from Rajmahal through the Teliagaria Pass. See map opposite p.69c

history of India. Some years later some 20,000 were required in Birbhum alone; and the number along the sections running through or bordering on the Santal territories amounted to one hundred thousand men,3 or more than the whole overflowings of the Santal race during a quarter of a century. Instead of labour going about the northern colony in fruitless search of capital, capital in unprecedented quantities roamed through the Santal country in quest of labour. The contractors sent their recruiters to every fair, and in a few months the Santals who had taken service came back with their girdles full of coins, and their women covered with silver jewelery, 'just like the Hindus', as their astonished clans-people remarked. Every man, woman and child could get work, and boys of ten earned higher wages in on the line than grown men had ever earned in the village."

This was the start of a new era for the Santals, one in which migrant labour and a monetary economy played a new role in their social life. The economic ruin in which the uprising left them helped later to increase their labour migration. In fact after the uprising the British Government had a specific policy of employing Santals on an extended project of road building in order to provide them with a livelihood. By 1865 Hunter reports that they were being transported in very large numbers to the tea plantations of Assam:

"I have no complete returns, but in 1865, when ex officio superintendent of labour transport at Kooshtea, I estimated the number at 3,000 a month. In July it amounted to 3,827, in May to 3,236 adult labourers, or, including children, to about 4,000 souls."2

The consequences of this for the Santals is most interesting. It is a theme taken up by Datta-Majumder and Martin Orans, but it is outside the scope of this thesis. In the few years before the uprising wage labour formed the new medium of contact between the Santals and the East India Company. It was the basis of their awareness of the new element in their structure of relations called 'cupni'. Another interesting result mentioned by Hunter is that the Santals began to emulate the

1. Hunter has a footnote here, "Return of daily average of workpeople employed on the East India Railway, by Mr. George Turnbull, chief engineer."

2. Hunter, 1872, p. 257.

Hindus to some limited extent. The fact that this emulation movement never developed any further, points to the strength of the barriers that had been built up in the Hor-Diku relatiunship.

## Chapter 6. The Santal Uprising of 1855.

### Section 1. The Development of Revitalisation.

The 1855 uprising has with a few exceptions[1] been treated as as an isolated event. But for the purposes of this thesis it is necessary to make an artificial distinction between the development of the revitalistic reaction and that of the conflict. This is similar to the treatment given in the last two chapters to the migration of the Santals and the conflict that resulted.

Two definite revitalisation movements are referred to in the records. They both reflect a more profound feeling of revitalisation among the people, which was an integral part of the ongoing process of development. This assumes that there is always some degree of lag between the conflict and the realisation of the revitalist reaction to it. The records however only refer to the actual moments when this feeling among the people broke out into physical and social action.

What then was that feeling among the people, which was the ongoing process of revitalisation? Wallace defines these movements as,[2] "a deliberate, organised, conscious effort by the members of a society to construct a more satisfactory culture." He splits into three developmental phases that feeling among the people which is the precursor of an actual movement. First is the 'steady state period', when the system is operating at a tolerable level of efficiency, and the conflicts that are developing do not disorganise the system. The vital factor of acculturation to the changes and dynamism of the system has not

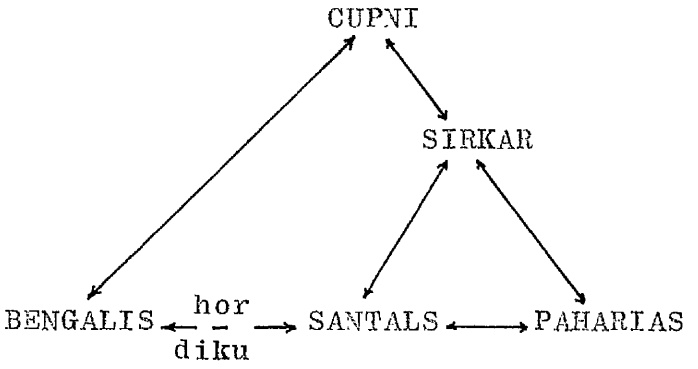
1. The notable exception to this is E. Jay, Revitalisation Movements in Tribal India, in Aspects of Religion in Indian Society, ed. by L.P. Vidyarthi, Meerut, 1961.
2. Wallace, 1956, p. 264-271.

reached a critical level. Second a period of 'increased individual stress' develops, whereby individuals within the system are unable to adapt to the turn of events. This grows into a period of general 'cultural distortion', when the individual attempts to alter and consciously redefine his own position and perhaps that of the group, because the structure has become distorted. Lastly, there is the period of 'revitalisation'. Individuals will now attempt to organise themselves in a conscious move to create better conditions. This, he states, will often be religious or political in character, with possible quasi-militaristic undertones.

In respect to the structure of relations in the Damin, the steady state period continues to the point where Mr. Pontet's role as 'hakim' for the Santals broke down. Leading up to this moment there is an increasing crystallisation of Santal identity away from the old basis of social identity as the 'hor', the indigenous concept of which has taken on a different role. It was no longer a political idea, that differentiated between social groupings which had cultural likeness. This idea was put well by Carstairs when the Hon. A. Eden, "the red Hakim, asked who the Dikkoos were." To which Sham, a Santal 'manjhi', replied: "All the world I think, except the Hor - that is our people whom ye call Sonthals -; the Sahibs and Paharias."[1] 'Hor' no longer referred just to the grouping of Santals, It had now become a term, which along with 'diku', specified an opposition between two groupings. Their relations were characterised by that opposition being based on the one having deprived the other absolutely. As such the distinction of Hor-Diku was one that could be applied to any group which

1. Carstairs, 1935, p. 133.

found itself in a similar relationship. Meanwhile within this relationship-specific distinction of Hor-Diku, the Santals were slowly becoming conscious of their new identity as such. Diagramatically this is a simplified version of the diagram 3 on page .




The degree to which this was a significant change in the nature of Santal identity can be seen if this expanded system of relations, recognised by the Santals, is compared with what it had been thirty years earlier before they migrated into the Damin. This was given in a similar diagram on page 129, which from the Santal point of view was:

DIKU (Bengalis) ——— HOR ——— MALER (Paharias)

This restructuring of the social groupings in west Bengal had led to a redefinition of those groups. The most radical was in status of the Santals. It meant that they were no longer a very loosely coherent and geographically scattered group of culturally-like villages and parganas, with minimal political cooperation between them. They were now largely united in one territory,[1] and in the third phase of revitalisation,

1. In 1851 there were 82,795 in the Damin and 10,000 outside. Hunter, 1872, p. 234.

capable of cooperative and concerted action. Mr. Pontet's role had enabled them to have a quasi-centralism, that would have been unlikely before. With this structure the Santals were able to operate at a tolerable level of efficiency. There was the structural possibility of Mr. Pontet acting as a mediator in the event of conflict. It was upon his ability that the hopes of the Santals lay. He represented 'sirkar' to them, and 'sirkar' had the whip-hand in west Bengal. But a system is inevitably very vulnerable when mediation between two groups in conflict is dependent on one man alone.

The vital qualification to this tolerable level of efficiency was that it had depended solely on Pontet as a mediator. At the same time the barriers between the economic spheres had precluded any ability to acculturate, accommodate or adapt satisfactorily to the new economy that the Santals faced.[1]

But Mr. Pontet's role was insufficient to fulfill its position as a mediatory one in the structure of relations. This was shown by his failure to mediate.[2] There was at this point a clear case of distortion in the structure. But since Mr. Pontet was not within the Santal culture, the second phase was a structural rather than the cultural distortion of Wallace's definition.

Thus the failure of Mr. Pontet's role as 'hakim' was the point at which the situation of absolute and relative deprivation developed into that phase of revitalisation characterised

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1. See the discussion on this below, pages 158-162. Although there was a barrier to any emulation of a Bengali economy at this moment, we will see later that a consistent trend towards a monetary economy did develop. See Chapter 6, sections 4 and 5, and Chapter 7, section 2, b and 3.

2. See Chapter 5, section 5, the judiciary cannot mediate.

by structural distortion.[1] This was apparent when Mr. Pontet's ability to mediate collapsed, and the social conflict between the Santals and the Bengalis became intolerable. The consequencies were complex, but they can be summarised as a hardening and polarisation of the opposing halves. Then since it was the Santals who were absolutely and relatively deprived, their attitudes were polarised. This was expressed admirably by Sham in Carstairs novel: when he was asked who the Diku were he replied, "All the world I think, except the Hor, that is our people whom ye call Sonthals."

The narrative of Chotrae Desmanjhi gives some very interesting details of the rumours circulating among the Santals at this time,[2] which emphasise this polarisation.

> "After this they spread another rumour. Those women who had an equal number of children swore eternal friednship and exchanged flowers in groups of two. They exchanged clothes and ate and drank together. Why no one knows. Perhaps it was to keep a solid front and be all related so that when the rebellion came no one would speak behind another's back and whatever happened would be kept secret."
>
> "Yet another rumour grew. People said, 'A buffalo cow is moving about the country. Whenever it finds grass at someone's outer door, it halts and grazes, and, until all the members of the household have died, it does not move away.' Therefore throughout the land they dug up all the grass in the village streets."

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1. At this stage Mr. Pontet gave up attempting to create better conditions for the tribes in the Damin. He continued in his post until after the uprising, but only carried out what was minimally necessary as an official. This meant that he had nothing to do with the Santals, who were now outside his jurisdiction. From reading Mr. Bidwell's letter, quoted in appendix A, we can see that he was reproved for taking affairs into his own hands in an inconsistent way. After this Mr. Pontet vanishes into obscurity. It is unfortunate that his diaries have not survived.

2. The Narrative of Chotrae Desmanjhi is one of the most interesting records of the Santal uprising. It is the only first hand account of what occurred. It was recorded by L.O. Skresfrud, a Norwegian missionary, who wrote the first Santal grammar. The only full English translation was made by Stephen Hari Tudu and Mildred Archer, and is published in full in W.G. Archer and W.J. Culshaw, The Santal Rebellion, Man in India, Vol. 25, 1945.

> "Then another rumour arose. 'People are coming to kill the Dekus. Hang up at the end of the village street a bullock skin and a flute, so that they will know that you are Santals. Otherwise they will kill all of you.' So fearing this would happen we hung up all these things in every village."

These rumours reflect clearly the realisation of conflict. The Santals felt threatened by the Dikus, and were hardening into self-defensive action of a nativistic character. All this projected an increasing solidarity and a feeling of necessity that the Santals must label themselves as such. Later on Chotrae Desmanjhi refers to his people as "We Santals". Herein lies the heart of what Wallace calls the attempt to redefine the position of the group. This was the final phase of the crystallisation of the new identity of the Santals. The redefinition was based on the British concept of 'people of Soant'. This again reflects the process of crystalisation. The move is away from a definition by opposition with Bengali and 'diku' to an alliance with 'hakim', who called them Santal. This was an attempt to overcome the structural distortion by trying to redefine themselves with 'sirkar'. In Carstairs' novel the Santals requested the Hon. A. Eden for a new 'hakim' to be appointed to them. Had this happened it would have stressed this move towards a redefinition that aligned the Santals with 'sirkar'.

The most interesting example of this redefinition occurred in January of 1854.

> "On one occasion my people witnessed a war dance of some magnificence, there being some very near 1,000 people attending who danced round a heap of battle axes, bows, arrows, spears and shields about three men high. On being asked what it meant they said that it was a new kind of 'puja' (worship). In the same cold weather, almost immediately after this grand war dance, my son a child of about 5 years at the time was seized upon by a number of Sonthals and in the presence of some 600or 800 people proclaimed King."1

1. Letter from Mr. Droese to Rev. Storrs, dated 10th May 1872, Church Missionary Society Archives.

Although this happened in the third phase of revitalisation, the kidnapping of a British boy and his enthronement as the new Santal Subah was evidence that the Santals wanted to align themselves with the British. This attempt at a redefinition is confirmed by the first vision of a visitation from "a white man in native costume", which was shared by the leaders of the uprising.[1]

During this period of structural distortion a large number of petitions appear to have been handed to 'sirkar'.[2] The most remarkable of them is given in full in Mr. Bidwell's letter to the Secretary of the Government. It is one of the most acute summaries of the conditions that led to the uprising. It details the development of what Wallace calls the period of 'increased individual stress', whereby the Santals were unable to adapt to the turn of events and were being mercilessly oppressed. Finally it states that the British must provide the necessary mediation if the Santals' way of life is to be preserved. In fact it is almost a definitive example of the structural distortion in the Damin.

"Petition of Nursingh Manjee and Koodroo Manjee Sonthals" which was presented to the Commissioner at Bhagalpur on the 29th August 1854.

> "The Mahajuns residing in the Damun in their intercourse with us jungly Sonthals, are in the habit of lending us a few rupees for their own profit. They charge us interest at the rate of half as much again and double of the sum lent, and extort it by force and oppression. When the debt is paid in grain, they weigh the produce, and we being Jungly animals

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 237; see also p. /9/ , where this is quoted in full.

2. A.C. Bidwell's letter to the Secretary to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, states that a large number of such petitions were handed in to various authorities. Although the majority were against individual cases of oppression, certain of those quoted make direct reference to the structural distortion referred to above.

ignorant of accounts and of language, do as they please. This is notorious to all even at the Sudder Station.[1] Besides this the Mahajuns, on pretence of indebtedness, enter our houses and forcibly carry off whatever of our cattle they can find, and give no receipt of it. They prepare false bonds of 40or 50 rupees, and bring suits in the civil court. If a Sonthal goes to a Mahajuns house for rupees, the latter brings a charge of Dacoity or theft, and some of them appear as Plaintiffs and some as witnesses. Petitions without number have been presented by us to Magistrate Collector and Superintendent, but to our misfortune the Hakims have paid no attention to our prayers. On this account many poor Sonthals oppressed by the tyranny of the Mahajuns have deserted their houses, and others are ready to go. When we came here from our country, and cleared the lands of the Damun, paying lacks of rupees to Govt., we stood high in the estimation of Govt. and Regn. I of 1827 was passed for our protection.[2] If in contravention of this law, the Mahajuns now oppress us to such an extent, and we get no protection from Govt., what resource is left to us? If no redress is granted we must leave the Jungle Kohistan, and the whole place will become jungle again. We pray that the Superintendent will be called upon to report on the matter, and the oppression of the Mahajuns be stopped, and our good character re-established. We have no protection but Govt. and pray that enquiry will be made, and the Mahajuns removed from the Damun so that we will be saved from their claws."[3]

Throughout this period the attempts of individual Santals to deal with this stress, and to compensate for the structural distortion by redefining their situation by having an 'hakim' of their own appointed, were frustrated. From the Santal point of view the British did not react. As this state of affairs fermented, the Santal reaction gradually changed from individual attempts to redefine the situation to larger and more organised awareness of the problem. This resulted in public discussions which led to the final and more positive phase that Wallace describes as 'revitalisation' itself.

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1. The Sudder Station was the European settlement at Deoghar.

2. This was a mistaken impression. The Regulation only applied to the Paharias.

3. Petition from Nursingh Manjhi and Kudru Manjhi to the Commissioner at Bhagalpur, dated 29th August 1854, quoted in full in a letter from A.C. Bidwell to the Secretary to the Govenment of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157. See Appendix A.

Oddly enough there was an early occurrence of this third phase of revitalisation that predates the main one which began in the second half of 1854. It is difficult to analyse this event because there is very little material on it. Mr. Droese, a missionary at Bhagalpur, wrote to Mr. Bidwell that the Santals had become closely knit into a brotherhood as early as 1843: Mr. Bidwell says that:

> "Some twelve years ago, Mr. Droese learns, arrangements were made for uniting the whole of the Sonthals in one body. Near the Damoodah river lives a Sonthal chief of chiefs (a 'parganait') whose name is Morgo Rajah - he is said to have been successful in making above 300 disciples within the last twelve years. These are sworn men and fully instructed in all plans for uniting all the Sonthals in one brotherhood. They are scattered among the Sonthals and continue to act under the instructionsof their chief and continually refer to him for advice. From all I have heard I am inclined to believe that they are as secret, active and obedient an agency as the Jesuits in the Romish Church."1

This movement was undoubtedly an organised and conscious attempt to create better conditions for the Sonthals. The fact that the leader called himself a 'rajah' or king implies that there was some intention to create a new Santal kingdom. Morgo must have been a very perceptive person. He foresaw almost exactly what happened later; that there would be an uprising which would attempt to create a new Santal Kingdom. His perception of the structural situation anteceded that of the social perception by the Santal people. Individually a person might have perceived the structural distortion that was taking place. But it was not until a certain majority of the entire grouping had realised the situation that any full scale social revitalisation could take place. This backs up Wallace's theory that a period of cultural, or structural, distortion is necessary before increased individual stress can develop into a revitalisation movement.

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1. Quoted in a letter from A.C. Bidwell to the Sec. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated February 14th 1856, No. 157. My insertions are in brackets. See Appendix A.

In conclusion this movement has no great social significance for the Santal people as a whole, despite it being most important historically in preceding the period of revitalisation. It took place before the necessary social conditions and therefore never developed as a tribal movement. Confined to a smaller group of the whole people it was significant in itself, but of minimal importance to the total development of the Santals.

