CHAPTER I

LAND AND PEOPLE

Nomenclature:

Bankura is a district that lies in the south-western part of West Bengal. The district of Bankura looks like an isosceles triangle with its apex lying in the north-west. The name of the district is derived from its chief town Bankura. But the name, however, has been differently spelt at different times in the past. In the Map of J. Rennell the name appears as 'Bāncoorāh' and apparently this was a small town. It has also been referred to as 'Bākoondā' or 'Bānkoorāh' in various official records. Col. J. E. Gastrell, the Revenue Surveyor, referred to the town as 'Bāncoorāh'.

L.S.S.O'Malley has recorded in his Gazetteer that the town may have been named after its reputed founder, a chieftain called Bānku Rāi. According to a current local tradition, the descendants of the chieftain are the present-day Rāis of Badra, a small village in Bankura. According to some, the town is so called after the name of legendary Bīr Bankura, one of the twenty-two sons of Bīr Hāmbir, the Rāja of Vishnupur. The Rājā divided his kingdom into many tarafs or circles and distributed them among his sons. The taraf or circle called Jaybelia fell to the share of Bīr Bankura. He established himself at the present site of the town, which was then a thickly forested region. The view that the town began developing during the subsequent period is not supported from the archaeological and historical
records. O'Malley suggests that the name might also be a corruption of Bānk-unda, meaning "five tanks" in local dialect. The name Bānkunda is found referred to in a Sanskrit verse by Edu Misra, a genealogist of the 15th century. He records that the great poet and ascetic, Sriharsa of Bharadwāja-gotra lived at Kanka in Bānkunda to the west of Burdwan. It is believed that Śrīharsa was the son of Medhātithi or Tithimedhā.

Late Jogesh Chandra Roy Vidyanidhi\(^4\) suggested that Bankura might have been so named because of the curved (bānka, in Bengali) figures of the lingam in the famous Śiva temple of Ekteswar, lying at a distance of two miles from the present city centre. He also suggests the possibility of bām (i.e. left side, in Bengali) and Kundā (i.e. a spring or a reservoir in Bengali) having combined to form Bāmkunda and from it was derived Bankura.

Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay\(^5\) suggests that the name Bankura may have originated from the Sanskrit root Vakra (meaning 'crooked' or 'serpentine') which, in course of time and also through its subsequent adoption in Prakrit, became vakka and then Vānkā. According to him, the later 'Indo-Aryan' adoption of the word transformed it into the present name. This term was apparently used as an epithet meaning 'the nice handsome one who is to be treated with respect'.

Scholars have hardly noticed that one of the most widely worshipped deities of the region is called Bānkura Rāi (i.e. 'King Bankura'). The region might have been named after the deity. This is supported by mediaeval Bengali
literary texts including \textit{Maṅgal Kāvyas} referring to the deity and some extant temples of the divinity.

**Bankura District : Changes in its boundaries**

The modern district of Bankura once formed parts of Burdwan and Midnapore (1760) and also Birbhum (1765) districts. In the early period, the territory, now covered by the Bankura district, was incorporated partly in \textit{Dandabhukti} and partly in \textit{Vardhamānabhukti}. \textit{Dandabhukti} was bounded by Kalinga on the west, the river Dwarakeswar on the east and the river Suvarnarekha on the south. \textit{Vardhamānabhukti} embraced the valley of the river Damodar, included the whole of \textit{Dakśinā-Rādhā} and parts of \textit{Uttara-Rādhā}, sometimes stretched as far south as the Suvarnarekha to include \textit{Dandabhukti-māṇḍala} itself and extended in the east up to the river Hooghly. It has been suggested by Jogesh Chandra Roy Vidyanidhi that Kalinga was at one time located at Simlapal in Bankura district. In the \textit{Dharmamaṅgala} of Mukundarāma, Lāusena is said to have married a princess of Kaliṅga-king who might have had his seat of authority at Simlapal.

In the mediaeval period, the whole tract of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa comprised a number of \textit{bhūms}, referred to in the \textit{Brahmānda} section of the \textit{Bhavishat Purāṇa} (15th-16th century) and also in Abul Fazal's \textit{Āin-i-Ākbarī}. Of these, Mallabhum (including Onda, Bishnupur, Kotalpur and Indas Police Stations), Sāmanta-bhūm (Chhatna P.S.), Śikharabhūm (Gangajalghati P.S.) and Tuṅgabhūm (south of Raipur P.S.) are located in the district of Bankura. The suffix \textit{bhūm} or \textit{bhūmi} meaning 'land' or 'territory' was added to a prefix which often explains the name of the ruling dynasty.
The administrative history records several changes in the boundaries of Bankura. The battle of Plassey in 1757 heralded the first set of changes in the jurisdiction of different districts of Bengal. In 1765, the Diwani was granted to the East India Company, and along with this the territory of the Vishnupur Raj came under the control of the company. In J. Grant's analysis of the Finances of Bengal, Vishnupur is included as a unit in the list of districts ceded to the company. According to the proceedings of the Select Committee, dated 16th August 1769, a supervisor was appointed for Birbhum.

In the correspondences of the Committee of Revenue which began to sit on the 13th October 1772 and held its last meeting on the 23rd November 1773, mention of the Birbhum collectorship occurs along with Panchet and Vishnupur. Separate collectors were appointed for Pachet and Vishnupur by an order dated 19th January 1773. Within a duration of 10 years these separate collectors were recalled. In the order dated 28th May 1783, the farmers were allowed to pay their revenue at Calcutta.

Then again, in a meeting held on the 23rd November 1783, when the council in accordance with the instructions of the court of Directors recalled the European Collectors and appointed a Diwan or Aumil from the native officers. During this stage, Vishnupur formed one of the districts of the second grand division of Burdwan. On the 18th April 1786, the Committee of Revenue in its meeting determined that Birbhum, Vishnupur and some other districts should be separated under separate collectorship. In 1786, the Committee of Revenue was replaced by the Board of Revenue. Sir John Shore, President of the Board of Revenue, suggested a re-unification of Birbhum with Vishnupur in order to reduce establishment expenses. It appears that for a short period before 1785, Vishnupur and Birbhum were included in the district of Murshidabad. In 1786 Vishnupur was
separated from Birbhum. One Mr. Foley was placed in charge of Birbhum and Mr. Pye in charge of Vishnupur. On the 29th March 1787, Vishnupur (the eastern portion of the present district of Bankura) was amalgamated with Birbhum again under Sir John Shore's plan.

