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STATISTICAL

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GEOGRAPHICAL REPORT

OF THE

24-PERGUNNAHS DISTRICT.

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CALCUTTA:

JOHN GRAY, "CALCUTTA GAZETTE" OFFICE.

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There are many other trees, but all too well known to require any description. They are the lime-tree, guava, plum, pomegranate, pumalo, mulberry, papitha, &c. &c. The vegetables reared are ginger, turmeric, onions, begún, sweet potatoe, radishes, kumrah, meeta kumrah or pumpkin, sēm, sorrel, karellah, oorcha, turbooj or water-melon, cucumber, peas, ole, garlick, carrots, french-beans, and an endless variety of mosalas, tarkari and sāg, which are used in seasoning the food of the natives.

NATURAL PRODUCTIONS.

These are few in number and consist of the leopard, hog, deer, wild cat, mungoose, jackal, and fox. These are to be found in the District at all times of the year. The tiger and wild buffaloe make incursions from the Soonderbund jungles at certain seasons, but cannot be classed amongst the wild animals of the District. The rhinoceros also visits the low lands in the vicinity of Pergunnah Dhooleapoor occasionally, and it is said that they exist in the Boyrah Bheel, in Pergunnah Boorun ; but I have never seen any of their foot-marks.

Game. The game found consists of the hare, jungle fowl on the borders of the Soonderbunds, wild ducks, and teal of all kinds, snipe, and a few quail.

Fish. Fish consist of the bhukti, bansputtee, hilsah, mangoe ("tupsee,"), mallet, rooe, cutlah, turtle, quoye, bholah, sowle, selliah, gooteeah, magoor, kouteh, gungtoorah, kowul toontee, pirachunda, bhengir, meer-gul, chingree, tengrah, choonah, and a variety of smaller kinds.

Reptiles. These comprise alligators, which are to be found in most of the rivers ; snakes of all kinds, from the boa and poisonous cobra down to the harmless grass snake ; lizards of various kinds ; frogs, rats, muskitoes, and vermin of every kind.

Domestic Animals. These are of an inferior description, and reckon cows, sheep, goats, bullocks for carriage and draft, and a few buffaloes. Pariah dogs and cats are numerous. Ducks, fowls, and pigeons are reared by the Mussulman population and some of the low castes among the Hindoos.

Minerals. There are none of any kind.

from Calcutta to Barrackpoor, which passes through it, is situated Coxe's Bungalow, the half-way halt for Troops. Partly in Agurparah and Pauneehatee, the boundary between the two villages running through it, is the Agurparah Church and Orphan Refuge, raised through the instrumentality of Mrs. Wilson, through whose benevolent importunity funds for the erection of apartments for 150 orphans to be trained up in Christian duties were obtained. The Church is 81 × 54 feet and 31 feet in height, with a tower of 74 feet, and is capable of holding 500 people. It was completed in 1840, at a cost of 15,000 Rupees. Khurdah is celebrated for its Rass Temple, the most distinguished for its class in Bengal. It belongs to the family of the Gossain's, who live in the village around it. They are descendants of Nityanundu, the associate of Chitunyu, the great modern heresiarch, who died about 1528, and through the agency of whose disciples, a fifth part of the population of Bengal has been withdrawn from the creed of the Poorans. The image which gives its celebrity to this place is that of Samsounder, and a brief notice of its origin will serve to illustrate the progress of superstitious credulity in the minds of the people. About 300 years ago, Roodra, a man beloved of the gods, is said to have been expelled from a temple at Chatra. He retired to Bhullubpoor, at the Southern extremity of Serampoor, then a dense jungle, where he practised religious observances for four or five years. At the end of this time, his titular god appeared to him and ordered him to proceed to Gour, and bring from thence a celebrated stone, which stood over the door-way of the palace in which the Mahomedan Viceroy resided. On arriving in that city, he found that the Prime Minister was a Hindoo and devoted Vishnoova. He made known the divine revelation to him, and asked his assistance to procure the stone for an image of Vishnoo. The stone was said to have the singular quality of sweating, and the minister, taking advantage of this circumstance, is said one day to have pointed out to his master the tears which it shed, and advised that so inauspicious a stone should be sent away with all speed. It was ordered to be taken down, but as Roodra was placing it on the boat, it fell into the water, and by another miracle was conducted without his aid to Bhullubpoor, where a portion of it was formed into an image, over which a splendid temple has since been erected. The Gossain's at Khurdah obtained a part of the wonderful stone and made an image for their own temple, which has become to them the source of great wealth. A festival is held there, attended by tens of thousands from all parts of the country. A short distance above this temple stands a cluster of 24 temples, erected by the wealthy family of Bishwas, and dedicated to Shiva. A mile above Khurdah is Tittaghur, a country residence, containing four garden houses, Combermere Lodge, the Hive, Lushington Lodge, and a small lowered-roomed house. Fifty years ago, this place was a scene of life and activity; it then contained a Dock-yard, and the largest Merchantman ever built in the Hooghly was launched from it, *the Countess of Sutherland*, of 1,445 tons. No vestige, however, now remains of the Dock-yard.