Full scale public deliberation began after the great hunt that followed the harvest of 1854. Carstairs describes this in his chapter "A Sonthal Parliament", and the missionaries, who were beginning to travel through the area,[1] took note of these meetings. "In the cold season ...[2] the year in which ...[2] myself and my people have seen the Sonthals of Godda and Rajabita neighbourhood performing war dances. On one occasion my people witnessed a war dance of some magnificence, there being some very near 1,000 people attending who danced around a heap of battle axes....."[3]

The traditional means of calling the Santals together for large scale events was used; branches of sal tree being sent to all the villages concerned. The leaves of these branches were knotted in a particular way that signified to the number of days hence and the place at which the meeting was to be held.[4]

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1. The Church Missionary Society did not start missions among the Santals until 1863, when Mr. Puxley set up an orphanage for them at Taljhari. They did not start baptising on any large scale until 1868, when 268 people were baptised. But in 1854, Mr. Droese had an orphan school at Bhagalpur, where he taught a few Santals, in whom he became very interested. He made occasional tours through the Damin to get to know them better.

2. Corner of page torn. (M.P.Y.)

3. Letter from Mr. Droese at Bhagalpur, to Rev. Storrs, 10th May 1872.

4. Sachchidananda, Bitlaha: Analysis of a Santal Institution, Man in India, Vol. 49, No. 3.

During this period organised dacoities, or raids, were made against some of the most hated of the mahajuns residing in the Damin. These were not movements of revitalisation, but attempts at revenge, which were sanctioned by the people. They were seen as legitimate actions by a people who had become known and admired for being "of a disposition so frank and kind. Their industry, perserverance, their love of order, their inquisitiveness, their joviality are conspicuous to the most casual visitor - what can have turned such a race into the furious savages they have shewn themselves to be."[1] All of a sudden in June of 1854 six dacoities were committed on the houses of local mahajuns.

> "The perpetrators of the offenses confessed and were punished by the Sessions Judge, and the Magistrate in reporting the case to the Commissioner remarked that it was a matter of grave consideration that these dacoities were committed entirely by men of the Sonthal caste who generally speaking are remarkable for their quiet and harmless mode of life... 'I would,' the Magistrate goes on to say, 'earnestly recommend that measures be at once taken to stop this spirit of angry discontent among the Sonthals, and the easiest mode of doing so appears to me to place them under the same law as the Hill men..... But I think it right to place on record my opinion, as to the probable result of the dealings of a witty and unscrupulous set of Bengallees and a wild simple race like that of the Sonthals.'"[2]

Later he wrote to the Commissioner: "The number of persons ready and willing to commit these dacoities, or as they prefer styling it to loot the Mahajuns, may I fear be reckoned by thousands."[3]

## Section 2. The Movement crystallises around the leaders; their unified ideas and aims.

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1. Letter from Mr. Doese, to Mr. Bidwell, quoted in a letter from Mr. Bidwell to the Sect. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157. See Appendix A.
2. Letter from Mr. A.C. Bidwell to the Sect. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157. See Appendix A.
3. Letter from Mr. Heywood, the Magistrate to the Commissioner, dated 30th August 1854, No. 648, quoted in above letter from A.C. Bidwell, 14th February 1856, No. 157. See Appendix A.

The best account on this stage of the uprising is given here in full, and then commented on in details, drawing from other sources as is necessary.

"To a people in this frame of mind, leaders are seldom wanting. Two brothers (Sidu and Khanu of Bhagnadihi), inhabitants of a village that had been oppressed beyond bearing by Hindu usury, stood forth as the deliverers of their countrymen, claimed a divine mission, and produced heaven-sent tokens as their credentials. The God of the Santals (Thakur), they said, had appeared to them on seven successive days: at first in the form of a white man in a native costume; next as a flame of fire, with a knife glowing in the midst; then as the perforated slice of a sal trunk that forms the wheel of the Santal's bullock cart. The divinity delivered the brothers a sacred book, and the sky showered slips of paper, which were secretly spread throughout the whole Santal country. (These were later found to be pages of an English version of St. John's Gospel.) Each village received a scrap without explanation, but with an imprecation as it would avoid the wrath of the national god, to forward it without pause to the nearest hamlet. Having in this way raised a general expectation of some great event among their countrymen, the leaders hoped that their English governors would enquire into the matter, and redress their wrongs; but the English governors had no time for such inquiries. They next petitioned to the authority to do them justice, adding obscurely, that their god had commanded them to wait no longer. This officer knew nothing of the people or their wrongs..... The English superintendent collected the revenue asusual, and put aside the complaints: the Santal leaders in despair had recourse to the Commissioner - a high English official in charge of a division

of the province - and, it is said, plainly told him that if he would not redress their wrongs, they would redress them themselves.[1] The Commissioner could not understand what they wanted: the taxes came in as usual; the administration continued cheap and practical as before. 'God is great, but He is too far off,' said the Santal leaders. A last resource remained. Emissaries, bearing the national Sal branch, were despatched to every mountain valley; and the people, obedient to the signal, gathered together in vast masses, not knowing for what object, but with their expectation excited by the slips of paper and carrying the invariable bow and arrows in their hands."

"The brothers found that they had raised a storm that they could not control. A general order went through the encampment to move down upon the plains towards Calcutta,[2] and on the 30th June 1855 the vast expedition set out.[3] The bodyguard of leaders alone amounted to 30,000 men.[4] As long as the food

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1. "I should add that I have never been able to verify this statement from official documents." Hunter's footnote.

2. Carstairs claims, in his novel Harma's Village, that this was a last-ditch attempt to make representation to the 'Great God Cupni' (the East India Co.) at Calcutta, which never achieved its aim.

3. "It was asserted that on this day the leaders addressed an ultimatum to the Gov., to the Commissioner at Bhagalpur and Beerbhoom, and to various police inspectors through whose jurisdictions their routes lay. I have never discovered one of these missives; few, if any reached their destination. But an accurate contemporary writer, with the whole facts before him, gives authority to the statement. The ultimatum is said to have insisted on the regulation of usury, on a new arrangement of revenue, and on the expulsion, or, as some say, the massacre of all Hindu extortioners." Hunter's footnote. The ultimatum is probably that petition sent by Sidu and Knahu to the residents of Rajmahal. This is quoted at the end of Bidwell's letter; see Appendix A.

4. This quantity varies with many reports. Bengal District Gazetteers give 10,000. Mr. Richardson, Magistrate at Bhagalpur, hears of 5-6,000 and 9,000. See letters from same, dated 19th July 1855, Nos. 1-75, B.J.R. Mr. Droese gives 8,000, see letter from same to Rev. J. Chapman, C.M.S. London, dated 25th February 1856.

which they had brought with them lasted, the march was orderly; but unofficered bodies of armed men roaming around, not very well knowing where they are going, soon became dangerous; and with the end of their own stock of provisions, the necessity for plundering or levying benevolences commenced. The leaders preferred the latter, the rabble the former. On the 7th of July a native inspector of police (daroga) heard of the entrance of a large body of Hill men into his jurisdiction; and the Hindu usurers, becoming uneasy, bribed him to get up a false charge of burglary against the band, and apprehend their leaders..... The two brothers ordered him (the daroga) to levy a tax of ten shillings on every Hindu family in his jurisdiction, for the subsistence of their followers, and were about to dismiss him in peace, when someone discovered that he had come out with the intention of getting up a false complaint. At first he denied the charge, saying he was on the way to investigate an accidental death from snakebite, but afterwards confessed that the usurers had bribed him..... The two brothers said, 'If you have any proof against us, take us and bind us.' The foolhardy inspector, presuming on the usually peaceable nature of the Santals, ordered his guards to pinion them; but no sooner were the words out of his mouth, than the whole mass rushed upon him, and bound him and his minions. After a hurried trial, the chief leader Sidu slew the corrupt inspector with his own hands, and the police left nine of their party dead in the Santal camp."

"From this day - the 7th of July - the rebellion dates."[1]

Edward Jay classifies the Santal movement thus:

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 236-240. All the brackets are my additions.

> "It was rooted in revelation and prophesy. The brothers Sidhu and Karnu obtained a vision of Thakur (the Santal Almighty), in which he appeared as a white man dressed in native clothes. This is indeed a vivid way to symbolise the power of the white man. His use of native attire probably symbolises the aboriginal aspirations for power. The Santal movement seems typically nativistic and of the revivalist-magical type. There may have been a reformative tendency in it but the brief account that is available makes no mention of borrowing from Hinduism, and the repots of attempts to destroy the Hindu overlords and establish a separate state are emphatically resistive in nature."1

It is very difficult to agree entirely with this analysis. All the chroniclers of the uprising concluded that it was rooted in the economics of exploitation, oppression and extortion, with their emphasis on the wily cunning of the Bengali and the honest thriftlessness of the Santal. To this they add that a weak administrative system was unable to do the job of keeping the peace as it was intended. By looking at too many movements too briefly Jay has unfortunatdy missed some very significant variables.

At first sight it appears that the Santal movement was only overtly manifested in revelation and prophesy. Although these two features do have significance this is minimal compared to the combined effects of conflicting barriers between economic spheres, the collapse of mediation, absolute deprivation by the Bengalis, relative deprivation to the Paharias, frustrated attempts during periods of individual stress and structural distortion to redefine the position of the Santals and recreate mediation. It was this content of the structure of relations in the Damin that was at the root and conditioned the form of the uprising. That this form was manifested to the Santals with religious symbols is another matter, the answer to which lies in the role that religion plays in Santal and any other society. How then did the content and structure of relations in the Damin

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1. Jay, 1961.

give rise to the form taken by the religious manifestation of the rebellion? Jay sees the Santals as giving legitimacy and credibility to Sidu and Khanu's vision of a white man dressed in native attire because it symbolised so well the power of the 'sahebs' and their aspirations to share it. This may well be true, but the emphasis is better placed on the power that this had to symbolise their attempts to overcome the structural distortion created by the failure of Mr. Pontet as a mediator. The image is almost one of the ghost of Palteen, the white man who understood their ways. At informal courts, that were not unlike their own 'more hore', he had been able to sort out their conflicts, and "stand between a 'hor' and a 'diku'." Previously the 'hakim' had legitimised their way of life in the Damin. He was now being used to legitimise an organised attempt at revitalisation.

The symbol of the flame with a knife glowing in the midst appears to emphasise the belief that an armed struggle was necessary to attain their desires. The cartwheel, which was a very important symbol of the uprising, eludes interpretation, due to the scarcity of material on these symbols. Fortunately the common aims and intentions of the Santals are clear at this stage.

These aims are shown in the statement of Gora Manjhi when he was captured after the uprising.

> "In the month of Sawin last, Kanoo, the Sonthal chief, came to the village of Settoo. He had with him a large army. He stayed there one night and then proceeded to different places to plunder. I went with him. He told me he would make me a Soubah. He said, 'You become a Soubah and rule in this Pergunnah', So I collected men. They heard of Kanoo and came under me."

Question by Magistrate:

> "Why have you done all this?"

Answer:

"It was the Soubah's orders. Kanoo said it was our 'Raj' now. We obeyed his words, for he was a 'Thakour'."

Question:

"What were your intentions. Did you wish to flee this part of the country?"

Answer:

"I thought if Kanoo was the master of the country I would be under him. If the English, I would serve them."

Question:

"Did you think the English would pardon you after what you have done?"

Answer:

"I have committed no murder, and I acted by the Thakour's orders. I thought the English might pardon me."1

Two very important conclusions come out of this extract. Firstly the religious or messianic nature of the uprising was the basis for the legitimization of all actions taken. If the Santal was to oppose the established forces of law and order, he had to appeal to a higher authority for his actions - that of the Almighty Thakour. However the Santals were faced by a conflict in the forces of law and order. Both the British and the Bengalis had authority over them. That is Palteen had authority through 'sirkar' and so did the Moonsiff's Court, after the collapse of Palteen as a mediator. But the Santals perceived that the Bengalis had misused their authority, and therefore its legitimacy was removed. "The amlahs now made the whole rules and regulations bad and this is sin to the Sahebs."[2]

Secondly Gora Manjhi's statement shows that it was the rebels

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1. Statement of Gora Manjhi, collected by Mr. Richardson, Magistrate at Bhagalpur. Quoted in letter dated 27th March 1856, No. 217. B.J.R.

2. Sidhu's notice to the Inhabitants of Rajmahal. Quoted in letter from Mr. A.C. Bidwell to the Sect to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 14th February 1856, No. 157, B.J.R. See AppendixA.

intention to create a Santal Raj or Kingdom. One of the primary objectives of this Raj was that the Santals should collect their own rent at the rate of 1 anna per bullock and two annas per buffalo. These rates are slightly different from those given in the revised District Gazetteer of the Santal Parganas:

> "On the appointed day, the 30th June 1855, at full moon, 10,000 Santals are said to have met at Bhaganadihi, where the Thakur's orders to them were announced. Letters are said to have been written addressed to Government, to the authorities at Bhagalpur and Birbhum, to some police darogas, Zemindars and others, informing them of these orders. The Santals, it is said, disclaimed any intentions of opposing the Government, and declared that their new God had directed them to collect and pay revenue to the State, at the rate of two annas on every buffalo-plough, one anna on each bullock-plough, and half-an-anna on each cow-plough per annum. The rate of interest upon loans was to be one pice in the rupee yearly. The Santals were further enjoined to slaughter at once all the 'mahajuns' and 'darogas', to banish the traders and zemindars[1] and all rich Bengalis from their country, to sever their connections with the Damin-i-Koh, and to fight all who resisted them, for the bullets of their enemies would be turned to water[2]..... It appears, however, that Khanu and Sidu proclaimed themselves lords of the country under the title of 'Subahs', and appointed 'naibs', 'darogas' and other subordinate officers."[3]

This intention to set up a Santal Raj, legitimised by religious sanction, was an attempt at a nativistic revival. In the structural position of a Raj, any mediation between the Santals and the Bengalis would be obviated. The Santals would then be independent of the Bengalis. It was this nativism, which Linton defines as "any conscious organised attempts on the part of societies members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture," that formed the climax of Santal crystallisation of identity, around the new grouping of Santal.

1. The Gazetteers appear unclear on the part that the zemindars played in the life of the Santals. There were supposedly none in the Damin. And according to Hunter there were only 10,000 Santals outside the Damin, who would have been in zemindaries, as against 84,000 who were direct ryots (tenants) of the Government in the Damin.
2. Carstairs, in his novel Harma's Village, makes the amusing observation that this came true. At the first encounter with the military, at Pealpur, the attack by the Hill Rangers was broken by the onset of the monsoon. The military was then unable to return until after the monsoon season.
3. Mukharji, 1938, p. 55-56.

And it was the gradual development over the past thirty years of this new form of identity that was the seed for the nativistic and revivalist content to the uprising. But although Jay's analysis of the content is correct it is still necessary to look at the form. By form is meant that complex of factors that includes the structure of relations in the Damin, the situation of deprivation and mediation that occurred. The two are closely interconnected and integral parts of the total revitalisation movement. The nativism of attempting to create a Santal Raj was affected through the crystallisation of Santal identity, as well as through the attempt to overcome the structural distortion.

The end product was the same. It was a new content and form for the Santals - but one that was very temporary. They were now a totally integrated tribal unit with complete centralism in the two leaders. There was the idea of a territorial unit in that all Bengalis were to be killed or turned out of the Santal country. There was even a quasi-military organisation with the chief of chiefs, or Thakur at the head, and under him the Subahs of various parganas. The Hon. A. Eden even mentions that "Sidoo is their leader and their army is organised into Officers and Sepoys, and this is most unlike them."[1] These roles were then backed up by the religious legitimisation of divine authority. This is well demonstrated by the event that occurred during a Santal attack on the village of Narainpur:

> "Suba Thakour gave an order, 'Break down the door', there were many large stones near the door of the wall round the house, and they began to break it by throwing stones. And Sam Suba becoming possessed and drawing a sword, ran right round the building. One of the soldiers felled Suba Thakour with a shot from the window at the top of the building, when he died all of us ran stumbling for our lives in all directions."[2]

1. Letter from Hon. A. Eden to Mr. Grey, the Sect. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 19th July 1855, No. 2, B.J.R.

2. The Narrative of Chotrae Desmanjhi, translated by Stephen Hari Tudi and Mildred Archer, quoted in Culshaw and Archer, 1945, p. 232.

Sam Suba was not merely himself, but on becoming possessed he became Suba Thakour, so that on his death not only he but Subah Thakour had died.

Nevertheless this new Santal Raj was still to accept the authority of the British. At the start off the uprising no harm was intended against British subjects. One missionary was even escorted out of the Damin by Santals in order that he might not become involved.[1]

Section 3. The course of the Uprising.

At this point it is necessary to give a brief description of the course of the uprising.[2]

After the incident on the 7th of July (see p. /9/ ) the Santal army broke up and ravaged the area between Colgong in the west, Rajmahal in the East and Raniganj in the South. (See map ~~opposite~~ page 69.) The British barricaded themselves into the old palace of Shah Shuja at Rajmahal. The houses of a number of influential Rajahs and mahajuns were gutted, and extensive damage was done to the railway installations. The old Paharia regiment of Hill Rangers was ordered to Pialpur where they met a large force of Santal, who beat them off largely due to a flooded watercourse and their poor training. The Santals, with bows and arrows, were able to hide easily in the jungle, whilst the more heavily armed Hill Rangers were less mobile.

The Santals had now swarmed down in large bands onto the

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1. Letter from Mr. Droese to Rev. Storrs, dated 10th May 1872. Archives of the Church Missionary Society.