Bankura continued to form one district with Birbhum until 1793, when it was transferred to the Burdwan collectorate. During the last two years of the 18th century, the south-west of the district which is now under the Raipur thana was in a very disturbed state in consequence of what is known as the Quadr-rebellion. At this time Bankura appears to have been known as part of the Jungle Mahal. This is a vague term applied in the 18th century to the Company's possessions and some dependent chiefdoms lying between the present day Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapur and the adjoining hilly country of Chotanagpur. The judge and magistrate of the Jungle Mahal Zilla had their headquarters at Bankura. The revenue administration of the district was supervised by the Burdwan Collector stationed at Bankura. Bankura continued to form a part of the Jungle Mahal till 1833, when it was separated on account of disturbances which took place in the western side of the district in 1832. A caste group known by the name Bhumij living in the western periphery of the district had become outlawed and created terror in the entire region. They were nick-named as Chus or robbers in the Jungle Mahals. In 1832 they revolted against the British causing a great deal of administrative problems. Consequently in 1833, Regulation XII was promulgated and the district of Jungle Mahal was broken up. The effect of this measure was that practically the whole of the west of the present district of Bankura was included within Manbhum. At the time of the Sepoy Mutiny (1857) Bankura included only the
Map of Bankura showing modern administrative divisions.
eastern half of the present district. The town of Bankura was on its extreme western boundary. The western half, including nearly all the territory to the west of the Bankura-Raniganj road and the Bankura-Khatra road, belonged to Manbhum. These territorial changes had taken place several more times until 1872, when the parganas of Sonamukhi, Indas, Kotulpur, Shergarh and Senpahari were transferred to Burdwan, while Manbhum was added to Bankura. Finally in 1879, Khatra, Raipur, Simlapal police stations were transferred from the Manbhum district and the police stations of Sonamukhi, Kotulpur and Indas were re-transferred from the Burdwan district to Bankura. Thus, the present dimension of the district of Bankura was attained in 1879, when the subdivision of Vishnupur was created. Today there are twenty-two Development Blocks covering the nineteen police stations of the district.

The present area of the district is 2,647 sq miles (6,855.8 sq km), of which 2,621.2 sq miles (6,789.1 sq km) are rural and 25.8 sq miles (66.7 sq km) urban. For administrative purpose the district is divided into two subdivisions11, viz. Sadar and Vishnupur (Bishnupur). The Sadar Subdivision (west and a major part of south and north) is further divided into thirteen Police Stations (thanas). These are Bankura, Onda, Chhatna, Gangajalghati, Borjora, Mejhia, Saltora, Khatra, Indpur, Ranibandh, Raipur, Simlapal and Taldangra. The Vishnupur Subdivision (east and south eastern part) includes the Police Stations of Vishnupur, Joypur, Kotulpur, Sonamukhi, Patrasair and Indas.

The district has five towns, three administered by the Board of Municipal Commissioners and the other two are in the non-municipal urban areas. The Sadar Subdivision has only one municipal town, Bankura and another non-municipal town Khatra.
The Vishnupur Subdivision has two municipal towns, Vishnupur and Sonamukhi and one non-municipal town, Patrasair. Khatra was recorded as a non-municipal town in 1951 Census. Besides these officially recognized towns, some fairly large semi-urban settlements developed in recent years around traditional shopping centers, such as Raipur, Barjora, Gangajalghati, Majhia, Beliatore, Chhatna, Saltora, Indpur, Kotulpur and Ranibandh.

**Physical features:**

The district of Bankura lies between 22°38' North to 23°38' North and 87°46' East to 86°36' East in the Northern hemisphere. The capital town of the district in Bankura which lies on the north bank of the river Dwarakeswar in 23°14' North and 87°4' East. The district is bounded in the north and north-east by the district of Burdwan from which it is separated by the natural barrier of the Damodar river. The entire bed of the Damodar lying between the two districts, falls within the jurisdiction of Bankura for the purposes of administration. The south-east of the district is bounded by the districts of Midnapore and Purulia.

The district lies along the intermediate country between the Chotanagpur Plateau and the alluvial plains of the lower Gangetic delta. The whole district, as such, can be clearly divided into three distinct natural divisions according to their topographic features. The hilly area to the west, the undulating tract in the middle and the fertile plain in the east are three major zones. The ground level gradually rises as one moves from east to the west. The green paddy fields in the east give rise to rough undulating rocky area in the middle. To the west the elevation becomes still higher as the
Chotanagpur plateau is reached. This portion of the district consists of broken rocky country with numerous groups of hills and isolated peaks. The vegetation cover is mainly deciduous forest trees. Both the Susunia and Biharinath hills are situated in this zone.

The terrains in the western border of the district and the rolling upland and the deltaic tract in the east have been well described by W. W. Hunter: "In Bankura the alluvial flats end in undulations, isolated peaks and short low ranges which form the advanced guard of the hill system of the Central Indian Plateau. A poor ferruginous soil and hard beds of laterite here take the place of the fertile deltaic detritus, with expanses of scrub-jungles and saal wood for the closely-tilled village lands of the east."12

The eastern part of the district is extensively covered by paddy fields fringed by quiet and restful hamlets encircled by clumps of bamboos, mango groves, plantain gardens and palm trees. Further west, land is less cultivated. A majority of the landscape is either bare or covered by jungles. Constant deforestation to meet the need of the neighbouring urban areas has rendered most of this region into a naked hilly land. During the summer the dry ochre soil and scarcity of trees along the vast expanses give a dreary appearance to this part of the country. After the rains, tender foliage of the scrub-jungles cover most of the rocky plains. Western Bankura holds another scenic grandeur in having a large number of flowering plants. Among these Mahua and Palash which when in full bloom with the advent of spring spreads out an intoxicating odour all over the air. These present a magnificent scenery setting the countryside aflame with a riot of colours. The description of the country by O'Malley is rather succinct although quite dated:
"The scenery in this part of the district has a distinctly park-like aspect. A traveller suddenly brought here might almost imagine himself transported to some English park, and in other places is agreeably surprised to find a long vista of trees stretching along a red lateritic road, which now passes into the hollow and again mounts the slopes. In the western and southern portions of the district the country is more broken and the scenery more picturesque as the upland ridges are succeeded by low forest clad hills and wooded glens in the south, while further to the north the Susunia and Biharinath hills stand out as commanding features in the landscape."\(^{13}\)

**Hills:**

The strata occurring within the area are disturbed in many places and flexuring and faulting exists to so large an extent that the stratigraphical variation of the beds become greatly confused and complicated. The Kanro or Karo, the Susunia and the Biharinath hills occur in the same area of disturbance. South of Mejhia hills is a fault which is almost as old as the period when the trough faultings in the Peninsular India were taking place. These fault lines have mainly given rise to isolated hills in the district\(^{14}\).

