PREFACE

The field investigation on which this thesis is based was undertaken between January 1969 and January 1971 as a research scholar in the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University. The study was undertaken on a scholarship from the Government of Assam. The period after field investigation has been spent in analysing the data and in writing the thesis.

Some changes have taken place in the overall social situations in the villages and in the city covered by this study since the completion of field work in 1971. However, I feel that these changes do not alter the significance of the findings presented in this thesis.

In the course of my work, I have had the opportunity to discuss my material with a large number of persons. Their suggestions have helped me a great deal.

The study was undertaken under the supervision of Dr Annada Charan Bhagabati, Reader, Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University. I owe him a great debt for encouraging me to take up this study. His
help and guidance at every stage in the course of this work have been invaluable. Without Dr Bhagabati's active suggestion, supervision, sympathetic criticism and constant encouragement, it would not have been possible for me to undertake and complete this work.

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I express my thanks to the Government of Assam for awarding me the scholarship and making it possible for me to undertake this work. My thanks are also due to the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, for offering me a grant to undertake library work for this study.
Above all, I am deeply indebted to the people in the places of my field work who accepted me amongst them and helped me in all possible ways. Without their cooperation and keen interest in my work it would not have been possible for me to complete this study. Instead of mentioning their names individually, I take this opportunity to express my respect and gratitude to all of them.

I ought to mention here that in the following pages I have reported observations and facts the way these have come to my notice. It is important to add that I am alone responsible for all the views expressed and for the shortcomings the thesis might possess.

Jorhat
March, 1974

Abu Nishar Md. Irshad Ali