2. There are many excellent commentaries. See:
   a) Bengal District Gazetteer, Santal Parganas, 1965, p.79-85.
   b) Hunter, 1872, p. 236-253.
   c) The best account is to be found in numerous letters in the Bengal Judicial Records, indexed under the Santhal Parganas, between the dates of 5th July 1855 and 10th January 1856.

plains to the east of the hills. They sacked Pakaur in Murshidabad and marched through Palsa in Birbhum to Mohespur, where the 7th Native Infantry defeated them on the 15th. They suffered 200 casualties, both Sidhu and Khanu being wounded, though not fatally. The troops then forced an entry into the Damin-i-Koh fighting small skirmishes and reaching Burhait in the centre of the Damin.

Brigadier General Lloyd arrived with a peace force that had to work under civil authority, and cleared the northern area of the hills between Rajmahal and Colgong of insurgents. But little more could be achieved during the rainy season, and 30,000 armed Santals who could take easy refuge in the jungle were still raiding and looting.

At the end of August a pardon was issued for all Santals who laid down their bows and arrows and returned to their villages but this was taken as a sign of weakness and extensive raiding and looting took place. Martial law was then declared and General Lloyd swept through the Damin with a force of 14,000 troops, and mopping up began. Wherever raids were reported a detachment was sent in that usually burnt out the relevant villages while the Santals disappeared into the jungle. Throughout this period bands of Paharias followed the Santals about, looting but taking no active part in the uprising.

Martial law was finally repealed on the 10th of January 1856, and the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal reported in a minute that:

> "Large bodies of the Sonthals are moving about in various parts of the country in a state of distress and almost starvation, and it is urgently necessary to take measures for quick settling and employing them. This renders it necessary to bring the new machinery into action as speedily as possible."[1]

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1. Letter dated 10th January 1856, No. 68. Minute by Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.

This new machinery referred to the Government's plan to set up a new administrative system in the Damin and provide work for the Santals, who were now in a very bad state. Many of their fields had been destroyed, and they had been unable to harvest their crops. As a result of the famine bands of Santals were still roaming about and plundering.

Section 4. The Aftermath of the Uprising.

The intentions of the Government were laid out clearly in a minute by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal:

> "Besides the ordinary and universal reasons for repairing roads in such a country, there is another of most potent and pressing urgency. It seems but too likely that we shall have to enter upon the pacification and resettlement of the Sonthals under the discouraging circumstances of a scarcity not unlikely amounting to famine. At this moment the crops of the Sonthals ought to be harvesting. But no crop was ever sown, and the grain laid up in the country has been, for the most part, scattered or destroyed. Add to this the exhaustion occasioned by Civil War and by the necessary calls of the troops, and it must be owned that the coming hot season and rains are gloomy."
>
> "I would submit that an order to meet the pressure of the coming scarcity, a scarcity already come among large bodies of the late insurgents, it will be advisable to establish a somewhat exhaustive system of public works, upon which the people may be speedily and constantly employed, and to have stores of grain at hand wherewith to pay or feed them."

He then proposes to appoint officers for the purpose of:

> "organising a system of cheap roads and bridges, such, as while they open the resources of the country and expose it to the full action of our Police and Military forces, shall at the same time give work to and food to the population and avert the disasters of famine."[1]

By March of the same year the Deputy Commissioner at Bhagalpur reported on the success of this policy.

> "Everything continues quiet about this place (Naya Dumka). The Sonthals are coming in by hundreds to work, and the road making has begun very auspiciously. They complain of the smallness of the wages, but as they have only the alternative of starvation, they will not give up their

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1. Letter dated 10th January 1856, No. 68, Minute by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.

labour in a hurry. I think it as well, too, that they should not be too much favoured at once."[1]

Once more a situation was developing that had occurred before the uprising. Due to adverse economic conditions the Santals were again taking up wage labour. Chotrae Desmanjhi's narrative puts this very well.

> "In this way through the cruelty and inticement of Sidhu and Kanhu, we Santals came upon sorrow and misfortune through the rebellion, many died, many were widowed and many children orphaned, instead of a blessing a great curse fell on us. And from after the rebellion we Santals began to scatter because of hunger. For hunger we Santals attached ourselves to the Deko (Diku) for our living. Many returned to Sirkar as day labourers, and for the most part went to Bengal to work for the Dekos: in the same way to the towns. Driven by hunger we spread across the Ganges ... and there we engaged in trade selling coal, wood and leaves. Some did not return to their own place until by their labour they had collected one or two cattle. The villages did not become populous till four or five years after the uprising."[2]

The Government's second plan for administrative reorganisation is contained in Act XXXVII of 1855. The main objective was to remove "the district called the Damin-i-Koh and other districts which are inhabited chiefly by the uncivilised race of people called the Sonthals." In order to do this a new administrative division was created. Primarily this consisted of the Damin-i-Koh, or that area of the Rajmahal Hills that was in Bhagalpur district, but now other areas of Bhagalpur, Birbhum and Murshidabad were included. (See map ~~opposite~~ page 69.) This new division was called the Santal Parganas. In charge of it were a Deputy commissioner and four Assistant Commissioners, who had civil and criminal jurisdiction.

Then in 1856 new police rules were issued, ~~and~~ known as

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1. Letter from Mr. Thomson, Deputy Commissioner at Bhagalpur, to the Sect. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 20th March 1856 No.284

2. The Narrative of Chotrae Desmanjhi, translated by Stephen Hari Tudu and Mildred Archer, quoted in Culshaw and Archer, 1945, p. 232.

"Yule's Rules", after Mr. George Yule who created them. They contained the major reforms of the Santal Parganas. In many respects they fulfilled the initial desires of the Santals to have an 'hakim' of their own. The Hon. A. Eden, to whom they had made representation before the uprising, was appointed Deputy Commissioner. The three chief principles of the new administration were: there was to be no intermediary between the Santals and the Assistant Commissioners; complaints were to be made verbally, without a written petition or the presence of an 'amlah'; and the Santals were to police themselves. Each village was responsible for this within the existing structure of the 'more hor', the equivalent of the Hindu village 'panchayat'. They would bring the accused and the witnesses to the courts themselves.

The creation of the Santal Parganas was completed by Act X of 1857.[1] Revitalisation, that is "deliberate, organised, conscious effort by the members of a society to construct a more satisfactory culture"[2] or, in this case, a more satisfactory structure of relations in the Damin, had been secured. With this correction of the structural distortions the Santals had achieved nearly all that they had wanted at the start of the uprising.

What was the new structure of relations? The nature of the tribal grouping of Santals had been altered and a new base for identity had crystallised. The idea of 'hor' had been completely superceded by that of Santal. 'Hor' remained an idea

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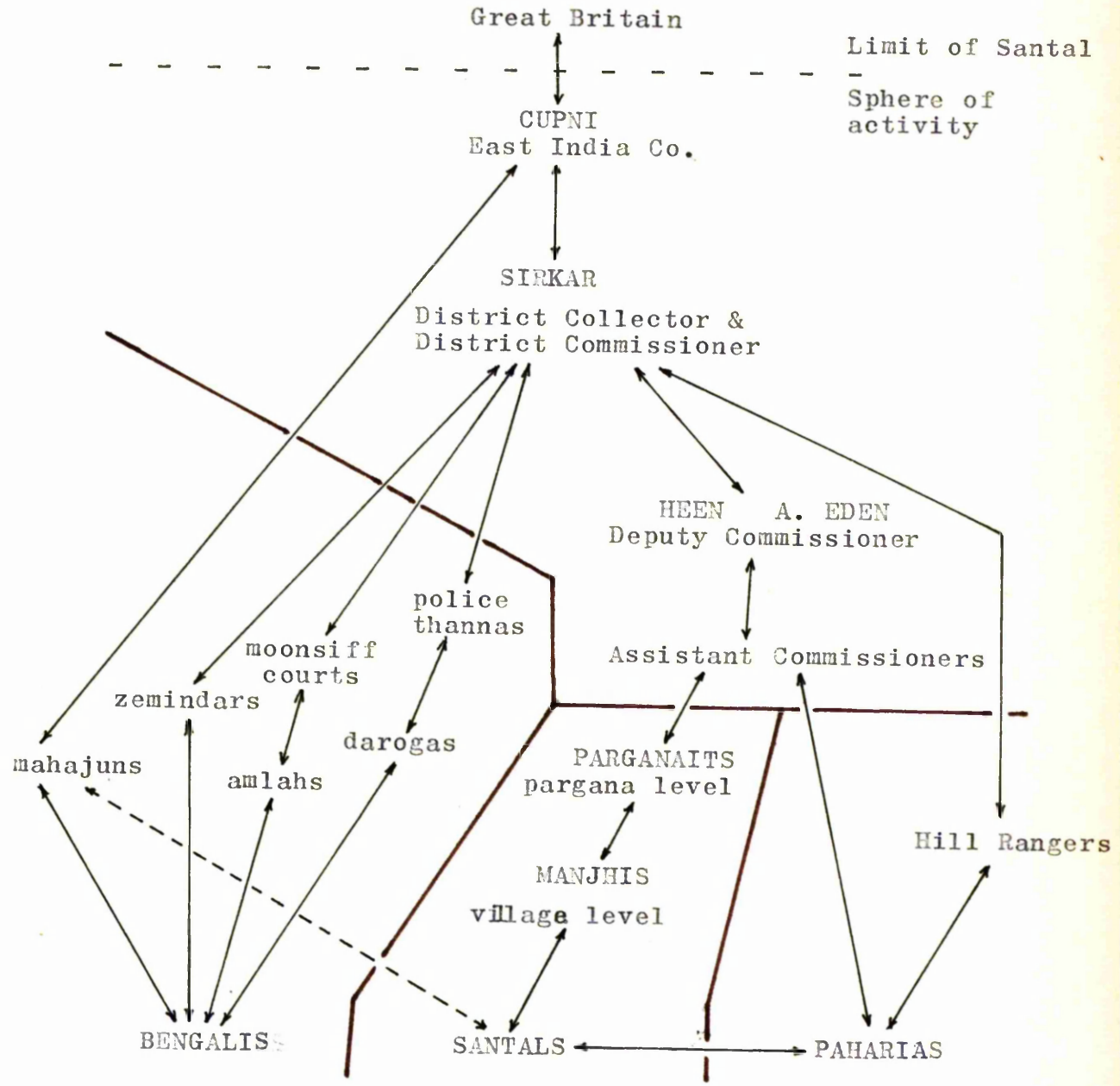
1. Act X of 1857 made certain amendments to Act XXXVII, which originally created the Santal Parganas. This was owing to strong complaints by various European Indigo planters and zemindars, who did not want to have their lands included within the new parganas, and thereby become the direct tenants of the Government.
2. Wallace, 1956, p. 264-271.

that distinguished the foreigner, the out-group, the 'diku', from the in-group and the 'hor'. But 'hor' no longer summed up the internal identity of that group of people who were now Santals. The Santals now identified around the factors of internal cultural likeness, political cohesion, in that they now had a territory, a central coordination, and were able to cooperate in political action. This new political and territorial unit was recognised within the administrative system of Bengal as being unique, and peculiarly Santali. It was the non-regulation system of the 'Santal' Parganas.

Diagrammatically the structure of relations in the Santal Parganas can now be represented like this:

Diagram 4.




The conflicts that existed between the Santals and the Bengalis were still implicit. The barrier between the economic spheres of the two had in no way been broken; if anything it had become worse with the emasculation which resulted from both exploitation and the uprising. Any emulation of the Bengali

sphere by the Santals was now unimaginable. The Santals were now dependent very largely on wage labour. However direct socio-economic interaction between the two was reduced to the only necessary one between the Santals and the 'mahajan' traders. Interaction had been cut down by their removal from any regulation administrative processes, except to some extent in the market place where interaction was backed up by a very firmly re-established mediating role. This mediator was the new administration of the Santal Parganas. The well acknowledged British policy of indirect rule was adapted specifically to the Santal political system, as a result of the advice of those who knew the Santals well, like Mr. Pontet, Mr. Bidwell, the Hon. Eden and Mr. Yule. The indigenous roles of 'manjhi' and 'parganait' were amalgamated into the British administrative system. These roles were no longer merely oriented towards the internal affairs of the village and 'pargana', but externally as well, in that they now represented the village and the 'pargana' to the Assistant commissioners, in matters of police authority, legal jurisdiction and revenue collection.[1]

The removal of distortion in the Santals' sphere of activity also ended the relative deprivation between the Santals and the Paharias. They were both represented in the administrative machinery, and had relations with the authority of the British, that could be manipulated to mediate between 'Hor' and 'Diku'.

Despite all these fortunate outcomings from the uprising, there was also a great deal of misfortune. In theory the identity

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1. Datta-Majumder, 1956, takes up the interesting discussion about the affect of this amalgamation, and the two way responsibility that it added to these roles; and the conflicts that it created. This is similar to Fallers discussion in Bantu Burocrasy, on the effect of indirect rule.

of the Santals was finally crystallised, so that they could now be called a tribe in the sense of their being a politically and territorially distinct unit, along with all the factors of cultural likeness. But in fact this was the beginning of their disintegration as a geographical unit.

As Chotrae Desmanjhi said, "from after the rebellion we Santals began to scatter because of hunger." This was the beginning of a new period. Although this new Santal identity was growing up and they had a new homeland in the Parganas, the Santals began to leave the area in huge numbers to find wage labour in Bengal and Assam. Hunter tells of the terrible conditions to which this migration gave rise. Unfortunately there are very few figures on the rates of migration for the period. Hunter says, "I have no complete returns, but in 1865, when ex officio superintendent of labour at Kooshtea, I estimated the number at 3,000 a month. In July it amounted to 3,827, in May to 3,236 adult labourers, or, including children, to about 4,000 souls."[1] In 1901 only 37.1% of the Santals were left inside the Santal Parganas.[2] The District Gazetteer states that, "At the census of 1911 the number of persons born in that district (Santal Parganas) and enumerated elsewhere was no less than 321,383, an increase of 95,000 over the figure recorded ten years earlier. In 1911 59,000 Santals were recorded in the Assamese tea gardens.[3]

The disintegration of the tribe began at the same time that it was created. This is the point at which MArtin Orans takes

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 257.
2. See the more detailed table on page 77 of Bihar District Gazetteer, Santal Parganas, ed. by R.B.S.C. Mukharji, Patna, 1938.
3. See Mukharji, 1938, p. 78.

up his study of the Santals.[1] In it, with reference to Redfield's idea of the great and little traditions, he discusses how the Santals, despite being scattered over a very extensive area, retain a great deal of identity through cultural likeness, while attempting to build a great tradition. This is also reflected in the existence today of the Jharkhand Party, and the Adivasi Movement in Bengal for recognition of tribal peoples.

Section 5. Historical Postscript.

The new administrative division of the Santal Parganas and the set of structural implications that it had for the social groupings within it continued to operate satisfactorily for some time. However by slow stages the non-regulation system was undermined by the Bengalis. This was due largely to the less than active interest that the officials of the administration took in the Santals, and in dovetailing the Santali political system into the British administrative one. Once again the administration failed to play its mediating role in the structure of relations. By slow and equivalent degrees the conflicts and barriers in the economic spheres, and the cultural differentiation and conflict inherent in the Hor- Diku relationship reared their heads again. A very similar set of affairs began to repeat itself in the Santal Parganas. Oppression, exploitation and emasculation gave rise to absolute deprivation, and once again revitalisation movements appeared on the scene.

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1. Orans, 1965.

2. Bodding, 1921.

## Chapter 7. Essay on the Historical Trends.

### Section 1. Introduction.

This study cannot offer any simple conclusions to those who want to learn from the historical experience of the Santals. The research started with a concern to make general statements about the oppositions and value loadings that build up around a social crisis. But it proved necessary to delve further and further back into Santal history to interpret the conditions of the uprising.

The overall approach has been to study the total process rather than the individual effects of social change. This is an uncompromising task that should be continued up to the present day. This has been done in part by various other writers on the Santals.[1] But the brevity with which they have considered this matter is somewhat tantalising to the student of social change. The only person who has studied Santal history and attempted to analyse it as a total process is Edward Jay. However this is only concerned with a brief and isolated moment in that history, namely the two years of the uprising. His analysis of revitalisation movements has been of great theoretical value and there is no intention to denigrate it. However it is limited by making an isolation of a moment in history of the Santals for specific analysis.

This overall concern with social change has been limited largely to that body of material that is focused on the political relations of large groups, and the manner in which these relations have changed and developed. Since variables come and go as the moment passes, it has not been possible to state which

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1. Orans, 1965, and Datta-Majumder, 1956.

of them are dependent and which are independent. This approach must be akin to what is today called systems thinking.[1]

This assumes that there is no total system, but that any set of relations can form a system, and that within it there are others and vice versa. The choice of a system is therefore somewhat holistic, and the analyst is bowing his head to expediency in limiting what he brings into his system.

The total system that delimits this study is the structure of relations in the Damin-i-Koh. It grew out of the coming together of different groupings of people, each with their own social system. These systems, or societies, took on the status of sub-systems that relate inwardly to their internal sphere and outwardly to their external one. The experience of the Santals was that their system grew larger and larger. As they came to know and relate to it, it gradually included more and more within its bounds.