The topography of these formations are found spread as hills, rivers and lakes or marshes. The hills of the district comprise of the outliers of the Chotanagpur Plateau and only two of them are of any great height. These are the Susunia and the Biharinath hills. Susunia is situated about 20 km north-west of Bankura city centre and lies on the northern border of Chhatna police station. It runs east-west for a length of about 3 km and rises up to a height of 439.5 metres above sea level. It is still covered with low forest and at the foot of the hill on the southern flank an annual fair is held regularly. A small spring flows through the rocks and
many visitors are attracted by it. This hill occupies a very significant place in the elucidation of pre-history and early history of the district.

The Biharinath hill lies in the north-west corner of the district, 2 km north-west of Saltora. It rises to a height of 447.8 metres. Besides this, there are several other low hills in this Saltora outpost. But only other hills in this part of the district that call for separate mention are the Mejhia hills located on the south bank of the Damodar river, opposite the town of Raniganj in Burdwan district. Its height is very insignificant, being only about 61 metres above the level of the surrounding area. In shape it is conical in structure with a rather spread out base and a sharp peak. This is typical of cryoturbation, and it is quite likely that the hill was much larger some hundreds of years ago. The Kanro or Karo hill lies in Gangajalghati police station and is about 122 metres high. It has an elongated contour lying in east-west direction. The west flank is steeply scarped but the north and south sides are precipitous. On the east, the hill rises from the ground with a very low incline.

Guniada is another low elevation hill situated in Khatra police station. It is nearly 100 m in height and forms an important landmark to the south of the river Silavati. It is isolated, bare and reddish in colour. The slopes are all around covered with rock delsis. Chunks of whitish quartz are prominently visible among them.

To the south in the police station area of Khatra, Ranibandh and Raipur are a number of low but picturesque hills. About 4 km to the east of Khatra town there is a hill locally known as Masker Pahar. It is nearly 122 metres in height. There is a legend about this hill. It is locally believed that a sage used to stay in a cave situated in the hill. The
M II Map of Bankura showing its river system.
chieftain used to present him a gold coin every time he visited the cave. The sage used to tuck the coin in his locks of matted hair coiled up over the head. Once the Raja felt if he could cut off the head of the sage he might recover a great deal of gold from his hair. Accordingly, he had the sage's head chopped off, but could not find any coin in his tuft of hair. Instead he was cursed by the dying sage. It is believed that this curse has long clung on his descendants in the form of hereditary insanity. Today nobody even tries to climb on the hill.

There is a cluster of hills around the Kansavati dam or water reservoir. These hills are locally known as Paresnath, Giraikata, etc. Another cluster of beautiful hills of the district is located on the Ranibandh and Jhilimili road towards the extreme south-west corner of the district. There are some more small low hills along the river Bhairab-banki. One of these is called Garpahar and others are mostly unnamed or locally named as Pahar.

**Rivers:**

The drainage pattern of the district is in the form of parallelly running from north-west to south-east flowing rivers. The river Damodar, flowing along the northern extreme of the district, forms its natural boundary and separates it from the district of Burdwan. Rest of the rivers run parallelly from north-west to south-east. Most of these have their origins in the western highlands and are essentially only hill-streams with permanent beds. During rains, water gush down in flood but usually subside as rapidly as they rise. In summer, most of these rivers are dry sandy beds. In the western part of the district, the banks are well defined and are mainly composed of Kankar and lateritic rocks. Towards the east, however, as they
approach the flat alluvial plains the banks are mainly composed of sand and clay. This accounts, to some extent, for periodical changes in the course of these rivers in eastern Bankura.

Apart from the geographical importance, these river-courses played a very significant role in acting as the inroads of culture in this region. Originally an entirely forested and hilly land, Bankura shows human colonization clustering along these rivers from old stone age to the present.

The Damodar:

The Damodar is the most important river of the district. It rises in the hilly country of Chotanagpur, about 96 km west of Ramgarh. It enters Bankura near the village Shirpuranama under the Police Station of Saltora and flows through a distance of 89.6 km before leaving from Samsar, a village under Indas Police Station. The average width of the river is 1,623 yards and the average fall is about 3.40 feet per mile. The rains falling in the catchment area have often given rise to repeated flash floods, causing enormous damage to the people in the past. The Santal tribes, who inhabit the banks of the river call these flash-floods hurpa ban. The existence of a special word in tribal language certainly indicates that these floods must have been quite common. The recent construction of dams on the river has considerably tamed its past erratic and dangerous courses. The antiquity of the river is further demonstrated by its reference occurring in mediaeval Bengali literature. The Kavikankan Chandi (whose works are dated to Circa 1550 A.D.) mentions the river and its course in quite details in some of his works.
The Dwarakeswar:

Next to the Damodar, the river Dwarakeswar is the most important river of the district. It originates near the Tilabani hills in the northern part of the Hura police station of the district Purulia and enters Bankura at Dunda under the Chhatna police station. It leaves the district at Naga Tentul under the Indas police station. It flows for about 107.2 km through the district and has a width of as much as 400 yards at some places. The incline of the river is less than that of the Damodar and one can hardly see any current in the water for most of the period from December to June. During rains, however, it can often take a furious appearance causing extensive erosion of its banks. Such erosions can often cause spilling of the banks during sudden swelling of the river and hence cause considerable damage to human settlement. Like the Damodar, the Dwarakeswar is also referred to in the mediaeval Bengali literature. 17 The word 'Dwarakeswar' refers to an epithet of Lord Krishna, but no specific legend about the river could be traced on etymological ground.

The Silavati:

The river Silavati, popularly known as the Silai, forms the largest tributary of the Dwarakeswar. It originates at Puncha police station in the district Purulia and enters Bankura at Salanpur under the Indpur police station. It leaves Bankura at Dhuliapur under the Simlapal police station after covering a distance of nearly 56 km. It finally joins the Dwarakeswar in the district of Midnapur. It is liable to heavy floods, although at most time even during the rains it can be easily crossed over. The term 'Silavati' may have been derived from the fact that a considerable length of the river flows over
naked rock, which in Sanskrit is called *Sila*. It has a small tributary named as the Jay Panda. There is a legend about these two rivers. It is believed that in ancient times a saint lived with his wife in western Bankura. The wife after giving birth to a female child died. The child was named Silavati and in course of time grew up to a charming woman, excelling in scholastic attainments. A young boy named Jaypanda came to the old saint to study the scriptures. The young boy was attracted by Silavati and proposed marriage to her. Silavati, however, felt duty bound with her father and hence declined the proposal. Unable to bear the pangs of separation, one day Jaypanda came to embrace Silavati, and to his surprise, she turned into a river. Jaypanda also decided to convert himself into another river. The union of these two rivers has been immortalized through this legend by the people of Bankura.

