P R E F A C E

The present study is the outcome of a sustained and intensive investigation through empirical field-work done by the author in two visits — from April 1972 to December 1972 and further from April 1974 to July 1974. The study focuses itself on ten villages located in Sagar District of Northern Madhya Pradesh. The two extended visits apart, the author made several occasional visits and long and short stay which considerably helped him in establishing rapport with the key informants as well as in gathering relevant material through intimate, friendly and informal discussions. The area of exploration in the present study is the inter-village caste councils — i.e., the Kudariya — with a view to analyzing the structural and functional aspects of these traditional caste councils, on the one hand, and with a view to finding out whether or not these traditional councils in the contemporary context still continue to have their relevance, wield their customary authority, and function as decisive regulatory mechanisms.

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