At the point where this study begins the Santals were little more than a bandit class with a high degree of isolation written into their culture. Their system was a simple bipartite one structured in terms of two major sub-systems, the 'hor' and the 'diku'. The external sphere was entirely encompassed by the category of 'diku'. But it began to expand as the British established their interest in Bengal. Thus the Santal external sphere grew and this in turn affected their internal sphere. No cultural or political variables were independent. As the spheres developed alongside each other, they affected each other, and relations within this complex were moulded by their interactions into a pattern or structure. It is this structure that

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1. Systems Thinking, ed. by F.E. Emery, Penguin, London, 1969.

formed the identifiable realisation of the processes of interaction that were at work.

In attempting to generalise the sociologist or anthropologist must consult the specialists in the study of international relations within the sphere of political science. J.W. Burton makes some very interesting observations about any attempt at developing a general theory of international relations.[1] These are very pertinent to this study when brackets are added to relate them to the discipline of anthropology.

"International (social) relations is concerned, amongst other things, with all events and situations affecting more than one state (system, group or society). In a deductive approach to politics (the study of social change) it is customary to make references to past situations and events by way of example, and in an inductive approach, by way of support to a theory. In either case there is reference to history and to current affairs. In both cases the reference has value only if, first the record of events is exact and, second, there is agreement on the interpretation of the record.

"Herein lies one of the major obstacles to a consensus in International (social) Relations. It is not difficult to give examples in support of a preconceived theory, no matter how improbable, and it is easy to extract from the record sufficient evidence on which to build a theory. Even the most objective and scientific of students will be misled by reference to the historical or current record of particular events. In one's own experience there are many situations in which one has direct participation, and about the details of which one is clear; yet

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1. Burton, 1965.

the Press and the texts report quite differently. The latter may be correct - they may reflect a better perspective than an actor could have; but one questions the usefulness of references to particular happenings to demonstrate or to support a theory when widely different recordings and interpretations of fact are possible..... It is still more misleading to take events and situations that are beyond living memory. Furthermore, apart from difficulties of fact and interpretation related to a particular situation, there is an infinite number of cases in the history of man from which to select, and reference to a small number of them cannot be regarded as a reliable basis for generalisation."[1]

Historical material is too fickle for either induction or deduction, and it is not possible to control it in an experimental sense. Nor can the information be tested and retested except to say that more than one person agrees on the interpretation of 'x', and therefore this version is true and useful to build a theory. But there is seldom a sufficient variety of sources, and also the job of collating them all would not be expedient. In history there is never the situation when all sons call their mother's brother 'mother', so that it is possible to say that so-and-so people call their mother's brother by the same word as their mother.

In other words history and all historical events are unique; a problem which Weber overcame with the idea of ideal types. All generalisations must take account of the passage of time and the diachronic process, and are called trends. The longer these trends are observed, the more reliable they are. This must be the major parameter in all attempts by

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1. Burton, 1965. The Brackets are mine.

anthropologists to study history in the context of social change. First it is necessary to find the consistent trends and then to come up with valid generalisations about the process of change itself.

Section 2. The trends in the history of the Santals.

Before 1770 the Santals lived in villages scattered through the hills of an area that stretched from northern Balsore, through Singhbhum to the Ramgarh Hills of Palamau and Ranchi. They were cultivators, hunters and gatherers who supplemented their economy by raiding the lowland zemindars. After the famine of 1770 they began to migrate northwards into the areas of north and west Birbhum and Bhagalpur, around the foothills of the Rajmahal Hills.

While this was going on the British were expanding their sphere of activity along the routeway of the Ganges. This involved them in establishing order in the country. The declining power of the Moghul Diwanis and Rajahs had resulted in an upsurge of raiding by the Paharias. No doubt these conditions were very similar for the Santals. To create order the British had set up special relationships between themselves and the Paharias, under the initiative of August Cleveland, who suprvised and paid the Paharias 'manjhis' to maintain civil and criminal order among their people.

However under the weak superintendence of Abdul Pasul Khan disorder returned and the Paharias began to raid again. This hindered the British interest in the area to such an extent that measures were taken to deal with it in 1823. Mr. Sutherland recommended that the Damin-i-Koh be created and become the property of the Government. Being a troublesome area it was taken out of the hands of the Bengalis in the

regulation system, and specially administered by the British. The object was to create political order and encourage economic development under the first hand supervision of new authorities. Moves were made to educate the Paharias to teach them to grow better crops, and encourage them to cultivate the more fertile soil in the valleys. It was believed that this would safeguard the area and increase the surplus productivity. But the Paharias did not respond properly. They adjusted to these new conditions but no acculturation took place.

At the same time the Santal migration northward had resulted in their settling fairly extensively around and often inside the Damin. They were now noticed by the British as being used to clearing forest land and creating new fields and communities. It was like an answer to a prayer. The local administrators at Bhagalpur wanted them to settle in strength and assist in the economic development of the area, but their hopes that the central Government would agree to this scheme were dashed. The Government said that the Damin was reserved for the Paharias.

Nevertheless by 1836, 427 Santal villages were established in the Damin. Troubles arose frequently between the incoming Santals and the Paharias, while the local zemindars, seeing the new land that had been developed, began to encroach on the area. To prevent this situation deteriorating Mr. Pontet was appointed as Superintendent of the Damin, but there was no formal recognition of the rights of the Santals there. Mr. Pontet's brief only said that he should encourage and protect the settlement of the Santals.[1] In this he was very successful, increasing the revenue from 6,682 rupees in 1837 to 58,033

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1. See Appendix B.

rupees in 1854. By 1851 the Santals had brought 310 square miles under cultivation, which was 33.9% of the total culturable area. The 16,653 of them in the Damin made up 72.5% of the total population.[1] Mr. Pontet's success may well have been due to his having taken the law into his own hands and set up informal courts to which the Santals could bring their complaints and obtain redress. It should be remembered that he had no mandate from the central Government to do so. The legislature stated that the non-regulation provisions applied only to the Paharias, and not to the Santals.

At the same time Mr. Pontet began to develop and rationalise the economic infrastructure. By 1850 he had organised the traders in the Damin into 18 bazaars and had turned some 350 miles of track into roads that could take wheeled vehicles. This attracted Bengali mahajans into the Damin. As Hunter put it, "The hill men (Santals) are so simple minded, that dealings with them are very profitable to the acute lowlander, who will pay large bribes to any person whose influence can secure for him a footing amongthem."[2] However the differences between the economies of the Santals and the Bengalis began to grow with the economic interaction. These differences were exploited and conflicts soon developed between the two parties. The Santals went to Mr. Pontet, their 'hakim', to mediate while the Bengalis resorted to the regulation system. Mr. Pontet, who had taken the law into his own hands was powerless, and so were the Santals without his protection in the courts. He had led them up the garden path. He retired to his armchair in Bhagalpur fed up and ungratified, but he continued to do what

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1. See figures on page /63.

2. Hunter, 1872, p. 218.

he could for the Paharias.

Throughout this the Paharias had remained isolated and uninvolved in the developments in the Damin. They continued to live in their hill-top villages while the Santals cultivated the valleys. They were not made to pay rent like the Santals. Since they were not involved in a monetary economy they did not interact with the mahajuns, and no conflict developed for them.

By the middle of the 1850s the oppression and exploitation of the Santals became unbearable. First of all they tried to have the situation put right through the recognised channels of the British administrative system, but it was too slow in reacting. By 1854 they had begun to take things into their own hands. They held large public meetings and began to raid some of the mahajuns. It was almost a return to the days before the famine of 1770, when every year after the harvest huge meetings of Santals were held for the great annual hunt, which was the turning point of their calendar, after which they raided the plains. The Santals then began to think of creating a new Santal Raj in West Bengal. They even kidnapped the five year old son of a missionary and proclaimed him the King of the new Raj. At this time two brothers from one of the most heavily oppressed villages called Bhagandihi, claimed to have had visions of 'Thakour' the Santal Almighty. The word was spread around and shrines were set up throughout the Damin to this new movement. As a newly united body, the Santals tried briefly to put matters right through the administrative channels, but receiving no reply they set off to petition the 'Great God Cupni' at Calcutta. On the way a police 'daroga' and his 'amlahs' were killed and the march of 8-30,000 men developed into an armed and rebellious force.

Their first intention was to take revenge against the mahajans, so they plundered and killed the more notorious of their arch enemies in the Damin.

The uprising, which started on the 7th of July 1855, continued for a year. They first met the forces of law and order in the form of the old Hill Rangers Corps, which had been created by Cleveland from the ranks of the Paharias. It is interesting to note that the Paharias, who had not experienced the economic conflicts of the Santals, fought alongside the British to defend the Bengalis against a people who had a very similar culture to themselves, and spoke a mutually intelligible language. The monsoon then came, and the uprising was able to continue unhindered until the start of the cold weather, when martial law was declared. The fighting that took place was virtually a massacre of the Santals.[1] By June of 1856 the situation had calmed down and reconstruction was possible.

Some of the more interesting features of the uprising are the symbols that were used and the effect that it had on the culture of the Santals. Although these features are outside the scope of this thesis, there is room for four short rebellion songs recorded by W.G. Archer in 1945.[2]

Song I

Bhagat of Amrapara (a big mahajan in the Amrapara bazaar))
Kenaram Bhagat
Sidhu Kanhu
for nothing they were bound.

Song II

Sidhu, why are you bathed in blood?
Kanhu, why do you cry Hul, Hul? (rebel, rebel)
For our people we have bathed in blood
For the trader thieves
have robbed us of our land.

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1. Hunter, 1872, p. 247-248.
2. Culshaw, 1945.

Song III

Saheb rule is full of trouble.
Shall we go or shall we stay?
Eating, drinking, clothing,
For everything we are troubled;
shall we go or shall we stay.

Song IV

Kenaram Becharam (a mahajan)
Longed for land in Piparjuri
They bound the litipara manjhi
And took him to the Sahib's door. (probably refers to prison)

This was the first time that the Santals had ever acted as one concerted tribe, and the effects were lasting. The idea of the creation of a Santal state has never really died out since the date of the revolution. It inspired the Kharwar movements of 1871-4, and in a somewhat different form, lies at the heart of the recent Jharkhand movement, or tribal party, that has been fighting for the creation of a special area for tribes in India.

After the British had re-established law and order the process of reconstruction went ahead. The most important point was the creation of the Santal Parganas as a more extended area for the protection of the Santals. At the same time as this a new administrative system was created for the area. This involved the complete removal of all the tribal people from the regulation system. They were to be administered directly by a Deputy Commissioner and four assistants. Policing and minor judicial duties were to be carried out within the existing Santal system of 'mahjhis' and 'parganaits'. This was the model form of indirect rule used by the British so frequently in Africa.

The other upshot, which resulted largely from the economic chaos that the uprising left in its wake, was an increasing

reliance by the Santals on wage labour. In an attempt to reduce the impending famine immediately after the uprising the British initiated an extensive scheme of public works, which consisted mainly in building roads and completing the railway line that had already been started. From then the Santals became one of the most important sources of migrant labour. They travelled to the tea plantations in Assam to the steel mills in Jamshedpur.

Section 2, b. Trends concerning the British in West Bengal.

Certain consistently recurring themes stand out in this complex of events. This study, however, is more interested in their structural aspects and special correlates than in their specific nature and history. The first to be dealt with concerns the British in Bengal.

Clive and Hastings had transformed the East India Company from a trading association into a sovereign power. That this was achieved must be considered a success if we are merely judging against what was intended. However the way in which this was achieved and the content of it is open to diverse interpretations. But the fact is that there was continued expansion of British interest in Bengal as the main hinterland of Calcutta or Fort William. Closely tied to this expansion were the interdependent parameters of economic and political control in that sphere of interest. The trend of an expanding interest necessitated a greater degree of political and economic stability. But politics and economics were interdependent so that further political control was not initiated when its economic counterpart had been achieved.

This trend gave rise to one of the most interesting correlates which governed the British experiences with the Santals.

The expansion of the British interest in the affairs of the Damin-i-Koh led consistently to a cycle of insecurity - Protectionism - insecurity and so on. Insecurity due to the Pharias raiding induced the protectionism of Cleveland. The return of insecurity under Abdul Rasul Khan, led to the increased protectionism of Sutherland and Ward, and the creation of the Damin-i-Koh. This period of protection involved establishing direct political control. Attempts were then made to control and increase the economic output of the area in order to justify the degree of political control. However for this trend to continue there was a structural necessity for a fairly rapid feedback of information to the policy making body that desired to initiate protectionism. With the onset of the next period of insecurity, that arose around economic conflicts, this feedback process did not respond. As a result there were statements like that of Captain Sherwill: "The rulers have little to do than bear their honours and collect their rents."

Once again the trend was re-established. However this time the measure of insecurity was more exaggerated, with the result that to reconstruct the necessary degree of protection, political control had to be established by force. But, even at this stage, the British were reluctant to redress by force of arms the balance between security and insecurity, control and lack of control. Despite pressure to the contrary General Lloyd had to keep his troops under civil command until the last moment. However, political control was once more established and a protectionist policy resumed. The crucial point about the collapse of a controlled situation and the re-establishment of the control was that the British Government in India usually preserved political order, property and trade through the administrative and legislative process, and was loathe to use the military. This was

part and parcel of the trend towards protectionism. However this study is not concerned with the nature of the political ideologies of the time. The intention is to show that they have affected the social system, and the nature of this effect.

The other trend, which was in close parallel to that of protectionism, may be called progressivism. This is perhaps a more difficult trend to define. Progressivism can be best summed up as the idea that what has been found to benefit one set of people is also good for another. In other words an idiom has been found to benefit mankind, and the more people to whom it can be brought, the more benefit it will bring to all, not least the initiators. The term 'idiom' is used here in the social rather than linguistic sense. Within the methodology of attempting to discover trends as a basis for analysis, certain events are referred to whose consistency can only be interpreted within the definition of an ideology, be it explicit or not. An idiom is a clearly delineated entity in that it must be a consistent peculiarity of any given system. It is unique and idiosyncratic. The idiom that was involved in progressivism had all these qualities and was of an extremely ethnocentric nature. This trend is summed up accurately in Mr. Pontet's own words as to what he felt his duties were in the Damin-i-Koh.

After stating that he was to obtain peaceable possession of the Damin; to encourage agriculture among the Hill people; to parcel out the land; to protect the Santals from the zemindars, and encourage more settling: Mr. Pontet said that this was "to enable any class of people to resort to the resources of the Damin; to bring to the notice of Government all productions that this unexplored tract is supposed to abound

in; and finally by accomplishing the preceeding, a handsome revenue will be yielded to Government, the race civilised and the tract made healthy."[1] The core of this statement of intentions and duties is crystallised in that one phrase, "the race civilised". It would benefit all to bring the Santals and the Paharias within the precincts or pale of civilisation.

But how was this trend of progressivism manifest in the history of Santal development? The concept cannot have any credibility or validity until its manifestations can be identified concretely.

Progressivism was already tied to the policy of protectionism. It is only after periods of insecurity and instability that the Government's policy is stated explicitly. After Captain Brooke had failed to bring peace to the Rajmahal Hills in 1772, August Cleveland surveyed the situation reported and in 1780:

> "The first question that occurs is whether it is for the interest of Government to supply the means of subsistence for a short while or to suffer the inhabitants of the hills to commit devastations on the country as thy have done for many years past. Certainly the former. For although the losses which Government has experienced on this account have been trifling owing to the rigid observances made with the zemindars, yet the sufferings of the lowcountry people are not to be described."[2]

Later in his attempts to make the Paharia 'manjhis' responsible for civil and criminal order, for which they were to be paid, Cleveland said:

> "The disembursement, and of course, the circulation of money in the hills by Government appears to me the most

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1. Letter from Mr. Pontet to Mr. H.J. James, Acting Collector of Bhagalpur, quoted in Roy Chaudhury, 1965; see Appendix B.

2. O'Malley, 1910, quoted on page 38, Letter from A. Cleveland to Sect. to the Gov. of Bengal, dated 21st November 1780.

> likely bait to ensure the attachment of the chiefs, and at the same time nothing will be so conducive to the civilising of the inhabitants as to employ a number of them in our service."[1]

The next period of protectionism that manifested the progressivism of the British was initiated by Mr. Pontet and has just been discussed.

This policy was again continued in the period of reconstruction after the uprising. This is seen in Mr. Yule's plans for the delegation of policing authority to the Santal 'manjhis' in a very similar fashion to that which Cleveland had effected in 1782. The idea was that the existing Santal structure of politics should be grafted onto the British administrative system, thereby allowing the two to acculturate, and so bring the Santals within the pale of civilisation. This policy was further backed up with a programme of road building, "such as, while they open the resources of the country and expose it to the full action of our Police and Military Forces, shall at the same time give work to and food to the population."[2]

Section 2,c. Trends concerning Santal society.

The significant trend in the Santal sphere of activity was that it had come to encompass a greater and greater diversity of elements. Before 1770 the Santals were only aware of the presence of the Bengalis and of those people with whom they shared a common culture, called the Hor, though possibly not with the Paharias to the north in the Rajmahal Hills. They were however interacting with the ordinary Bengali ryots and with the zemindars from whom they often held subtenancies. Then as they

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1. Ibid., p. 39.
2. Letter dated 10th January 1856, No. 68, Minute by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.

migrated northwards they almost certainly came into contact with the Paharias in the Damin.