The Gandheswari:

This is another important tributary of the Dwarakeswar. It rises in north-western part of Susunia hills under Chhatna police station and flows in south-easterly direction to join the Dwarakeswar, near the town of Bankura. The total length of its flow is only 32 km. Like the Dwarakeswar, the Gandheswari is also subject to flash floods during rains.

The Kansavati:

It is also popularly called the Kansai river. It originates in the hills of Jhalda in Purulia and enters Bankura at Vedua in Khatra police station. It leaves the district at the south-east corner of Raipur and crosses over to the district of Midnapur. It flows for a total length of 56 km within the district. It is the only other river navigable during the rains besides the river Damodar. It is also liable to cause seasonal floods.
The Sali:

It is one of the principal tributaries of the river Damodar. It rises at a distance of a few miles from Amarkanan under the Gangajalghati police station and joins Damodar at Samsar under the Indas police station after flowing for a distance of about 73.6 km.

The Bodai:

It is relatively smaller tributary of the Damodar. It issues near the village of Rampur in Sonamukhi police station and flows through a distance of only 16 km before uniting with the Damodar at Panchpara. At many places the river now flows with narrow and low course. The side bed, however, leaves no doubt that once this must have been a big and forceful river in the region.

The Arkusa/Arkasa:

It is a small tributary of the Dwarakeswar. After rising in the north-west of the Indpur police station the river joins the Dwarakeswar near the village of Hanulia in Chhatna police station. It is relatively a small river with very low water flow.

The Berai:

It is another small tributary of Dwarakeswar originating from Onda. After flowing for about 30 km across Onda and Vishnupur it joins the Dwarakeswar near Chakdaha, 3 km north of Vishnupur.
The Amadgar:

This is yet another tributary of the Dwarakeswar. It originates at Joypur and after flowing through Bankura for 28 km enters the Hoogly district. It emerges out of Bankura at Haldi under the Kotulpur police station.

The Ujani:

It is the smallest tributary of the Dwarakeswar. It has a small and narrow course. It rises in the area of the Indpur police station and after traversing about 5 km joins the main flow of Dwarakeswar at Krishnanagar near the town of Bankura.

The Jaypanda:

It is one of the principal tributaries of the river Silavati and rises at a place called Chaitandihi under the Indpur police station. It forms the boundary between the Indpur and the Onda police station for a distance before meeting Silavati at Bhutsahar under the Simlapal police station. The total course of the river is nearly 43 km.

Besides the Jaypanda, the Silavati has two other small tributaries called Purandar and Champakhal. Neither of these exceed a course of more than 10 km. Both these finally meet the Silavati in the adjoining district of Midnapur.

The Kumari:

It is one of the principal tributaries of the Kansavati and originates in the Bagmundi hills of the Purulia district. It enters Bankura near Baddi and then flows for only 8 km in the district before meeting Kansavati at Ambikanagar under the Ranibandh police station.
III Geological map of West Bengal showing the present study area.
The Bhairab-banki:

It is yet another tributary of the river Kansavati. It originates from the south-eastern part of the Ranibandh police station. It flows through Bankura for a length of 32 km before entering Midnapur district. Like most of the rivers which have an origin in the hills of Chotanagpur plateau, the Bhairab-banki is also prone to flash floods during heavy rains. The upper reaches of the river contain red alluvium mined with lateritic rocks while the lower reaches maintain mainly recent alluvial.

The Tarapheni/Tarafani:

It is a small tributary of Kansavati which rises in the Belpahari hilly area of Midnapur district. It flows through the southernmost part of Bankura for only 8 km and then again enters Midnapur where it joins Kansavati.

Geological Pattern

As to the geological background of the district, it may be stated that the entire region between east Bankura and Tripura hills was an open bay which got filled during the Cenozoic period. Most of the western zone, however, being an extension of the Chotanagpur plateau, is of Lower Gondwana formation. Chronologically, the geological history of the district may, therefore, be arranged as follows:

- **Recent**
  - Alluvium
- **Pleistocene**
  - Laterite
- **Oligocene-Miocene**
  - Sandstone, gravel and conglomerate
- **Permian (Lower Gondwana)**
  - Sandstone and shale
- **Archaean**
  - Dolerite etc.
A considerable part of the land-area in the district is covered by lateritic formations and the alluvium derived from these outcrops. The latter material occurs in all gradations of gravelly clay, Kankar and simple sandy clay containing only a few ferrugionous nodules. The western part of the district, i.e., Chotanagpur region maintains the Archaean formation of gneissose and schistose. The southern region maintains areas of sedimentary rocks of the Gondwana system. A number of doleritic dykes of Mesozoic age are found cutting across the Gondwana rocks and the Archaean formations in the north-western parts of the district. There are also some important seams of coal known in the Gondwana region of south Bankura. These are found between Mejhia and Biharinath hills.

The Archaean rocks are dominantly gneisses which are cut across at places by granites, pegmatites, vein-quartz, hornblende gneisses and felspathic quartzite.

A wide plain of recent alluvium covers the entire eastern and northern parts, specially around Vishnupur sub-division. It is not surprising, therefore, that the terracotta art could develop in this part of the district in a big way.

Quaternary Geology of Bankura has only been sporadically studied. One of the recent studies which concentrates on the alluvial deposits in the Dwarakeswar and Damodar rivers is highly rewarding. It has been found that most of the northern rivers seem to behave uniformly in their past climatic period. All of them maintain three terraces. The highest of them has been called the Bamundiha terrace which occurs up to 8-15 metres above the present stream level. The middle terrace, called Bansol terrace, stands 7-12 metres above the present streams. Finally, the lowest terrace, called the Gusbana terrace, occurs at a height of 1-3 metres. A younger deposition on the highest
Map of Bankura showing the distribution of its soil composition.
terrace yielded some significant fossils also. These include *Palaeoloxodon namadicus*, *Panthera of leo*, *Cracuta* sp., *Hystrix* sp., *Bos* sp., *Bubalus palaeindicus*, *Boselephas* sp., *Cervus duvauceli*, *Antilope of cervicapra*, *Sus* sp., *Gavialis* sp., and *Trionyx* sp. Both *Palaeoloxodon namadicus* and *Bubalus palaeindicus* are now extinct and at least the former is decidedly known to be of late Pleistocene date. It was, therefore, surmised that most of the drainage systems of present day Bankura were absent for the main period of Pleistocene duration. At this time, perhaps, the huge lateritic hardpans were in their process of formation. Alluvial deposits can at the most be of 40,000 to 50,000 years old.