Barrackpoor is the Head Quarters of the Presidency Division of the Army. The natives call it "Chanuck," from the circumstance of Job Charnock, the founder of

Calcutta, having erected a bungalow and established a small bazar there about 160 years ago. Troops were first stationed there in 1772, from which time it has acquired the name of Barrackpore. The Cantonment is situated on the left bank of the river, it has also a large bazar and several large tanks; also a parade ground, on which races were formerly held. There are usually four Regiments of Native Infantry cantoned in the lines. To the South of the Cantonment is situated the Park, created by the taste and public spirit of Lord Wellesley. Within the Park is situated the Government House, a noble-looking building, commenced by Lord Minto and enlarged into its present state by the Marquis of Hastings. The Park is beautifully laid out and contains a small menagerie of wild beasts, amongst which figure a pair of large rhinoceros. Opposite Barrackpore is situated Serampore, formerly a Danish Settlement, but purchased by the Government in 1845 for 12½ lakhs of Rupees. A short way above Barrackpore is Muneerampore, containing the house and garden occupied by the late General Marley, long the father of the Indian Army, who died in 1842, after a residence in India of 71 years. A Powder Magazine is situated a mile above this at Fultah Ghant, which is the ferry crossing over to Ghyrettee and communicating with the Grand Trunk Road to the North-Western Provinces. Dum-Dum has been the Head Quarters of the Artillery Regiment from the year 1783. In 1853 they were removed to Meerut, as being more central. The Cantonment, however, still contains a proportion of Artillery, together with a Magazine and Percussion Cap Manufactory. There are 25 good pukka houses; the residences of the Officers and a noble Mess House; a Protestant Church (St. Stephen's) capable of containing from 7 to 800 people; a Roman Catholic Chapel; a large square surrounded on three sides with two-storied Barracks and on the fourth side by Barracks of one floor; a European and Native Hospital; a large Bazar, and several very large clear-water tanks. Within the balustrade which surrounds the Protestant Church is raised, by his brother Officers, a handsome pillar of the Corinthian order, to the memory of Colonel Pearse, the first Commandant of the Artillery Regiment, who died in Calcutta 15th June 1790. On the small plain in front of the Regimental Mess House, another monumental column was raised (since blown down in the severe gale of May 14th 1852) to the memory of the Officers and men who fell during the insurrection and retreat from Cabool in 1841, but more especially to Captain Nicholl and the Officers and men of the 1st Troop 1st Brigade Horse Artillery, who were cut down to the last man in defence of their guns. The pediment of this monument, with the marble slabs containing the names of all the Officers and men, is all that now remains. "Dum-Dum" appears first to have been used as a practice ground for Artillery in 1775. The Cantonment was marked out by Colonel Duff in 1783. Its origin is doubtful. The first mention of it is by Orme. He speaks of Clive crossing the Dum-Dum road. This road led to Dum-Dum, the place now occupied by Dum-Dum House, the origin of which building is also enveloped in mystery. It is said to have been built by a Mr. or Colonel Home. The mound on which it (a large two-storied house with buttresses all round) stands is said to have been raised by a spirit in the course of a single night, and to this day visions of ghosts haunt the grounds." Several of such mounds are to be met with in

PERGUNNAH BOORUN.

Pergunnah Boorun, of 145½ square miles in extent, contains a population of 58,468 souls. Of the adult population, nearly 5,000 are non-agriculturists, obtaining their livelihood in different trades and employments, such as carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers, shoemakers, boat-builders, &c. ; the remaining population forms the tenantry of the zemindars.