By the middle of the 1830s, when the Santals were arriving in strength in the Damin, they became aware of a new element in their external sphere. This was the first meeting with the British whose interest was also expanding in the area and particularly in the Santā s as potential developers. This new element was 'Palteen'. 'Palteen' was their 'hakim', and became their representative in most of their interaction with their external sphere. He was vested with an authority and dominion, seemingly, over all the elements in their sphere of activity. And as such their 'hakim' became a new and vital part of their culture.

As conflict developed in the Damin-i-Koh the Santals became aware of yet another element in the political system of west Bengal. This was the extensive and complex regulation administrative system that the British commanded, but over which somebody greater than 'Palteen' was in charge. The 'amlahs' and 'darogas', or court officials and police of the regulation system, took their authority from what the Santals then came to call 'sirkar'. This referred to the Government offices headed by the Commissioner and Collector at Bhagalpur, the administrative centre. With the collapse of Mr. Pontet's role as their 'hakim', the Santals found themselves directly under the authority of 'sirkar', and the regulation system that it commanded. But when the conflict between them and the Bengalis developed they needed a mediator, which they could not get from the regulation system, as it was staffed by Bengalis, so they petitioned 'sirkar'. R. Carstairs tells how certain manjhis went to the Hon. Mr. Eden at Bhagalpur to

demand an 'hakim' of their own. The petition of Nursingh and Kudru Manjhis to the Commissioner at Bhagalpur is quoted at full on page 186-7. Finally an awareness of yet another element in the politics of west Bengal developed. This was of 'cupni', as the East India Company at Calcutta was known. How they conceptualised 'cupni' cannot be ascertained. It was referred to as 'the Great God, that is too far off'. This development of the expanding sphere of activity can be seen clearly in the multiple diagram at the end of this section.

The most direct correlate of this expansion was the decreasing isolation of the Santals. In the bipartite sphere before 1770 there had been a strong degree of social distance between them and the Bengalis. The Bengalis were the hated 'diku' outsider, contact with whom was distasteful to the 'hor' or pure people. The Santals were accustomed to raid the 'diku'. And when interaction could no longer be prevented they would leave that village and set up a new one. The ethnographies of the Santals all stress that they appear to have moved about north India consistently before their arrival in Singhbhum and Birbhum, though reports differ as to the path of their migrations. Their myth of origin was also concerned with their early migrations. It is suggested that the root cause of this was their isolationist tendency. And this also appears to have been true of their time in Singhbhum and Birbhum. The Bengali zemindars, seeing the forest land that the Santal cleared and cultivated, were always eager to include it within their zemindaris, in order to increase their own revenue.

During this period, when there was no protection for the Santals whose mobility was high, ~~and~~ there was no necessity for mediation between the 'hor' and the 'diku'.

Social distance and mobility made it possible for any conflict that arose to be negated. However with the accommodation of an expanding sphere this degree of purely geographical isolation in clearings in the forests became less and less possible. As the Santals came to populate the Damin more densely (by 1851 22.6% of the land was under cultivation) they were at least nominally protected by their 'hakim', and paying rent on formally assessed land, isolation was more difficult, and mobility was cut down and less necessary. Then the more complex structure of their sphere of activity made isolation less possible. Isolation had been easier to preserve across a unitary interface, than across a more complexly interwoven one, as developed in the Damin.

The correlate of this, which can be seen as a consistent trend in the development of the Santals, was that more and more demands are made on the structure of relations. This implied an increasing necessity for mediation within the structure so that the individual units could manipulate the political structure for their own interests. In a situation of conflict this demand becomes all the more pertinent. And so a trend arose for the structure of relations to become more and more complex. This comes out quite clearly in the multiple diagram. Initially there was an absence of any formalised mediation in the structure between 'hor' and 'diku'. It was merely governed by opposition, social distance and isolation. On the Santal entry into the Damin Mr. Pontet became a generalised mediator between all the Santals and anybody else for civil and criminal matters that did not involve more than Rs. 300. However, even at this stage, larger matters were mediated by the regulation system, which was not satisfactory from the cultural point of view. But the

Santals were unable to work the system, so that exploitation by the Bengalis became possible. Finally, after the uprising and the institutionalising of 'Yule's Rules', there was for the Santals a complete division of administrative authority between the regulation and non-regulation system. More than one person was needed to deal with all matters. The Santal Parganas were split into four divisions each with an assistant commissioner who was grafted onto the internal political structure of the Santal village and pargana.

The last major trend was the crystallisation of Santal identity. This has been discussed in detail in the text, along with its relationship to the structure of relations; the role that the British played, and the conflicts that helped to condition it. The occurence of this trend was integral with the decreasing isolation of the Santals. Under the conditions of strong isolation there was no great necessity for a crystallised identity. In a bipartite structure, characterised by isolation and social distance, identity was clear on the simple basis of the 'hor' not being 'diku'. Since, however, the political structure of the Santals was not highly integrated, this type of identification had a residual element. The pargana was the biggest politically cooperative unit. The larger category of 'hor' was based on the more diffuse parameter of cultural likeness. However, along with all the other trends this loose identification of the grouping was no longer sufficient. The centrally mediating role of Mr. Pontet had given them a quasi-centrality. Under such conditions they were already becoming more than just a culturally homogeneous grouping. Then with the later necessity for concerted action that arose with the uprising, they

actually began to see themselves as the Santals. And this was the final phase of identity crystallisation, as is best witnessed in the narrative of Chotrae Desmanjhi, where Chotrae referred to his people as "we Santals".

The final trend was the gradual move among the Santals towards an economy in which the rupee played a greater and greater role, as did their greater reliance on wage labour for economic continuity. It is interesting to note that this did not happen to the Paharias. The only cause for this appears to have been that the Paharias were never obliged to pay rent to the British. The real reason why they accommodated but did not acculturate a monetary economy lies deeper than this and is difficult to define. Perhaps the Paharias had always had a degree of security in their hill-top villages. Their bandit aggression against the lowland zemindars remained totally unchallenged, so that they must have had enough confidence not to dabble their fingers in a different economy. The fact that they acquiesced in Cleveland's offers does not deny this. For them to act as a policing force and to be paid by the British for their services also supports the idea, however spurious it may be. But the fact remains that the Santals both accommodated and acculturated a partial monetary economy; and that this sector in their economy has continued to grow up to the present day. Basically this was a factor of the poverty that the Santals experienced from the oppression of the Bengalis, and the aftermath of the uprising. But this in turn was a result of the structure of relations in the Damin.

The developments in the Santal sphere of activity can be admirably represented diagrammatically. And when these diagrams are superimposed on transparent film it is possible to present

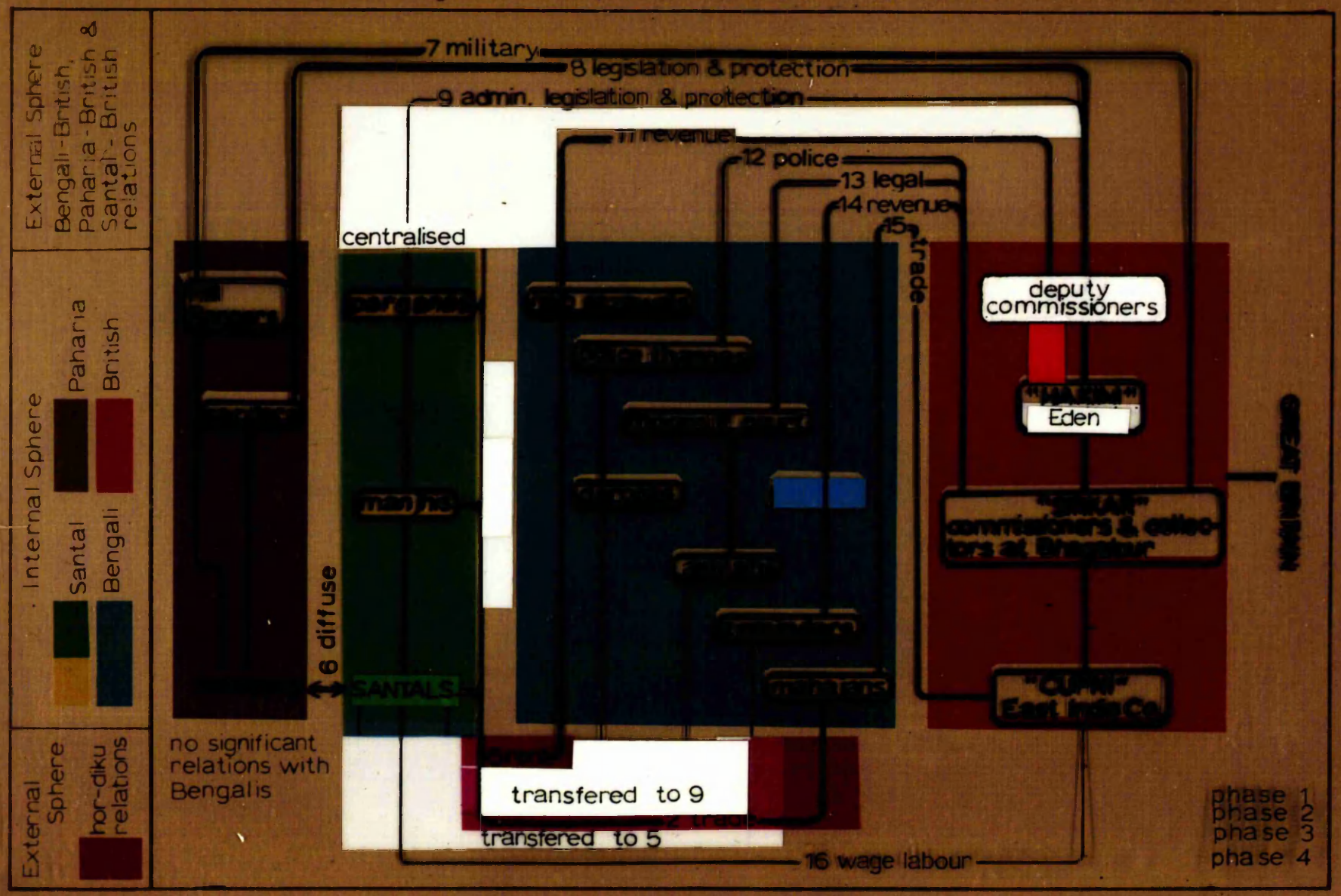
the changes that have occurred in a manner whereby comparison of the changes in the patterning of the structure over time can be seen to interrelate. Diagrammatically certain correlates of this can also be shown, such as the variations in importance at one time of the Hor-Diku relationship, the corresponding changes in the nature of Santal Bengali interaction, the variations of interaction between the Santals and the British and the manner that this affected the identity of the Santals.

One of the main problems of the written word is that it progresses in a linear fashion whereby at any given moment it is only possible to state one set of relations at a time. When it is presented as a three dimensional diagram the majority of the relationships can be presented together, so that it is then possible for the reader to select and compare those relations that he desires in a way that is not predisposed. In this way the information is highly manipulable. And with the prior explanation of this information that the thesis has given, it is possible for this diagram to perform the function of a highly manipulable conclusion. But it may be necessary to first have a brief explanation of the way in which this diagram has been composed so that it can form a guide through the time sequences that are presented.

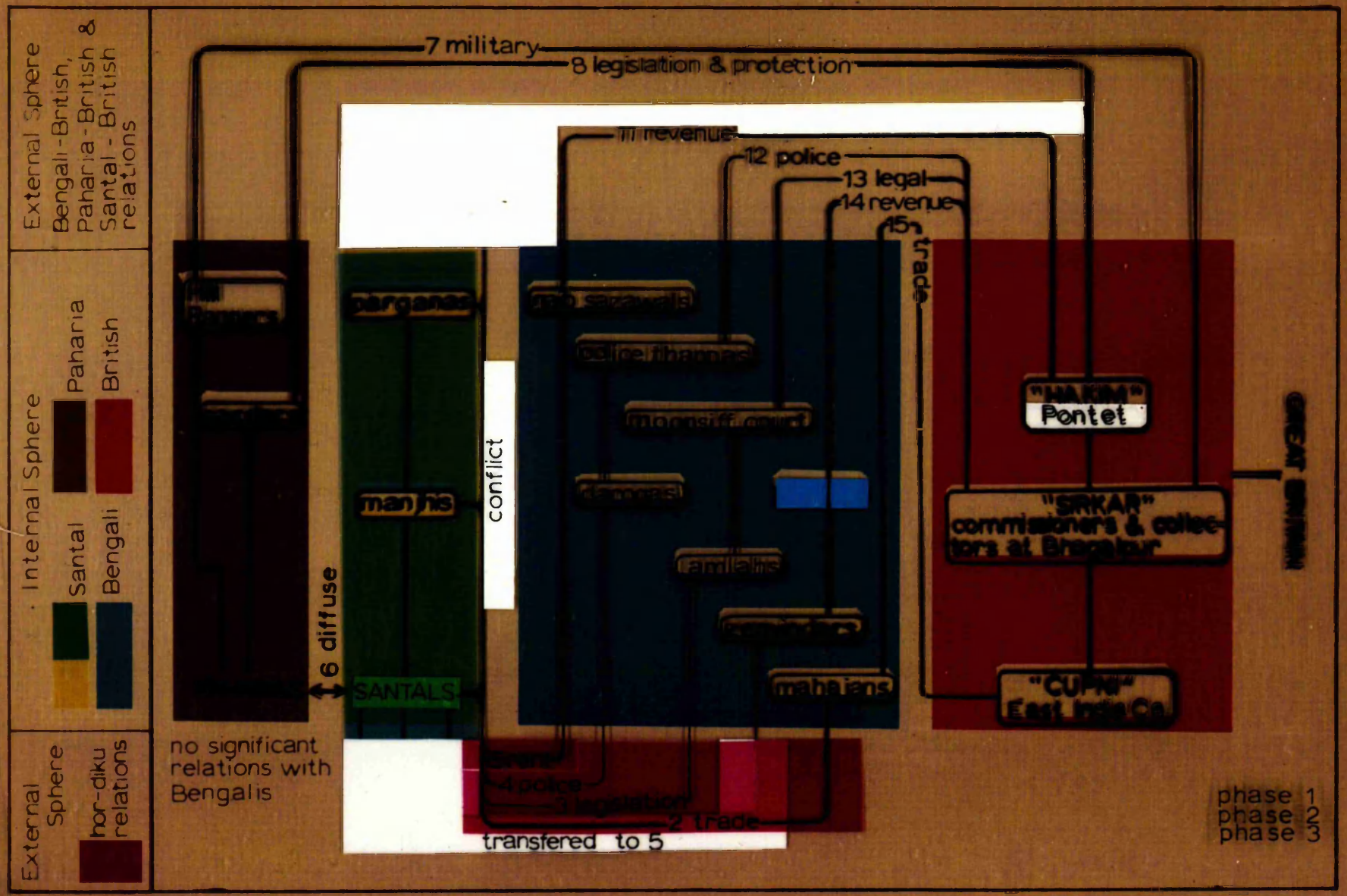
Essentially this diagram is a more abstracted version of diagrams 1, 2, 3 and 4 placed on top of a general information backing sheet. Phase 1 is the same as diagram 1 and so on. There are three horizontal divisions. The central one includes those relations within cultural boundaries, and the top and bottom ones those relations between the cultural groups. These groups are then separated vertically. The third

dimension is used to divide the time sequence in the development of the structure of relations, starting from the bottom or phase 1. This represents the era before migration into the Damin. Phase two is the period that covers the Santals becoming established in the Damin under the supervision of Mr. Pontet. Phase 3 covers the time when Mr. Pontet's role as a mediator collapsed and the Santals were subject to the direct authority of the regulation system and Bengali personnel. Here the contrast between the external relations of the Santals all going downwards while those of the Paharias are all going upwards is clear. Herein lies the condition of relative deprivation. It is also possible to see here Wallaces three phases of revitalisation developing. As the phases are superimposed the transfer of functions can be seen from one inter-group sphere of relations to another, and in this way it is possible to understand the developments and changes in the interrelations of the system. The sheets of film can be secured to each other by firmly stroking them together and thereby building up an electrostatic charge. Phase 4 represents the period after the uprising when the new system of administration in the Santal Parganas was in operation.

Composite Diagram: Development Of Structure Of Relations 1770-1857



Composite Diagram: Development Of Structure Of Relations. 1770-1857



Composite Diagram: Development Of Structure Of Relations. 1770-1857.