The *Bansol* and the *Gusbana* terraces are both laid down during Holocene. Most probably, *Bansol* was laid during 6000 to 4000 B.C. while *Gusbana* could be of as young a date as 1000 B.C. We have no substantiating dates available and all these figures are purely speculative. These are based on climatic indications reconstructed from the geomorphological features of the terrace fills (IL.1).

**Soil:**

The soils of Bankura have been studied by several investigators appointed by Government of West Bengal. The studies have grouped the soil into three broad categories:

1. Laterites
2. Red earth
3. Alluvial soil

The laterites are found in the undulating well-drained tract covering the western and a good portion of southern part of the district. At places, the structures of the lateritic rocks are exposed. Acidic in character and deficient in
organic matter, these are poorly aggregated and possess low water holding capacity. Usually scrubby bushes of Saal trees grow on this soil.

The red soil is the transported lateritic wash occurring along the eastern and southern periphery of the primary lateritic zone. Morum, and feldspar and occasionally lime concretions are also observed in this kind of soil deposition. This soil is shallow and coarse in texture and is acidic in character. The soil is very poor in organic matters and plant nutrients. They have been brought under cultivation for growing sturdy species of plants.

The third category of soil, i.e., alluvial soil forms the most important type of soil for the district. The soil in the Indas and Kotalpur police stations lying north of the Sonamukhi police station and some parts of the Barjora police station has the maximum cover of this soil. It is composed of recent alluvium and is loamy and clayey.

Although in a general way, the soil of the high lands (danga) is poor for agricultural usage, the farmers of Bankura have been successful in growing some varieties of rice as well as maize and rabi crops in this area. As contrast to this, the soil of the low land is fertile and yields bumper crop provided rains do not fail them. The alluvial soil may be divided into two varieties: the Sali land, which is restricted to rice cultivation and the Suna land in which various other crops are grown. These multiple crops raised by the Bankura farmers include sugarcane, oil-seeds, tobacco, betel and other vegetables. As a rule, the Sali lands are allowed to lie fallow every third or fourth year but the Suna land is never permitted to remain uncultivated.
Minerals

Studies on mineral sources of the region are by no means as scanty as geo-chronology. The Geological Survey of India carried out systematic mineral exploration in the district during last one hundred years or more. These studies indicate that small areas of rock outcrops rich in economic minerals are found studded at many places in Bankura. These are of various ages and types. Coal is the most important mineral, mainly confined to the areas of Gondwana formation lying between the police stations of Saltora and Gangajalghati. Impure limestones, mostly dolemitic, are known to occur at Guniada, Harirampur (both under the Khatra police station) and Ramlalpur (in the Mejhia police station). Mica bearing pegmatites have also been recorded from Khatra, Taldangra, Raipur, Simlapal, Ranibandh and Onda police stations.

Crystals of garnet have been brought by villagers from Bariathara (Ranibandh police station). Kyanite has been found at Saritari under the same police station. A small pocket of Kyanite, although it still exists in this region, is no longer quarried because of being non-economical.

Lumps of magnetite lie scattered over the surface in pathardihi mauza under Saltora police station. Similar deposits are also known to occur near Tiluri under the same police station.

Iron ore in the district was first recorded by V. Ball from Pora phahar lying south of Khatra. Economic exploitation of these deposits was found to be unrealistic by subsequent studies. However, that these ores and their technological potentialities were known to the local people is demonstrated by the fact that some early historic sites with smelting
evidences were found by the present investigator during his explorations. A significant amount of iron smelting debries was also discovered along a nullah near the town of Bankura. The Agarias might have been the people who extracted this metal in these areas.

The most important mineral deposit of the district is Wolfram which is used to manufacture tungsten carbide and also forms an ingredient of a special type of steel. The main deposit occurs at Chhendapathar under the Ranibandh police station. The mineral wealth of the area has been extensively studied by P.S. Chakrabarty. It appears from these studies that Wolfram occurs sparingly distributed in massive quartz veins found in the Kuilapal granite bed. Ancient miners left this mineral as most probably they did not have any use of it.

Copper occurs mainly with the great boundary fault running near the southern margin of the Chotanagpur granitic gneiss. Chakrabarty records the geology of some of these depositional areas. The main area recorded by him are Mukutmanipur (22°58':86°47'), Nilgiri (22°57':86°43'), Narayanpur (22°48':86°44') and Sarengarh (22°57':86°44'). These sites are spread over the area of tri-junction of Bankura, Midnapur and Purulia districts. Copper mineralization is found in cherty bands, running parallel to regional foliation of schists. Many of the ores contain chalcopyrite and malachite in high concentration. As elsewhere, many of these areas have been worked by ancient miners. Long tunnels, apparently dug by the miners, are not uncommon. It seems that mainly carbonates and oxides of copper were preferred by these early miners.

The Indian Bureau of Mines investigated the occurrence of galena in Aunda under the Khatra police station. From
Chaitandiha and Benkakocha in the Ranibandh police station the discovery of galena has been reported.

Flora

Apart from the eastern and north-eastern parts, the rest of the district is higher and rocky. These are either naked or covered with such scrub-jungle of zizyphus and other thorny shrubs. The scrub-jungle gradually merges into forest as one proceeds towards north and east. Here Sal (Shorea robusta) grows in large number. The low hills in addition to Sal are also covered by species of Milliusa, Schbichera, Diospyros and similar varieties.

Mitra\textsuperscript{25} presented an extensive account of the forests of Bankura. It was reported that more than 541 square miles of land in the district is under forest cover. This works out to be nearly 20.4 per cent of the total area of the district. The north-eastern and south-western parts have the least forest cover. These include the Saltora, Mejhia and Kotalpur police stations. The shape or size of the forest belt vary widely from one place to another. Since most of the forest in the lower regions has now been brought under cultivation in a relative sense, the upland hill slopes appear more forest clad, although they lack a compactness and have an irregular external boundary. Several long belts of such forests are still found at Sonamukhi, Joypur, Vishnupur, Motgoda and Ranibandh-Jhilmili area. In typological category these forests can be termed as "Northern Tropical Dry Deciduous - Day Sal". Besides Sal, these include Asan (Terminalia tomentosa), Bahera (Terminalia belerica), Palash (Butea frondosa), Mahua (Bassica latifolia), Kend (Diospyros melanoxylon), etc.
Indiscriminate destruction of the forest started only after the Kharagpur-Gomo branch line of the South-eastern Railway (then called BNR) was started in 1901 to connect the district with the main routes of communication in the area. The rich landlords started felling the trees for timber and then extending their areas of cultivation. As a result of this, soon large tracts of the hilly slopes were rendered bare of any vegetation cover. Surface erosion and gully formation started at an alarming rate. The phenomenon became so alarming that in 1953 the Government enacted the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act and made private holding of forest land illegal. Since then the situation of continual depletion of forest has stopped, but a total replenishment of the destroyed floral wealth is still very far off.