The principal village or pergunnah town is "Shatkira," called also Pranshuhur, the family residence of the zemindar, Prannath Chowdree. It contains 20 pukka buildings, many Hindoo temples, 480 kutchahouses, and 1,300 inhabitants, mostly Hindoos. It has a large Native School or Patshalah, and a Dispensary in charge of a Native Sub-Assistant Surgeon from the Calcutta Medical College. The School is entirely supported by the zemindar, who has established it for the education of the better class of his tenants. The Dispensary is a recognized Government Establishment and receives an annual supply of medicines from the Company's Dispensary. This village has attained to the importance of a provincial city, by having a navigable canal cut to the Echamuttee River, as well as very fair roads leading from it to the nearest marts of traffic, thus establishing it an emporium for the sale and shipment of the produce of the surrounding country. A very large fair is annually held here at the full moon of February, in honour of the Hindoo festival called "Dole Jatra" or "Hoolee," when excesses of the lower classes of natives and freedom of behaviour towards their superiors are licensed. A number of men, estimated at 15,000, at this time congregate at Shatkira, the poorest of whom are fed and clothed, for the eight days the festival lasts, by the zemindar. Booths are erected by vendors of sweetmeats, toys, and other nick-nacks and holiday merriment and frivolities are encouraged and indulged in by all classes of men, women, and children. At this season of the year, the Brahmins receive largesses, the poor are fed and clad, and the ryot forgets, amidst his revelry and superstitious reverence of the festival, the prudential maxims of economy he has so studiously followed, to launch into extravagance in the purchase of clothes and luxuries, entailing on him much privation for the remainder of the year. The Police Thannah and Moonsiff's Cutcherry is situated in the village of "Labsha," the former subordinate to the Joint Magistrate of Baraset and the latter subject to the Appellate Court of the 24-Pergunnah District. A Salt Chowkey, under the supervision of the Salt Superintendent at Bagundee, is situated in Mouza "Magoorah," at the confluence of the Katta Khal and Bhetna Nuddee, and retains the name of the "Boyrah" Chowkee, in which village it formerly was.

The high roads in the Pergunnah lead from Shatkira, one to Kullarahaut and another to Boyrah Ghaut, two principal export marts and depôts for grain. These roads, especially the one to Kullarahaut, are well raised, and from 10 to 20 feet wide, and kept in good repair by the zemindar, who has constructed them at his own expense, greatly to the convenience of the country generally.

The Pergunnah, with the exception of the Ballee and Datbangah Bheels, is never inundated. The crops are wholly dependant on the annual showers for water, as irrigation is nowhere attempted.

The only river is the Echamuttee, bounding the Pergunnah to the S. W. for about 6 miles. The other streams or khals are the Sonye, Nowkhalee, Bhetna, and Katta Khal. The khals of traffic are the Katta Khal (a canal dug by the zemindar from the Echamuttee River joining the Bhetna at Magoorah) and the Bhetna Nuddee, which latter is navigable for boats of 100 maunds burthen as far as Kullarahaut, about 12 miles above Shatkira. The rise of water in the Bhetna is about 6 feet below Shatkira, and above there is no perceptible ebb or flow. The other khals are not tidal ones.

The chief traffic is in exports of sugar and rice. Khaur sugar, manufactured from the date-juice, is largely manufactured, and extensively exported to Calcutta and also to the surrounding Pergunnahs of the District. This Pergunnah yields the largest quantity of date-sugar of any in the District, and the manufacture is very remunerative to the native merchants or mahajuns, who have established small Factories at Shatkira, Boyrah, Jowāngah, Baboolea, and most of the large villages, where they purchase the juice and make the sugar by the simple process of boiling it to a consistency. These Factories or boiling-houses manufacture only the coarsest kind of sugar, goor or jagree, and no attempt at clarifying or refining is made. The sugar from these Factories, besides what is made in each village, is carried by land to Shatkira and conveyed thence by boat. The annual shipments to Calcutta alone, exclusive of what is used in the Pergunnah and sent to neighbouring marts, is said to exceed 20,000 maunds. The "goor" is sold in Calcutta at Rupees 2 and 2-8 per maund, and procurable in the villages at Rupees 1-8 and 1-12 per maund. Rice, the staple produce, is also largely exported to Calcutta and the Nuddeah District, and is procurable in the Pergunnah at 14 annas to 1 Rupee 8 annas the maund, according as the harvest is good or bad and the quality of the rice. Tobacco, gram, oats, and wheat are grown in small quantities sufficient for home consumption. Dhurma mats, baskets, and wicker work of different kinds are worked with the null reed obtainable on the bheels, and which latter extend over some 30 square miles of the Pergunnahs. Markets exist at Bithari, Atooria, Boikari, Jhoodanga, Madubkatee, Bhatparah, Agurdari, Sreepoor, Ostir Pranshuhur, Pranshuhur, Shatkira, Baklah, Alleepoor, Pooshpkatee, Mohadebnuggur, Boyrah, and Lukydari.