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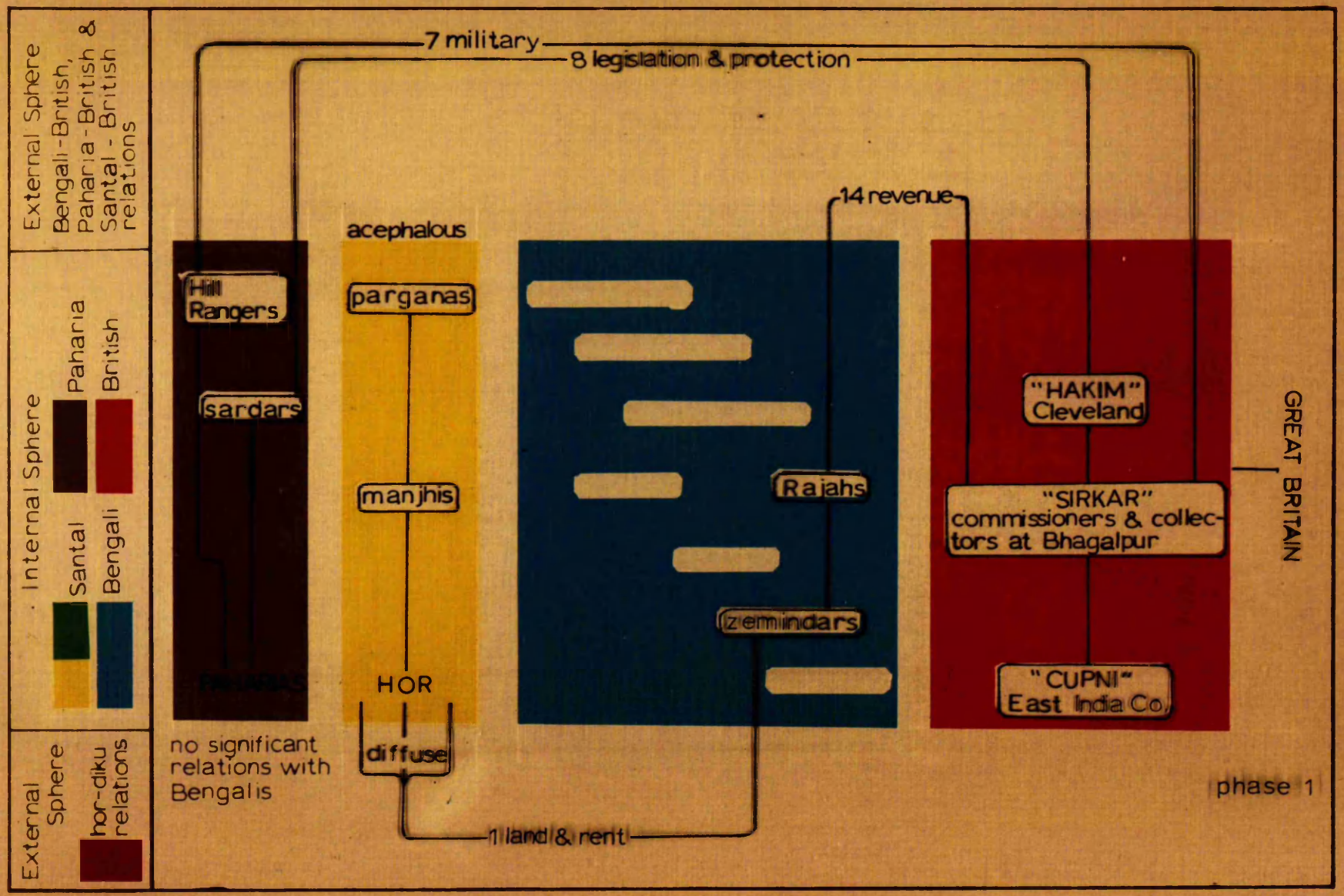

Section 3. Conclusion.

One of the most intriguing features of the historical development of the Santals is that trend referred to as identity crystallisation. This has still to be explained properly. This study has shown (pages 108-110) that it would be naive to suggest that the colonial presence of the British merely froze the social categories that existed and so created tribal groupings. It is now possible within the complex of trends that have been identified to look at this idea in greater detail and clarity, than by drowning it in a welter of historical minutiae. That there was a close relationship between the colonial authority and the nature of the tribal groupings cannot be denied. Bradbury states that, "Reorganisation in the Benin politics are motivated (a) by the government's searching for more effective administrative machinery for the implementation of its policies and (b) by the necessity of containing internal political conflict and of coming to terms with demands on the government which can no longer be safely ignored."[1] In terms of the historical trends in the Santal Parganas this means that Santal redefinition and crystallisation of identity was due to the expanding interest of the British in west Bengal. The motive force behind this was the necessity to contain political control for economic benefit. If the British had not entered west Bengal the Santals might have remained in a situation where their sphere of activity was a simple bipartite one. But this was not so. The Santal sphere of activity did change, and the initiative for this change was due to the British presence. But once this initiative was established the ensuing developments were conditioned by a more

1. Bradbury, 1968, p. 248.

complex interrelating of factors. Social change cannot be analysed merely in terms of the causality of innovation. Once innovation has occurred, then this change is integrated into the extant system and acculturation takes place. It is then no longer useful to look for unitary causes in the analysis of social change. One must look at the system, understand the manner of integration and payoffs, and consider the modes of manipulation that became possible. A system is here a complex of relata, whose relationships all act on each other as interdependent variables. This is better than saying that the British presence is an independent variable that will affect the other dependent variables.

All this has involved a systemic approach, and takes into account what Barth says about innovation.[1] After analysing Fur beer parties and changes in the division of labour, he states that social change does not consist only of innovations, but includes the institutionalisation and maintenance of those innovations. So change covers the constraints that condition the accommodation and acculturation, and are effective in the institutionalisation process. The British interest in West Bengal caused certain innovations among the Santals, but the end-product at any given time was the complex result of many interacting variables.

The gradual process of identity crystallisation did not just develop through the presence of the British. Their progressivism was instrumental in the continuous formative process. It was the motivation for increased economic and political control. The protectionism that this created enabled the Santal's identity to crystallise, and the concommitant decrease of iso-

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1. Barth, 1967.

lation necessitated a more complex structure of relations. But owing to a lack in the feedback through the administration, the resulting lack of protection left the less isolated groupings relatively insecure. In other words the institutions for upholding protectionism, which were specifically the mediating roles in the structure of relations, were insufficient for the new level of greater interaction, that had arisen from less isolation. The payoff from this was greater insecurity, whereby the conflicts and barriers in the structure of relations produced open conflict and deprivation. This then created a polarisation and crystallisation of identity. Then in the case of the conflicts that arose during the 1850s the process of crystallisation was carried along on a wave of revitalisation. The reaction of protection that this elicited from the British, in order to preserve economic and political control, had now escalated to a level at which it had to recognise the increased crystallisation of identity.

In this way there is a complex of variables that relate to each other and affect the form taken by social change. The interesting outcome of this among the Santals was that when redefinition was not possible within the existing structure of relations owing to their distortion conscious individual attempts to redefine the group was made by themselves, irrespective of that structure. With the Santals it took the form of trying to create a new Raj.

This was not a freezing of tribal groupings, but a restructuring of the parameters of identification at the relational level. In other words the given group defines itself in relation to its sphere of activity. Then, as that sphere expands and changes in structure there is a concommittant necessity

for the terms of definition to change. The restructuring or redefinition that is involved in the crystallisation of identity is therefore purely relational. This means that there has been no simple freezing of a real structure of tribal groupings into certain specific tribes for the administrative convenience of a dominant colonial authority. In other words any tribal or ethnic group will vary in relation to its changing sphere of activity. The new grouping of Santals was not a freezing of the old one of 'hor'. The two were different in the sense that 'hor' was a relationship specific to 'diku', whereas Santal was an identity that existed in its own right and by a relationship to a more complex sphere of activity and structure of relations. The old conceptualisation of Hor-Diku still exists after the process of redefinition as a relationship specific to interaction between 'hor' and 'diku' only. That grouping, called Santal, is then on a different relational level that is involved with a more expanded sphere of activity. In one sense a new complex level of activity has been superimposed on an earlier and more simplified one. This implies that a Santal can still be looked on asa 'hor', and a Bengali as a 'diku', but in the changed situation this only applies to the specific relationships that involve both 'hor' and 'diku'. In other words, 'hor' and 'diku' no longer exist as exclusive groupings; Hor-Diku now refers to one particular relationship that exists among many others.

In conclusion, the process of tribal and ethnic grouping is continuous. Its continuity lies in its dynamic potential. But, at any one time, the level at which these groupings are realised is in relation to its sphere of activity. A tribe

must therefore be defined by the structure of relations in which it is involved. At one moment this may be purely on the basis of cultural likeness, and at another on the basis of territoriality or political centralism. But whatever this basis may be, it is consequent on the historical development of that group. If colonial rule in any sense crystallised or heightened tribal consciousness, it was primarily a result of the expansion of sphere which that colonial rule occasioned.

APPENDIX A

BENGAL JUDICIAL CONSULTATIONS

Letter dated 14th February, 1856, No.157

From A.C. Bidwell, Esq., Late Special Commissioner for the suppression of the Sonthal Insurrection No.827A of 10th December 1855 -

(No.827A)

From the Late Special Commissioner for the Suppression of the Sonthal Insurrection

To the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, Fort William, Dated Bhaugulpore 10th December, 1855.

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No.2777 dated 9th October last, directing me to report at my earliest convenience.

1st - The causes of the late Sonthal insurrection as far as I have yet been able to ascertain them;

2nd - The measures which I would recommend for putting an end to the insurrection to be carried into effect at the close of the rains;

3rd - The measures to be taken to prevent such risings for the future.

For the causes of the insurrection one naturally turns in the first instance to the manifestoes of the Insurgents as well as to the Statements of those of them who have been taken prisoners, and been put upon their trial.

The first manifesto which comes before us, which is the fullest and contains everything that is set forth in any other, is the notice issued by Seedoo to the residents at Rajmehal, see Appendix A. The grievances therein referred to are 1st a sort of complaint of excessive taxation implied in a prescribed reduction of rent to 1 Anna for each bullock plough and 2 Annas for each buffaloe, and the country is to be taken away from the Sahibs on account of the prevalence of falsehood, the negligence of the Sahibs, the extortion of the Mahajuns, the corruption of the Amlahs, and the oppression of the Police.

In Seedoo's examination before Mr. Eden he states that he and others had repeatedly complained of the oppression of the Mahajuns to Mr. Pontet, but could get no redress. That these Mahajuns take 5 Rupees interest for 1 Rupee lent and purchase their rice at unfair rates, and if they don't give it, pull their ears and beat them. That his rent has been raised,

and that the Naib Sezawals who make the collections take 10 or 5 Rupees from each village for "Salance". That one of the Railway Sahibs carried off 2 Sonthal women, wounded a Sonthal man and killed another. For these reasons the Sonthals were dissatisfied and were pondering what was to be done, when a God descended, in the form of a cartwheel, and advised them to Kill Pontet and the Mahajuns and then they would have justice and a father and mother.

Peetoo Pergunnait, another prisoner, says the Mahajuns oppress us dreadfully. They take our rice at unfair rates and charge exorbitant interest. We complain of this to Pontet, who gives a Perwannah on the Naib Sazawal to enquire into the case. The Naib Sazawal does nothing for us. If we don't pay the Mahajuns they seize our cows and cattle. We are willing to give 4 Annas interest in the Rupee but no more. The rent we pay is just, we have nothing to find fault with in that respect. We give it willingly. The Naib Sazawals take 3 rupees "Expenses" from each villave when they come to collect rent; but we give it willingly. If the Mahajuns are kept in order and punished, we have nothing to complain of.

Manick Southal another prisoner states that the outbreak occurred on account of the Mahajuns oppression. I suggest Singh of Nainsook lent him 4 Rupees and took 8 in payment. He complained to Mr. Pontet who gave him a Perwannah on Kalleepurshad Naib Sazawal to enquire into the case. But the Naib Sazawal did nothing.

Dullas Manjee Southal attributes the outbreak to the oppression of the Mahajuns and that of the Sahibs of the Railway who committed great oppression at Seetapaharee. The Sahib (Mr. Thomas) the women of whose family were killed, used to commit very great oppression. He used to go out with a Mussaul at night and dishonor the women of the Sonthals, and carry off goats, fowls and kids by force. On one occasion he took a goat - a Sonthal endeavoured to get it from him and they were both pulling at it, on which the Sahib or a Burkundanzi who was with him, drew his sword and killed the Sonthal. A Sonthal came to complain of this at Bhaugulpore but got put into jail himself for his trouble. (I have looked at the record of this case which certainly appears to have been very imperfectly prosecuted by the Magistrate of Bhaugulpore. The wounded Sonthal, no one was killed, were sent to the hospital which perhaps led to the supposition that they were sent to the jail. The offenders escaped punishment.)

Purtoo Purgunnait (since condemned to death for rebellion and murder) states that he was addressed by Seedoo and Kanoo, who told him that justice had arrived and that the hakims had erred in taking too much rent, and the Mahajuns in taking too much interest, that 2 Annas were in future to be paid for a bullock plough and 1 Pice in ten Rupees is to be the rate of interest.

The above exhibit the causes of the insurrection as gathered from the replies of the prisoners - many more of whom answered to the same effect, while others replied that it was the "Thakours" order for them to rise which was warrant enough for them.

I have called upon the principal zemindars and gentlemen of the District, whose occupations have thrown them into collision with the Sonthals, for any information which they can afford as to the causes of the outbreak, and their replies are some more and more less in accordance with the views which I have been lead to adopt from other sources.

Captain Sherwill who was asked for his opinion on the subject by Mr. Brown in July last, states in reply that his survey duties in the years 1851 and following have led him much into intercourse with the Sonthals - that he took his family and lived amongst them unarmed, and fearless, visited nearly all their villages, conversed with nearly every head man, counted their houses, surveyed and mapped their country, obtained supplies, cooly-labour and every assistance, all of which was rendered with the greatest cheerfulness and willingness.

That he heard no complaints against any one during his stay with them, but was particularly struck with the barefaced rapacity of the Mahajuns and Merchants buying grain and produce of them. The Sonthals hatred and detestation of whom has been shewn by the murder of every one of them that fell into their hands after the outbreak Captain Sherwill states that there were about 50 Bengally Traders at Burhait the capital of the Damun and a number more at Burio an important town eleven miles north of it - that it was at these two places that the insurrection broke out. And he really believes that the oppression, exactions and gross rapacity of these traders have in a great measure been the cause of the present lamentable outbreak - "that religion has been mixed up with the rebellion in order to strengthen the hands of the rebel chiefs by acting upon the minds of the Sonthals for the Sonthal in his own way is a peculiarly religious man and when his ideas are assisted by the powerful Mahooa spirit and smoking Ganja, which two excitants are resorted to in all their religious dances and excercises, and freely used upon the present occasion, the Sonthal may be driven to acts of violence and desperation".

Captain Sherwill adds the Sonthals in the Damunikok are far better clothed, better fed have more cattle and better houses than those outside the Government boundary, and that wherever he has not fallen into the snares of the bengally traders he is a happy and contented man. He has always heard Mr. Pontet's name mentioned by them with respect and reverence, and he is satisfied that a high assessment has had no share in producing the present outbreak.

Mr. Charles Barnes a gentleman engaged in Indigo-planting and agricultural pursuits many years in this District and who has considerable knowledge of the Sonthal tribe has come to the conclusion that the origin of the outbreak is to be traced to religious fanaticism alone. He does not believe that the Sonthal has been oppressed by Zemindar, Police or Mahajun, because as a valuable ryot, particularly expert in clearing jungle, punctual in his payments, though he will pay no undue cess nor yield any forced labour, he is especially protected by the Zemindars -- that they were a quiet peaceable set and were never seen at the Police Thannaks. That their assessment is so light they have seldom occasion to resort to the Mahajun and their dealings with them must therefore be limited. He believes that a few designing individuals of the tribe, taking advantage of the notorious ignorance and superstition of their brethren have instilled the idea of a Divine revelation into their minds calling upon them to recover an imaginary Kingdom once their own. To this end all Sonthals were publicly called upon to rise to plunder villages and massacre all, except the lower castes. With the recovery of their Kingdom the land rent was to be commuted to a tax on ploughs.

These orders tallied with their savage instincts and their innate love of bloodshed was apparent from the very commencement of the rising. They did not confine their cruelties to those who had injured or offended them -- but women and children beggars and travellers, all shared the same fate. Many of the victims were bound hand and foot, and deliberately sacrificed before an emblem of their Thakour with the same expressions as used by the Hindoos in their sacrifices of animals to Kallee. The universal answer given when remonstrated with being it is "the Thakoor's order and must be obeyed". The poorest and quietest Sonthals committed as great atrocities as the Manjees and Pergunnates who led them. That many were deceived there is no question, but it is equally evident that others were glad of the opportunity furnished by the orders of men in no better position of life than themselves, to commit these depredations.

Though I think that Mr. Barnes is, for want of the same information that is before me, mistaken in his notion that the Sonthals had no complaint against the Mahajuns, his view of the affair is deserving of great consideration, as that of an intelligent observer long resident on the spot.

The Rev. Mr. Droese whose avocations have taken him much among the Sonthals, says of them "I have never anywhere in India met with Nations of a disposition so frank and kind. Their industry, their perserverance, their love of order, their inquisitiveness, their joviality are conspicuous to the most casual visitor - what can have turned such a race into the furious savages they have shewn themselves to be ? He hears that their grievances are as follows - that they are over taxed in having to pay a ruinous ground rent to Govt. but also in having to pay to Govt. or to Govt. Officials on the produce of trees standing on ground already taxed. That they complain of the encouragement given to Bengally Merchants to settle in Sonthal villages, and Mr. Droese has "seen enough of these lying rascals to understand what a grivance their presence must be to a simple frank-hearted race" - and mostly they complain of the rapacious villanous and merciless conduct of Hindoo and Mahomedan Darogahs, appointed by Govt. to keep order in their villages".

The Sonthal is he says closely knit in brotherhood. "Some twelve years ago, Mr. Droese learns, arrangements were made for uniting the whole of the Sonthals in one body - near the Damoodah lives a Sonthal chief of chiefs whose name is Morgo Rajah - he is said to have been successful in making aboue 300 disciples within the last 12 years. These are sworn men and fully instructed in all plans for uniting all the Sonthals in one brotherhood. They are scattered among the Sonthals and continue to act under the instructions of their chief and continually refer to him for advice. From all I have heard I am inclined to believe that they are as secret, active and obedient an agency as the Jesuits in the Romish Church".