The eastern and north-eastern part of the district, which forms the rice plains, contains the usual marsh weeds of the Gangetic or deltaic plains. On ponds, ditches and stagnated streams float aquatic plants accompanied by many submerged water weeds. Around villages and the neighbourhood of towns there are the usual shrubberies of semi-spontaneous and often un-economic shrubs of small trees. The common shrubbery species amongst these are Glycosmis, Poliathia siberosa, Clerodendron, Infortunatum, Solanum, Torvum and various other species of the same genus, besides Treme strebulus and Ficus hispida. Some species of the figs like pipal and banyan, red cotton tree (Bombax malabarrium), mango (Mangifera indica) and Jiyal (Odina wodier) are also quite commonly found around human settlement areas.

Fauna

Bankura is not comparable with the adjoining areas of Chotanagpur in its faunal stock. This is primarily because
most of its forests have been entirely exterminated in the past and whatever exists today as forest is also considerably thinned. Most of the big games have consequently been driven westwards. Another important reason of the wild life depletion is the hunting habits of the Santal tribe who inhabit these regions.

Leopards, wild bears and hyaenas are known to be found in the Saltora, Ranibandh, Raipur, Sonamukhi and Barjora police stations. Unconfirmed reports refer to tigers having been occasionally sighted in the jungles of Saltora in the north-west and Raipur in the south-west. Formerly, wild elephants were quite numerous but presently these have been disappearing. Besides, small carnivores as jackals, fox, civet cats and wild cats are quite commonly known. Rarely one may observe some packs of deer as well but these are also disappearing rapidly.

Pea-fowls are still found in some parts of the district. The other birds include pigeons, quail, grey and black partridge, wild goose, bulbul, sparrow, honey sucker etc.

Snakes are not numerous but display a large variety. Fish found in the district offer no special features.

Climate:

The characteristic climate of the district is hot and dry, although the seasonal cycle prevails over here. The temperature rises sharply up to 47°C or 48°C (116.6°F - 118.4°F) during the period from March to May. The wind during this time blows from the west and brings no blasts of air. The monsoon normally arrives around June, when the western wind calms down. This continues intermittently till September. During the period from October to November, the heat re-appears
with increased humidity. The climate becomes oppressive during these months. From December to February the winter is quite pleasant \((12^\circ C \text{ or } 53.6^\circ F)\) in its early phase and then gradually records increase in the day-temperature and finally is followed by the summer.

The annual rainfall in the district is \(1303.7 \text{ mm (51.33")}\). The monsoon accounts for 78 per cent of this total rainfall. The rainfall is chiefly accompanied by cyclonic storms. Generally speaking, the climatic features of Bankura are more comparable to the adjoining Chotanagpur region of Bihar than to any other part of West Bengal.

**Population**

The population of Bankura may be at the very outset linguistically grouped as Austro, Dravidian and Indo-European. To the Austro-Asiatic sub-family of the Austric family belong eight mother tongues, viz. Santali, Korā, Munḍāri, Khāria, Ho, Kol, Munḍā-unspecified and Mahāli of the Munḍā branch. Under the Dravidian family comes Kurukh/Oraon. The Indo-Aryan sub-family of the Indo-European family may include Bengali, Oriya, Hindi and Urdu. The predominant language of the district is Western Bengali which belongs, according to G. A. Grierson, to the Eastern group of the Indo-European family\(^2\). Suniti Kumar Chatterjee\(^2\) marked a further division of the Bankura dialects as Western Rāḍhā dialects.

Bengali is the principal language in the district of Bankura. The percentage of Bengali speakers is 90.60 per cent in the Census of 1961. Santali is the next major tongue in vogue amongst the inhabitants of Bankura. In 1961 Santali speakers comprise only 8.75 per cent of the total population of Bankura. The Hindi speakers form only 0.37 per cent of the
district's population in the Census of 1961. Urdu is the language of the Muslims who have been residing for more than two generations. The Oriya-speaking group, whose ancestors migrated to the district many generations ago, concentrated mostly in the Simlapal and Raipur police stations. There are 319 males and 264 females in the district whose mother tongue is Koḍa which belongs to the Mundā branch. 31 males and 643 females have the Kurukh (Oraon) language as their mother tongue which belongs to the intermediate group of the Dravidian family of languages. It may be mentioned that the tribal ethnic groups like the Sāntāls, Korās and Oraons use Bengali as a subsidiary language in addition to their respective mother-tongues, Sāntāli, Koḍa and Kurukh.

The population of Bankura was 2,374,815 as per 1981 Census. It consisted of 1,208,861 males and 1,165,948 females. The present day population of Bankura may broadly be divided into tribals and caste-groups. Nearly 10 per cent of the population is constituted of various groups of tribal population. Of these, nearly three-fourth is distributed in the villages. The hilly and forested regions are not as thickly populated as the plains. The overall population density of the district is worked out as 348 people per square kilometer.

A. Tribal population:

The tribal population is concentrated to a great extent in the Bankura-Sadar subdivision. Only a small chunk of the tribal population consisting mostly of Sāntāls is found settled in the Vishnupur subdivision, especially in its western part. In general, the tribal population is more or less settled in and around the forest-areas and at places just near the foothills.
The Santals\(^{29}\) are the earliest inhabitants of Chota-
Nagpur plateau as well as of the district of Bankura. They
constitute the largest single ethnic group in the district.
They are counted as scheduled tribe and are found mainly in
the south and south-west of the district. The police stations
of Raipur, Chhatna, Ranibandh, Khatra, Saltora, Simlapal and
Taldangra have the largest Santal population. Only a small
section of them is found in the western part of the Vishnupur
subdivision. Their traditional occupation is collecting
forest products besides hunting, fishing and cultivation.
Their nature, day-to-day life, culture, fairs and festivals
closely correspond to those of their counterparts in the
Chotanagpur region. The Santals worship \text{Marāṅg-Burām}\ (the great
mountain) as a powerful God, among other several village
spirits, and their religion is known as Saridharma.

The Bhumij\(^{30}\) is considered to be one of the oldest
tribes in the district. They are usually concentrated in the
western and south-western part of the district. They are
divided into four endogamous groups viz. (i) Śikhariya (or
Meno), the name having a ring of their supposed original
homeland in Śikharbhum (Raipur Police Station), (ii) Desī,
(iii) Barābhumia, which bears a reference to their supposed
alternative homeland in Barābhūm (Balarampur Police Station in
Purulia district), and (iv) Shelo, having perhaps an allusion
to their original occupation of iron-smelting. Each of these
groups is divided further in a number of exogamous clans. The
social status of all these tribal groups is not equal. They
have a well-known traditional festival called Karam\(^{31}\).

The Koras\(^{32}\) are mainly distributed in the police
stations of Khatra, Saltora, Ranibandh and Raipur. The district
has the third largest number of Koras in the State of West
Bengal. They are divided into a number of totemistic exogamous clans. Within the plural society of Bankura "the social position of the Korās is very low, and they are usually classed with Bagdis, Bauris, Bunas and other dwellers on the confines of Hinduism". S. C. Roy thinks that the Korās represent a branch of the Oraon tribe of Chotanagpur. They are found to worship Mahādeo or Śiva, Rādhā-Krishṇa and Śakti.

The Māls or Māles are widely distributed throughout the district of Bankura. Risley considered them as having a Dravidian origin. Apparently they have been traced from an original Māl tribe. Most of them are cultivators, although some of them are known also to do fishing as a full-time occupation.

Besides the above groups of tribal population, there are other very thinly distributed in the south and south-western parts of the district.

B. Lower castes:

The district of Bankura has a good number of population of lower caste groups. They are widely distributed over the whole of the district. However, the eastern and north-north-eastern parts of the district contain relatively a larger concentration of these lower caste groups than other parts of the district.

The Bāuris are predominant among the lower castes of Bankura. They are found in many other districts of West Bengal as well. In Bankura they are concentrated in Gangajalghati, Indpur, Chhatna, Khatra, Saltora, Raipur, Sonamukhi, Joypur, Barjora, Onda and Vishnupur besides Bankura Sadar. Their original occupation had been palanquin-bearing or acting
as the strong armed men or as guards of the landlords. Now-a­
days, they are mostly landless labourers.

The Bagdis are widely distributed in West Bengal and also in the district of Bankura. According to the Census of 1961, there were 93,476 Bagdis in the district forming 5.6 per cent of its total population. Now their population is increasing. Traditionally, Bagdis are occupied in fishing in addition to small-scale farming. In fact, they are found employed in a wide variety of occupations and are economically much better off than the Bauris. The process of their Hinduisation has been completed presumably due to their close contact with the upper castes of the society. The Bauris and Bagdis worship Śiva, Viṣṇu, Dharmarāj, Durgā and numerous other deities like Sakti. The worship is usually performed under the officiating role of a pandit whose position, it is believed, is similar to that of a Brāhmin Priest. The Bagdis themselves consider Manasa or the snake-goddess as their principal deity. Their other deities include Bhādu, Man Singh, Dharmarāj, Kudrasini. Unlike Bagdis, who have a degraded Brahmin to officiate in their rituals, the Bauris have not attained enough mobility in the Hinduisation as to have any Brahmin to serve them. Their favourite deities are Manasa and Bhadu.

The Lohārs are mainly concentrated in Raipur, Simlapal, Vishnupur, Onda, Patrasaier and Joypur areas. According to Risley, they are large and heterogenous aggregates. They contain numbers of several different tribes and castes who in different parts of the country took up the occupation of working in iron during the past.

The Kairās form another group within the scheduled caste category. Their main concentration is noted in the
district of Bankura. According to Risley, the Kairas form a cultivating sub-caste of the Bagdis and are synonymous with the Koras of Chotanagpur region. Raha opined that they are in endogamous group having exogamous totemic clans or gotras.

The Sunris are yet another group of the scheduled castes. Their traditional occupation is distilling and selling spirituous liquors.

The Doms form one of the largest numerical caste-groups. They are mostly derived from the aborigines of the region. They worship Dharmaraj or Dharma Thakur.

The Jalia Kaibartas locally known as Kewat, are distributed almost throughout the district with the exception of the south-western region. They are essentially a fishing community and represent a section of the main Kaibarta caste-group. Risley points out that Kaibartas are one of the earliest inhabitants of Bengal.

The Dhobas or Dhopas are widely distributed in the district. Their chief occupation was to wash clothes. But recently many of them have taken up cultivation.

The Chamars (also known as Charmakar, Muchi, Rabidas, Ruidas, Rishi or Satnami) form yet another large caste belonging to the Scheduled Caste category. They are also widely distributed, their main concentration being in the Vishnupur sub-division.

In addition to the above groups the district also has a handful of other lower castes, such as Sarak, Mahali, Mathar, Mahato (Kurmi) and a few other small groups of the Kurmi community.
C. Higher Castes:

The Brāhmims form the highest number among the total number of the caste-Hindus. There are three completely different classes of Brāhmims in Bankura and they are strictly endogamous. The Raḍhiyas occupy the highest rank among them. The Madhyadesis claim the next rank. Both these Brāhmiṇ groups are found almost all over lower Bankura. The third and lowest group of Brāhmins is called Utkala. They are mainly found in the Simlapal, Indpur, Taldanga, Raipur and Ranibandh police stations. According to the local tradition, during the victorious campaign of Anantavarman Choḍaganga, the Utkala Brahmins came over from Orissa and settled down in the southern and south-western parts of the district. The three classes of Brāhmins maintain distinct physiognomical traits.

The Kayasthas (Karanas of earlier age) form one of the largest caste-groups in the district. In fact, they are found almost throughout the whole of Bankura. Their largest concentration occurs in the northern, central and eastern parts of the district. They use surnames like Bose, Ghosh, Mitra, Sarkar etc. and are mostly engaged in non-manual occupations requiring an educational background.

The Telis form a distinct caste which is considered clean. They are found spread all over the district, although Vishnupur shows a high concentration of this caste. The occupation ascribed to the group is of cooking oil and its trading.

The Goālās are most numerous in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the district. They usually live in groups of their own caste-members. The Goālā is a clean caste.
The Sadgopas seem to have originated from the Goalas sometime in the past. Most of the members of this caste group have taken to agriculture. They are mostly concentrated in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the district (which is virtually the same as the rice-plain).