Strong suspicions have been excited as to the complicity of one or more of the Ameers of Saiside in this insurrection. But I have not yet had to observe anything more than is in support of this view of Mr. Droese.

Mr. I Grant a European Zemindar long resident in the District attributes the rising to a discontented feeling caused by the illegal exactions and oppressions of the Naib Sezawals, which afforded a favourable opportunity to designing men like Seedoo and others, to work upon their

feelings and led to the lamentable results which followed. He does not consider the oppression of the Mahajuns could have been the cause of the outbreak for the people of the surrounding Pergunnahs are forced to submit to the same exactions which prevail wherever there are ryots to borrow and Mahajuns to lend.

Mr. I. Grant was not aware of the circumstances of the Dacoitees which took place in the year 1854, nor of the numerous petitions presented by Sonthals to the different Courts complaining of the oppressions of the Mahajuns.

Baboo Girdharee Col.Govt. Pleader and a wemindar in the District attributes the insurrection to the fanatic and credulous disposition of the tribe, which enabled a few of their number, notorious characters, impoverished by hard drinking, to lead them into rebellion by giving out that the time of their Kingdom was come. That God himself had revealed this to Seedoo, and that the Mandate was to kill and plunder all. Meeting at first with little check from the Govt. Troops on this side, they believed the dictum of their chiefs. Had Troops been available when the outbreak occurred, thousands of lives and much valuable property would have been saved.

The agent of the Ranee Khema Sooduree of Packour attributes the rising to the oppression of the Mahajuns and the unwarrantable conduct of some of the Railway employees who insulted their women and refused to pay the Sonthals when employed on the Railway works. This enabled Seedoo to assemble the whole body, in revolt through the stimulus of religious fanaticism.

The Rajah of Moheshpore attributes the dissatisfaction of the Sonthals to the increase of land rent, the exortions of the Mahajuns and the oppression of the Railway Managers, who forced them to hard labour and paid them very little. This dissatisfaction was fanned into a flame by the fraud of a pretended descent of the deity in the house of Seedoo, who told them to take arms and drive the people out of the country.

Mr. Taylor a very intelligent engineer of the Railway Department who was stationed at Shreekond near which the outbreak commenced and who saw a great deal of the Sonthall tribe says:

"The Railway Officials, Mr. Pontet, the Police and the Mahajuns have all in their turn been accused of causing the insurrection. From my position and good understanding with the Sonthals I am fully certain that no cause of oppression on the part of Europeans employed on the Railway could have occurred without my knowing something about it, and I don't believe anything of the sort ever happened. It is my opinion that no

case ever occurred of Sonthals being underpaid for work done, or of one of their women being forcibly carried off by any of the Europeans employed on the line."

Mr. Taylor states that very few Sonthals could be induced to work on the line, not because they were underpaid or illtreated, but because they were generally so well off that they preferred drinking and dancing and amusing themselves. He has often heard the Sonthals speak of Mr. Pontet but never heard them say anything against him, or complain of having to pay too much rent, in fact he always understood that they paid very little for lands in the Damun and that they fixed the rent themselves by Panchayat and that Mr. Pontet took in fact whatever they chose to give.

Mr. Taylor's opinion of the cause of the outbreak is that the Sonthals from living such a lazy drunken life for some time past, had got into a very excited inflammable state, and that the leader perceiving this, and knowing that a dreat deal could be done before the arrival of Troops formed a plan to plunder the country and make off with the loot across the trunk road. They knew that the only way to get the Sonthals to rise was to work upon their superstitions and impose upon them the story of the Takoor having given them the order to do so.

The above constitutes the opinions of such of the zemindars and gentlemen residents in the neighbourhood who have favoured me with them. I have next employed myself in looking over the correspondence regarding the Damun for the last ten years especially the reports of Mr. Pontet.

Before recording my own opinion as to the cause of the outbreak I will give a short sketch of the administration of the Damunikoh for the last 20 years. This track which, as the Govt. is aware, embraces what are called the Rajmahal Hills and the lands skirting the same which were not included in the Decennial Settlement with the zemindar of the District was declared to be Govt. property in the year 1823 and a special officer was for many years entertained to decide and demarcate the boundaries thereof. For several years the culturable lands included in this tract were reserved for the Hill people, but in the year 1827/31st October the Board supported Mr. Ward's recommendation that other classes should be admitted to cultivate these lands; that the clearance of the forests if left to the Hill people would never take place, whereas the Sonthal race were largely employed by neighbouring zemindars in bringing forest lands into cultivation and no possible objection existed to employ them in the same way in the Damun.

The Govt. however replied that his Lordship in Council was unwilling to depart from the resolution which the Govt. had come to that the Damun lands should be exclusively reserved for the encouragement of the Hill race in agriculture. "Should the Hill race disappoint these expectations it will then be at the option of Govt. to change their plan and look to other classes for the improvement of their lands."

No formal orders of Govt. repealing these instructions appear on record; but the Sonthals gradually located themselves on the Damun lands, and in 1830 the Govt. recognized their existence there by authorizing the local authorities to protect them from any demand, beyond that which it is customary for them to pay, by taking a stipulation to that effect from the Hill grantees.

After repeated recommendations from the local authorities in favour of encouraging Sonthals to settle on these lands as the only means of clearing the jungle, the Govt. on the 21st November 1836 consented to the appointment of a special officer for the Superintendence of the Damunikoh; and the Collector Mr. Dunbar in his instructions to Mr. Pontet who was nominated to the Office, intimated to him that his duty was to use his best efforts to bring the culturable portion of the Damun lands under cultivation, by means of the Sonthals, and that the sooner to effect this desirable object, he should not only afford protection to those already settled in the Damun, but also give every encouragement to fresh settlers upon the unoccupied lands.

The following notes of the revenue received on account of the Damun lands from the year 1837/38 to 1854/55 shews the result of this change of system, from discouragement to encouragement of Sonthal settlers.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Revenue for the year : | 1837/38.....Rupees | 6682 |
| | 38/39 | 7798 |
| | 39/40 | 10644 |
| | 40/41 | 20074 |
| | 41/42 | 20997 |
| | 42/43 | 22372 |
| | 43/44 | 25450 |
| | 44/45 | 28002 |
| | 45/46 | 32430 |
| | 46/47 | 36407 |
| | 47/48 | 39905 |
| | 48/49 | 40947 |
| | 49/50 | 43724 |
| | 50/51 | 47665 |
| | 51/52 | 50160 |
| | 52/53 | 51825 |
| | 53/54 | 53455 |
| | 54/55 | 58033 |

It has been the fashion to attribute this result to the "admirable management" of Mr. Pontet the Supt. but I confess that I look upon it as arising from causes independent of management that is to say to the policy of Govt. in encouraging instead of, as before, discouraging the settling of these Tribes, and to the attractive quality of the soil which is of the finest description. At the same time I hope, when I come to notice Mr. Pontet's qualifications as a public officer, I shall not be found to treat them with injustice.

Mr. Dunbar stated that there were when he wrote 427 villages inhabited by Sonthals and Bhooyans (sic), that he thought the number of Sonthals who might be induced by a very moderate degree of encouragement to settle was limited only by the extent of the lands, and that they were already locating themselves in large numbers without invitation. "They are a most industrious hard-working and peaceable people, and the jungle disappears under their labours with astonishing celerity." Mr. Dunbar adds that their produce was generally disposed of at a rate considerably lower than the market price of the day to the Mahajuns who had given them advances at the commencement of the season, or to dealers who come into the Damun for the purposes of purchasing grain.

From the time of his appointment to the date of the outbreak Mr. Pontet's management received the undeviating approbation of Collector, Commissioner and the Board. It seems I fear ungracious in me to say that looking at the avidity which the Sonthals had already shewn to settle in this tract, and their extremely tractable and straightforward character as ryuts, this high praise was a little too hastily conceded.

Besides carefully going over the correspondence regarding the Damun for the last 10 years, I have looked into all the complaints sent to me by the Supt. Magistrate, Collector and Commissioner as comprising all presented to them by Sonthals for the last two years.

I cannot say that Mr. Pontet's reports impress me highly with his capacity as a public officer. At the same time there are obvious marks of good sense and discretion in his account of his administration tours. I see not a sign anywhere, either in the correspondence or in petitions, of over assessment of the Sonthals. Mr. Pontet's demands indeed seem to be limited to what the Sonthal community decided was just and proper and they have always been paid without demur or difficulty.

In the year 1851 Captain Sherwil ascertained by survey that the quantity of land under cultivation by Sonthals in the Damun was 162560 acres, equal to 491744 Beegahs, and as the Govt. rent for the following year did not exceed Rs.47555, we find the average rate of assessment imposed on lands held by Sonthals in the Damun to be about one and a half anna per beegah which considering the fine quality of much of the land in the Damun must be considered moderate in the extreme.

The system in force there is to give the uncleared land rent free for the first three years. "A trifling rent is taken for the next three years according to what the Pergumaite may consider just, averaging from 3 to 10 rupees per village. The next lease is for five years when the rent to be paid is fixed by a Panchayat of Manjees, who have been holding villages for the last five years, and with my knowledge, Mr. Pontet says, of the length and breadth of the village under settlement as also the number of houses in it, I can generally judge if the assessment has been a fair one." Mr. Pontet states elsewhere that he never takes from Sonthals a higher rate than 8 annas per beegah as estimated by him.

The Sonthals are said to object to pay for their lands by the beegah though there are zemindarees in the Districts in which this objection is overcome, and considerable credit I believe has been given to Mr. Pontet for ingenuity in the indirect means which he took of asertaining the quantity contained in each holding, which was by getting them to erect a post in the centre of each village cultivation to serve as defining their boundaries, from which I obtained at the same time a rough caldulation of the quantity of land". But the objection of the Sonthals is to paying by the Beegah, not I believe to the measurement of his land. And at any rate a better plan than the rude one adopted by Mr. Pontet, of estimating the area of each village, would have been to go round it with the chain and prismatic compass with which he had been supplied, marking the boundaries as he went along and working out the area on paper.

The Collections are made through the Naib Sazawals once in the year, and that at a time when Mr. Pontet himself is present in the Damun, ready to check any exaction on the part of these officers.

Mr. Pontet is satisfied that these men do not extort money from the Sonthals, but I am certainly disposed to coincide in the opinion generally prevalent here, that they do. Indeed from the insufficient manner in which Mr. Pontet has gone into the one or two cases of complaint against Naib Sazawals which are now before me, I am satisfied that he was not sufficiently on his guard to prevent it.

The Statement made by Peetoo Sonthal prisoner as quoted in the margin[1], I consider to be as near the truth as may be. And the return of Sonthal villages in the Damun being given at 1218 the amount of illegal cess extorted by the Naib Sezawals will be about 8308. No one who has had any experience of the difficulty of controlling native officers employed in Bengal in the collection of revenue will consider this as over estimated, and the names of several of the Naib Sazawals of the Damun are mentioned to me as having notoriously amassed large sums of money in the office.

As I said before I find no symptom of over taxation in any part of the correspondence. Mr. Pontet's mode of dealing with disputes was judicious. "I had the parties before me face to face and settled the amount due by Punchait". But I find in his reports early notice of the sufferings of the Sonthals from the oppression of the Mahajuns, which I think he might have done more to obviate. In 1847 (Nov.1st) in advocating the extension of the provisions of Regn.I of 1827 to the Sonthals, as well as the Hill men, which would give the Magistrate jurisdiction over Civil cases between Sonthals and Natives of the plains, up to 100 rupees, he says "If the Sonthals are left to carry on their suits before the Moonsiff's Courts, it is impossible that they can compete with the cleverness and chicanery of the people of the plains".

In August 1848 he states "This year three villages absconded in consequence of the pppression of the Mahajuns who had gained cases in the Moonsiff's Court from the ignorance of the Sonthals to defend them". "I fully believe" he says "the whole cases false - certainly as regards the amount sued for; but in some instances I am sure the whole debt had been paid tenfold. These poor fellows from not being able to read or write, have no check whatever over the Bengally in marking off their payments, and as for the Bengally giving a receipt when paid in full, or returning the bonds, such a thing is never known". Mr. Pontet then suggests that if the provisions of Section III of Regn.I of 1827 cannot be made applicable to the Sonthals, he should be authorised to appoint a Mookhtan in the Moonsiff's Court to defend cases against Sonthals.

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1. The revenue we pay is just. We have nothing to find fault with in that we give it willingly. The Naib Sezawals take 6 rupees from each village when they come to collect the rent, but we give that willingly. If the Mahajuns are kept in order and punished we have nothing to complain of.

In his report of the 22nd May 1849, Mr. Pontet says Received complaints against petty Mahajuns allowing their lattoos to graze on the ryuts corn - reported the same to the Collector in the hope of his being able to punish the offending parties".

In May 1851 he says "great complaints against the Mahajuns taking exorbitant interest, and using larger measures than those established by me in former years which I had settled with the consent of all parties. This oppression is a hardship, and with the trifling power I hold can scarcely be rectified. I can only in consequence merely summon the parties and point it out, threatening them if they don't desist to turn them out of the Damun".

In 1853 his report on the past season, he notices a number of petitions received against petty Mahajuns who are always exacting an illegal interest from the ignorant Sonthal.

In his report of the 15th May 1854 Mr. Pontet notices complaints made of petty oppression on the part of the servants of the Railroad employees taking fowls and kids at their own prices. The Mahajuns have also causes some injury to the settlers by carrying them into the Moonsiff's Courts and getting out attachments upon their cattle before the ryuts even hear of it".

In reporting to the Collector as to the cause of the Dacoitees of that year, Mr. Pontet wrote on the 5th July, 1854, "When visiting the Damun this past season, the Sonthals have complained to me generally of the oppression committed by the Mahajuns in exacting enormous interest, also in taking grain almost on their own terms. I often endeavoured to protect my ryuts when any glaring case is brought to my notice, but when I return to my station in April, the Moonsiff's Court is a set a going, and decrees are obtained exparte in most cases, when the unfortunate ryut is sold up house and cattle, and is thereby reduced to beggary after a legal fashion".

In his report of 28th May 1855 Mr. Pontet again reverts to the oppressions of the Mahajuns, and states that on examining their books we found that they steadily charged 50 per cent interest on money lent - 8 annas in the rupee, and that they had taken bonds on stamped paper including this illegal charge.

This is all that I find in the correspondence of the last 10 years bearing upon the point under consideration, vis. the cause of the insurrection. I will now proceed to notice the petitions sent to me from the various offices of the District.

The petitions sent to me by Mr. Pontet as those put in by Sonthals within the last two years are 24 in 1854 and 67 in 1855. In the cases of 1854 fifteen are complaints regarding dispossion and non-payment of rent by ryuts - the remaining 9 refer to oppression alleged against Mahajuns. In these cases the dispute was settled generally by bringing the parties face to face, and adjusting the matter on apparently equitable grounds. But although Mr. Pontet complains, in many of his letters of his limited power to protect the Sonthals against the Mahajuns, I see that he exercises extra-ordinary powers, which if justifiable in one instance, might have been used in others to the manifest advantage of the Sonthals - for instance, on the report of the Naib Sazawal of Doomkah that Monzah Koolgattee is deserted by the ryuts owing to the Mahajuns having in May last caused the ryuts to pledge their cattle to him for debt Mr. Pontet, often he says satisfying himself that the fact was as stated ordered the Naib Sazawal to recover the Govt. revenue from the Mahajun. The same order was also passed as regards the bukya balance due from the ryuts of Mouzah Konaidihee.

Again when Boodhun Roy petitioned that Seetaram Mahajun has taken away 5 rupees worth of Teel from his ryuts, and thereby driven them from the place, leaving 5 rupees due from them to him, and desired that the Mahajun might be called upon to pay it, it was ordered accordingly 20th July 1854 that the Mahajun should pay the balance of Govt. revenue due from petitioner, and if he has any claim on the ryuts he can recover it.

Of the 67 cases of 1855 upwards of one half are complaints of oppression against Mahajuns. The Mahajuns when sent for by Mr. Pontet, generally denied the charge, on which they were warned against oppressing the Sonthals on pain of being turned out of the Damun.

On one occasion Kanoo Manjee Pergunnaite and others complained against Kishen Jenum Singh Naib Sazawal of Doomkah representing that he extorts 6 rupees from each Monzah on his own account - on the 7th November the complainant was by Mr. Pontet ordered to produce his witnesses in the Mofussil. But the complainant afterwards represented that the petition was got up by the acting Naib Sazawal, and it was struck off. In this case I think that a more prompt and rigorous prosecution of the case by the Superintendent would have shewn the truth of the complaint though it is very probable that it was suggested by the acting Naib Sazawal.

Mr. Pontet frequently refers to the orders of Govt. prohibiting the settling of any others than Sonthals in the Damun, and on this ground threatening expulsion to Mahajuns accused of oppression. I do not find any such order of Govt. on record; but it appears to me that if Mr. Pontet had actually expelled one or two notoriously oppressive Mahajuns the act, if of questionable legality, would not have been more so than others of his acts, and would have been attended with the best efforts in checking the gross oppression which prevailed.