The Tambulis form one of the largest among the minor castes of the district. In fact, one of their largest concentrations in the whole district of West Bengal occurs along the courses of the Dwarakeswar and the Damodar in Bankura.

The Karmakars are traditionally metal workers and traders in metals (mainly iron). A good number of Karmakars have now left their caste-occupation and taken to full time agriculture with the introduction of factory finished metal products. They are sporadically distributed in the district.

The Kumars are by tradition clay-workers or pottery manufacturing community. In India potters have always enjoyed a favoured status primarily because of their indispensibility in providing household and storage utensils. In Bankura, however, the status of the potter became quite important right from the medieval period when terracotta slabs with art-execution in millions had to be supplied to the kings for panelling the numerous temples. Thus, from a peasant level of inter-connection they were at once shot into connection with the state high lords. When this patronage became weak in subsequent period these potters entered into the commercial network by making art-objects. It is not surprising, therefore, that they could evolve their own styles and designs of the Bankura horse and elephant which fetched them fortune. Unfortunately lack of wood for firing is bringing a big pressure on them in the last few years. Thus the Kumars of Bankura belong to an artisan class.
The Chhatris form a caste which is not quite common in West Bengal. In Bankura they are quite numerous and widely distributed. They claim their descent from the Rajput merchants who migrated to Bengal. According to a legend, one of the Malla Kings of Vishnupur once called a meeting of the Chhatris in order to formally admit them to Kshatriyahood. A section of the assembly agreed and the king rewarded them with gifts of land and the hereditary title of Singh-thakur. The section which did not agree with this transformation had cut off all social connections with them. The Singha-Thakurs formed a distinct and separate caste group.

Besides the above caste-groups there are also a few other communities belonging mainly to traditional manual labourer class such as Nāpit, Chhutār (Sūtradhar) etc., distributed in clusters around the district. But due to the changes of character of the society, they have more or less left their caste-occupation. However, in the villages such traditions are still prevailing.

Religious sects/castes:

Apart from the above, there are some religious communities or sects transformed into castes. Popular religious communities such as Bairāgi or Vaiṣṇav, Bāul, Yugi etc. usually take to begging alms and singing the glory of God. They are spread sporadically in the north and north-eastern parts of the district. But gradually their identity as separate communities is disappearing. They are now becoming mixed up with other communities either of higher caste or lower caste.
Economic classes:

A clear cut division in terms of land-holding shows a stratification in terms of economy. The highest economic class is formed by those who have largest land-holdings. The Brahmins of all the three types, in this regard, occupy the most favourable position. The surplus in their yield enables them to import technology and diversify resources into further profitable business.

The other higher castes like Teeli, Goala, Chhatri and Kayastha occupy the next higher economic class in having substantial land holding. Even if some individuals have as large a land-holding as another Brahmin, the latter seem to be in a better state in terms of relative fertility. Further, the Brahmins being averse to tilling have often passed on their lands to this group on commission basis. Thus, the higher castes, whether Brahmins or not are in total control over the entire productive economy of the district.

The labour and ancilliary requirements are provided by carpenters, lohars, chamars and doms, for an agricultural village. They are, therefore, accommodated in patches of land provided for their habitation on the condition of supplying daily requirements to the landlord in exchange of food and clothing. The Bauris also cluster around in the periphery, because they are often called upon to do many unclean jobs. Since such a large number of landless people cannot be employed by the landlords except in the period of harvesting, many of them in recent years, have taken to a multiple of trading occupations and have opened their shops near the village bus-stand or in the nearby towns. Many of them have turned to be migrant labourers and travel as far west as Punjab and Delhi, when the urban contractors gather them from the villages.
The artisan class includes the metal-workers, clay-workers, carpenters, leather-workers, distiller of spirituous liquors and masons who were predominantly Muslims. The Telis, Tāmbulis, Suvargakāras represent the trading class of the society.

The Village set-up

The villages in the district are scattered all over, although the western and southern hilly regions show a much lesser number of villages than the eastern and northern parts. The villages are more or less similar to those in other districts of West Bengal. Availability of suitable land for cultivation is one of the prime considerations of these village-settlements. Usually the houses in the villages are not as narrowly clustered as in other parts of Bengal. The average distance between two houses can be between a half and one furlong.

The houses are rectangular in ground plan and usually are constructed with bamboo and mud. The roof is thatched and is shaped in a convex manner with rather drooping corners. Usually the Doms are expert in the construction of such houses, and they are in high demand during summer months for repair-work. Corrugated iron or brick structure form a low percentage among the total number of dwelling structures in a village. In some tribal villages, both the roof and the walls may be made with strong vegetation products. Almost all villages in the district are interconnected through tarred roads. There are lower and higher primary schools in almost every village, and High Schools are generally within a radius of 7-9 kms.

Every big village in Bankura is a unit by itself. It has houses of all the occupational castes like washerman, barber and
other labourers for manual work in agricultural field. Of these, service castes are paid in kind once or twice a year.

A study of the land and people of Bankura furnishes us with an inside view of the material background in which the culture of Bankura evolved through different stages. The geographical factors undoubtedly have determined the character of the people living in the plains watered by the rivers like the Damodar, the Dwarakeswar and the Kansavati. There is every reason to believe that Bankura, like other parts of Bengal, was originally inhabited by the Austric and Dravidian speaking people whose descendants are the Santals, Maler, Malpahariyas, Oraons etc. Anthropologists are unanimous in respect of the view of de-tribalization, the process by which the lower castes are derived from the primitive tribes and later on accommodated within the structure of the caste hierarchy. Not only the lower castes but also the major portion of the higher castes would not remain unmixed with the primitive tribal population, although the process of organisation engineered by the brahmin developed a social order based on homogeneity of culture. Archaeologically, it would be interesting to make a study of the settlement sites mainly located in basins of the rivers which originated from the hills of the Chotanagpur plateau. The people of Bankura whose culture gradually developed since the prehistoric times might have followed a riverine route to build up their settlements, so that the fertile soil for cultivation might be easily available to them. It is difficult in the present state of our knowledge to determine whether the people who settled in Bankura were from the Santal Pargana region or any other part outside Bengal. But it remains true that the juxtaposition of the hilly region of the Santal Pargana with the alluvial plain of the Bankura indicates the trait of the population migration
from one part of the country to the other, if we believe in the theory that the food-gathering stage was followed by that of food-production. In other words, the hunters using lithic tools and implements gradually turned into primitive cultivators, and for that reason the hilly and forested region was substituted by plains in the valley of the rivers for the settlement of the people. Therefore, the study of the land and people of Bankura provides us with the background of the study of its culture from archaeological point of view.
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