The petitions sent by the Collector are mostly, unimportant complaints regarding right to settlement petty boundary disputes. One however is a serious complaint brought by Samoo Manjee and 8 others against Mohesh Dutt the Naib Sazawal of Digghee for extortion and oppression. That he takes from some ryuts 4 rupees from others 5, from others 2. The petitioners particularly beg that the enquiry may be conducted by the Collector himself. The Collector however sent it to Mr. Pontet for investigation, who ordered it to be brought up in the Mofussil. Afterwards he ordered petitioners to be in attendance before him at Buchroogunge on the 20th and 21st instant.

When the petitioners were so brought before Mr. Pontet the Naib Sazawal had of course made matters smooth and the petitioners one and all denied that the complaint had been made by them. Mr. Pontet then sent the case to the collector in order that the instigators of the complaint might be punished. But on the Collector enquiring he found good cause to make him consider the complaint a genuine one even if now denied and he struck the case off his file 19th of April 1854.

The Collector should in my opinion have gone into the case himself; but when Mr. Pontet found it transferred to him, he ought to have known that his only chance of eliciting the truth was to take up the case and sift it thoroughly, without a day's delay. He did not do this and of course the complaint was by cajolery and intimidation hushed up and denied.

Mr. Pontet states in his letter to me No.130 dated 30th Sept. as his grounds for believing that the extortion is not practised by the Naib Sazawals, that so few complaints were preferred of this kind; but when men see that their complaints are not properly gone into by the authorities, they will not expose themselves to additional oppression by repeating them. Mr. Brown in his letter No.1514 dated 15th October makes the same remark, viz. that as very few charges have been preferred against the Sezawal and Police it is therefore fairly to be inferred that no ground for them existed.

A very short experience in Indian administration is required to shew the fallacy of this reasoning.

Mr. Brown also goes on to say that Seedoo who killed Mohesh Dutt Naib Sazawal could not have had any personal cause of complaint against him, because his Seedoo's house was not within his jurisdiction. But Mohesh Dutt might be, and probably was, obnoxious to the whole tribe of Sonthals, on account of his extortion, and Seedoo it might be said acted not in his individual capacity, but as the constituted leader of the Insurgent Sonthals in revenging their wrongs.

At the commencement of the year 1855 the Collector appears to have noticed the increase in complaints against the Mahajuns and called upon the Naib Sazawal for enquiry and report. The Mahajuns were also all required to move into the katho and Bazars, and not to be living in the detached villages of the Sonthals under penalty of 5 rupees per day fine. A few months afterwards the outbreak occurred.

In the cases before the Magistrate the complaint of the Sonthals of ill treatment on the part of the Mahajuns are very numerous, and there are a few against the Railway servants. In three cases[1] the Mahajuns were punished by fine commutable to imprisonment. The rest were mostly struck off the file because the peon's fees and subsistence money of witnesses was not deposited. This proceeding was according to law certainly, but I think the circumstances of the parties the notorious oppression of the Mahajuns, and the well known truthfulness of the Sonthal, required a different course and that the Magistrate might, without infringing the law, have done more to stop the oppression complained of. The efforts of the Magistrate were however sometimes defeated by powers beyond his control. The Mohurrir of Khyhurea was dismissed by the Magistrate on the 27th Dec. 1853 for extorting the sum of 106 rupees from a Sonthal. The Mohurrir appealed to the Commissioner of Circuit and was reinstated on the ground of contradictions in the evidence for the prosecution.

The following circumstances lead me to regard with considerable surprise the insufficient attention given by the Magistrate to the petitions of the Sonthals on this score, for the year before the outbreak.

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1. In one case a complaint was preferred by Muttor Manjee that Muddoosoodur Lal and others Mahajuns had carried of 105 of his cattle. The case was struck off the file on the 25th Nov. 1855, on account of the non-attendance of the plaintiff to prosecute his charges. A few days afterwards he petitioned to have it brought on the file again, but his petition was rejected.

In the months of May and June 1854, six Dacoitees were committed by Sonthals on the houses of Mahajuns rediding in the Damun. The perpetrators of the offences confessed and were punished by the Sessions Judge, and the Magistrate in reporting the case to the commissioner remarked that it was matter of grave consideration that these Dacoitees were committed entirely by men of the Sonthal caste who generally speaking are remarkable for their quiet and harmless mode of life. Upon questioning them the Magistrate states they gave as their reason that the Bengally Mahajuns settled in the Damun had reduced them to beggary. The Magistrate remarked that with such a feeling abroad amongst the Sonthals of the Damunikoh, he feared that the District would soon become a most lawless one. He considered that the perpetrators had been caught, in this instance, not through any remarkable activity or sagacity on the part of the police but simply through the interposition of Providence, a clue to the Dacoitees was obtained, ten or 12 days after the perpetration of the last one.

"I would", the Magistrate goes on to say, earnestly recommend that measures be at once taken to stop this spirit of angry discontent among the Sonthals, and the easiest mode of doing so it appears to me would be to place them under the same law as the Hill men, vis. that they be subject to the jurisdiction of the Magistrate and not of the Civil Court for sums not exceeding Rupees 100.

"It may however be that the capture of this gang will stop further outrages; but I think it right thus to place on record my opinion, as to the probably result of the dealings of a witty and unscrupulous set of Bengallees and a wild simple race like that of the Sonthals."

In a subsequent letter on the same subject to the Commissioner No.648 dated 30th of August, Mr. Heywood the Magistrate says "The number of persons ready and willing to commit these Dacoitees, or as they prefer styling it to loot the Mahajuns, may I fear be reckoned by thousands."

In laying the matter before the Govt. Mr. Brown stated that he agreed with the local authorities in thinking that additional protection should be afforded to the inhabitants of the Rajmehal Hills included in the Damun-ikoh. This might be done, he said either by making the provisions of Regn.I of 1827 applicable to Sonthals as well as to the Hillmen (to which class it had been construed by the Sudder Court in 1847 to be restricted) or by investing Mr. Pontet with the powers of a Moonsiff within the boundaries of the Damunikoh. "The latter place Mr. Brown represented to be more easy of execution", while it would be equally efficacious in checking the spirit of lawless revenge, to which an otherwise peaceably disposed race have been driven by the cruel exactions of astute interlopers".

The Government accordingly in Mr. Hodgson Pratt's letter No.2433 dated the 3rd November after consultation with the Sudder Court, directed that Mr. Pontet should be appointed a Moonsiff within the limits of the Damunikoh, with authority to exercise those powers in all cases which did not come under the provisions of Regn.I of 1827.

Mr. Pontet's appointment reached this office, I am informed on the 26th of November when Mr. Pontet was at the station which he did not again quit before the 18th December. The Judge Mr. Bell is unable to state why Mr. Farquharson his predecessor did not then install Mr. Pontet, but when he took charge of the office on the 13th of January, he found the Sumnud still there, and on that day called upon Mr. Pontet to attend and take the oaths. On the 30th of January, he again addressed him, and on the 2nd of March he informed him that in the event of his not taking up the appointment he, Mr. Bell, must report the matter to the higher Court. To this Mr. Pontet replied that he hoped to be at the station by the 20th March, when he would attend that his duties did not admit of his coming in earlier. He accordingly did attend on the 20th of March and was duly sworn in.

It is not at all satisfactorily explained how a measure to which the Commissioner attached so much importance, as the investiture of Mr. Pontet with Moonsiff's powers, should have been so long delayed. Mr. Pontet acknowledges that he was aware in November that his appointment had taken place, he heard it from Mr. Halliday on the Steamer, yet he remained in the station nearly three weeks, apparently without enquiry on the subject, and left it on the 18th without having been invested.

It is extraordinary that the following petition which was presented to the Commissioner on the 29th August 1854 should not have kept his attention alive to the subject:

Petition of Nursingh Manjee and Koodroo Manjee Sonthals.

"The Mahajuns residing in the Damun in their intercourse with us Jungly Sonthals, are in the habit of lending us a few rupees for their own profit. They charge us interest at the rate of half as much again and double of the sum lent, and extort it by force and oppression. When the debt is paid in grain, they weigh the produce, and we being Jungly animals ignorant of accounts and of the language, do as they please. This is notorious to all even at the Sudder Station. Besides this, the Mahajuns on pretence of indebtedness, enter our houses and forcibly carry off whatever of our cattle they can find, and give no receipt. They prepard false bonds of 40 or 50

rupees, and bring suits in the Civil Court. If a Sonthal goes to a Mahajun's house for rupees, the latter brings a charge of Dacoity or theft, and some of them appear as Plaintiffs and some as witnesses. Petitions without number have been presented by us to Magistrate Collector and Superintendent, but to our misfortune the Hakins have paid no attention to our prayers. On this account many poor Sonthals oppressed by the tyranny of the Mahajuns have deserted their houses, and others are ready to go. When we came here from our country, and cleared the lands of the Damun, paying lacks of rupees to Govt., we stood high in the estimation of Govt. and Regn.I of 1827 was passed for our protection. If in contravention of this law, the Mahajuns now oppress us to such an extent, and we get no protection from Govt., what resource is left to us ? If no redress is granted we must leave the Jungle Kohistan, and the whole place will become Jungle again. We pray that the Superintendent may be called upon to report on the matter, and the oppression of the Mahajuns be stopped, and our good character re-established. We have no protection but Govt. and pray that enquiry be made, and the Mahajuns removed from the Damun so that we be saved from their claws."

No order appears to have been passed by the Commissioner on this until the 19th April 1855, when he sent it to the Collector for suitable orders. The Collector sent it to the Magistrate, and the latter on the 4th of May 1855 called upon the Mohafiz to bring up the papers of the cases regarding Mahajuns and Sonthals, held by Mr. Heywood in his tour. The outbreak then took place, and nothing more was done on this petition.

No one I think who has gone through the foregoing narrative can fail to arrive at the same conclusion with myself that the primary cause of the outbreak was the state of dissatisfaction existing amongst the tribe, on accound of the oppressive exactions of the Mahajuns added to the corruption of the Naib Sazawals, and in some places oppression on the part of Railway employees, and the little check which they received from the Govt.authorities.

This discontent was perhaps aggravated, and a spirit of resistance nursed by the drinking and dancing assemblies alluded to by Mr. Taylor. At any rate an inflamatory state was produced which required but a spark to set the whole Damun in a flame. This spark was supplied by the pretended divine revelation to Seedoo whose notification "the country is to be taken away from the Sahibs on account of the prevalence of falsehood, the negligence of the Sahibs, the extortion of the Mahajuns, the corruption of the Amla, and the oppression of the Police" is amply illustrated by the Narrative contained in the preceding paragraphs.

The first attack of the Insurgents were directed against the special objects of emnity the Mahajuns, the Police and the Railway but when they had tasted the wild excitement of plunder and bloodshed, all distinction of persons was lost, and the Bengally ryut who had done them no injury, his defenceless wife and children, the traveller and the beggar were sacrificed with equal barbarity to their inhuman revenge.

The open frank and manly character of the Sonthal is spoken of in terms of praise by all who have come in contact with them but one of their warmest admirers Captain Sherwill draws in his reports on the Damun a picture of a sacrifice in a Sonthal village which shows that there was latent in their religion and character an innate delight in bloodshed which led no doubt to the prevalence of the cruel butcheries which market the course of the insurgents and which frequently took the form of sacrifices to their Takoor or deity.

The insurrection no doubt had its rise among the Sonthals of the Damun, though others joined in it afterwards, and the question naturally suggests itself - how was this, if the condition of the Sonthal was as universally described to be so much better in the Damun than in the neighbouring zemindarees ?

The answer may be that the Sonthal is a sufficiently reasoning animal to know that if he is screwd by his zemindar, there is nothing but what he might expect in his exactions. The Sonthal knows what the zemindars terms are when he settles on his Estate, he sees the other ryuts assessed in the same manner, and if he does not like the terms, he can go elsewhere. But in the Damun he is aware that the only legal demand on him the Government revenue is light in the extreme, that the extortions of both the Mohajuns and Sazawals are unauthorised - he knows that it is the duty of the Govt. authorities to protect him against them, and finding this duty as he conceives utterly neglected his discontent becomes extreme and he responds with alacrity to the call of his deity to take away the country from those who have so grossly abused the trust reposed in them.

Again it <u>may</u> be that it was the result of accident only that the flame burst forth in the Damun. From statements made to me by Mr. Eden within the last few days, it would appear that he learns that the dissatisfaction among the tribe was as prevalent in zemindarees as in the Damun, on account of the oppressions of the zemindars and the Police, and that they were encouraged in their designs by an Ameer or Soobah in the vicinity of

Hazareebagh. The truth of these statements will be tested by Mr. Eden, in the meantime they do not affect the correctness of the conclusion that the extortions of the Mahajuns and Police in the Damun were the cause of the outbreak there.

I need not now reply to the question what measures I would recommend for putting an end to the insurrection to be carried into effect at the close of the rains.

It only remains that I should state what measures I would suggest to prevent such risings for the future.

Troops must of course be retained in the District for a year or two - and an improved Police introduced under the management of an active and intelligent Magistrate. Protection too must be afforded to the simple minded and straight forward Sonthal against the extortions of Police and Mahajun, and I know of no more effectual mode of securing this, than by placing the Damun on the footing of an Extra-Regulation province, as suggested by the Honourable the Lieut. Governor in his minuted dated the 19th October,"to be under the immediate administration of an Officer especially appointed by the Govt. to superintend the Civil, Criminal and Fiscal affairs of the District."

This District however must comprise not only the Damunikoh but those Pergunnahs adjacent which are inhabited almost solely by Sonthals. Should this measure be adopted there may probably be one or two more small Pergunnahs which should be included, and which can be added at any time after exact information on the subject which I have not at hand has been obtained.

I have grace

A.C. Bidwell

Late Special Commissioner for the Suppression of the Sonthal Insurrection.

Appendices to accompany this letter :

A - Copy of Seedoo's notice to the residents of Rajmehal
B - " " Captain Sherwill's letter dated 24th July 1855
C - Original of Mr. Barne's letter dated 24th July 1855
D - " " Revd.Mr. Droese " " 8th July 1855
E - " " Mr. I. Grant " " 5th November 1855
F - " " Baboo Girdharee Lal " 22nd November
G - " " Agent of Ranee Khuma Soomdury of 9th November
H - " " Rajah Gopal Chunder Singh of Moheshpore of 14th October
I - " " W. Tayler Esq. dated 21st October 1855 -

This is he who sends the Thakoors Perwannah

Sidoo Manjee

Kanoo Manjee

at the incarnation of the Thakoor.

Inhabitants Kanoo and Seedoo of Bagwadee Pa Kaseata The Thakoor has become an incarnation at the place of Seedoo and Kanoo and his brothers. Whatever the Thakoor declares comes down from the firmament, and the discourse of Kanoo Manjee and Sidoo Manjee is the Thakors. He says "Let all the poor people fight". Kanoo Manjee and Sidoo Manjee are not to fight. The Thakoor himself will fight. You all come near the Thakoor and fight. He who will be sent to the Thakoor by Ganga Mage will rain down fire. Whoever will agree to stay will the favour of the Thakoor you cross the Ganges. So you will obtain incarnation. The Thakoor has ordained the rent at 1 Anna per bullock and at 2 Annas per buffalo. The compassion of religion and investigation of religion will commence. He that will act treacherously (be dhurm) will not be able to stay on earth. The Mahajuns have committed heinous crimes (pap) and all have acted unjustly. The Amlahs now made the whole rules and regulation bad and this is sin to the Sahibs. The Sahib who takes the duties of a Magistrate, he Naib Sazawal is the person who holds investigation, and extorts sixty or eighty rupees by force. This is a sin of the Sahibs. And it is from this that the Thakoor has commanded me that the land does not belong to the Sahibs. If you do not obey these commands, you must reply to this by a Perwannah. He that will agree to this must send his Perwannah dated the 10th Sawreo 1262.

APPENDIX B.

I have been unable to find a copy of the instructions that were sent to Mr. Pontet on his being appointed the Superintendent of the Damin-i-Koh. However Mr. Pontet has enumerated what he saw his duties to have been in a letter to Mr. H.J. Lames, the Acting Collector at Bhagalpur. This was sent as part of the enquiry that took place after the uprising of 1855. It is quoted in the Bihar District Gazetteer, Santal Parganas, edited by P.C.Roy Chaudhury, and published in Patna in 1965.

I trust it will not be considered presumptuous on my part in bringing further to notice what I have been led to considerr my duties to consist of as recommended by Mr. Dunbar to the Sudoer Board of the Revenue on 25th January 1837, viz.-

1. To obtain possession peacebly of that extensive wild tract the Damin-i-Kohlands in this district as under the orders of Government date (17th July 1823, para 31-32) which having been held by the mountaineers for so many years past considered it hereditary property.
2. To introduce among the Hill people a taste for agriculture.
3. To parcel off jageers to 'Sardars', 'Naibs' and 'manjhis' agreeable to the orders of Government date 6th December, 1827.
4. Tp protect the industrious race of settlers called the Santals who have been driven by oppressive

zamindars from their native countries, Birbhum and Singhbhum.

5. To resume all lands within the Damin clanderstinely retained by the zamindars.

6. to encourage more settlers for clearing away the immense forests and thereby to make the counrty healthy to enable any class of people to reort to the resources of the Damin.

7. To bring to the notice of Government all productions that this unexplored tract is supposed to abound in.

8. Finally by accomplishing the preceeding, a handsome revenue will be yielded to Government, the race civilised and the tract made healthy.

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