The whole of this Pergunnah, with the exception of the bheels, is in an advanced state of cultivation. Mangoe, plantain, and date gardens are every where found round the village sites. The assessment by the zemindar for village site land is consequently very high, averaging from 1 Rupee 8 annas to 3 and 4 Rupees per beegah. For cultivation the price of land varies 12 annas to 1 Rupee 4 annas per beegah. The people, though

PERGUNNAH BAJITPOOR.

Pergunnah Bajitpoor is bounded on the North by Pergunnahs Myehatee and Bhalookah, East by Pergunnahs Bhalookah and Jameerah, South by the Soonderbunds, and West by the Jaboonah and Echamuttee Rivers, with the exception of a few villages of Pergunnah Dhooleapoor, situated on the left bank of the river.

The principal village is Nulta, situated near the Northern boundary of the Pergunnah. The next in importance are :—Nowpara, Ruggoonathpoor, Bharaseemla, and Nangla. Its markets are :—Nitekhalee and Khansee markets on the Khangur Khal, Nulta, Tarali, Tetoolia, Kaligunge, Johilpoor, Dum-dumma, Koosle, Futtehpoor, Bhozoor, Fakeer, Ramnuggur, Shunkurkatee, and Kasimari markets, all held bi-weekly. The Dum-dumma Police Thannah is situated close to Kaligunge market, at the entrance of the Coxialee Khal, from the Jaboonah River. Kaligunge is known as the anchorage in the Jaboonah, previous to boats passing through the Coxialee Khal, on their way to the Eastward towards Assasonee, or to the Southward towards the Soonderbunds. It is only navigable at the flood.

This Pergunnah is much subject to inundations from the Jaboonah and Culputooah Rivers at spring tides, and there is in consequence much waste and jungle land. To the S. E. of Nulta is also a large bheel, called Bheel Goollee, being the accumulation of water from the drainage of the surrounding country. It is much intersected, as are all other Pergunnahs in this vicinity, with tidal khals, which form the means of transit, there not being a single road in the Pergunnah. Its cultivation is entirely composed of paddy.

It comprises an area of 74 square miles, with a population of 319 to the square mile and 4.88 per house. It contains 162 hulkas, four outlying in Pergunnah Dhooleapoor, and within its boundary twelve of Pergunnah Dhooleapoor, three of Mohbutpoor, four of Jameerah, seven of Hashunpoor, three of Tallah, one of Eshubpoor, of District Jessore, and one of Pergunnah Rekabi Bazar. Its mouzas or villages number 159.

PERGUNNAHS DHOOLEAPOOR, NOORNUGGUR, AND SHAHPOOR.

These Pergunnahs, adjoining one another, are situated within the belt of land between the Jaboonah and Khalindee Rivers, which separate at Bussuntpoor, in the Northern part of Pergunnah Dhooleapoor, finding their way into the Soonderbunds at Puranpoor, on the Southern extremity of Pergunnah Noornuggur. About a mile below this point, the two rivers again approach one another within a mile, after which

they separate finally, finding different courses through the Soonderbunds. There is a passage through the Huldur Khal at Puranpoor for small boats from the Jaboonah to the Khalindee.

The principal village in Pergunnah Dhooleapoor is Bussuntpoor, situated at the confluence of the Khalindee and Jaboonah Rivers. It contains 109 houses and 224 adults. Bussuntpoor, from its position, is of importance to the extensive traffic carried on with the Eastern Districts, as all boats put in here for provisions and fresh water, as also for repairs. It affords good anchorage for country boats of any burden. In Pergunnah Noornuggur, the principal village is Ramnuggur, generally known in the Mofussil as "Noornuggur," and is the residence of the present proprietor of the Pergunnah. There is no village of note in Pergunnah Shahpoor. Markets are held at Bussuntpoor, Kassessurpoor, Hasimkatee, and Mokoondpoor,* in Pergunnah Dhooleapoor, and at Ramnuggur and Mahmoodpoor, in Pergunnah Noornuggur. In Bangalkhatee, Pergunnah Dhooleapoor, there is a good bazar. At Bussuntpoor is a Salt Chowkey, in charge of a Darogah, under the supervision of the Superintendent at Bagundee, Pergunnah Balleah (North.)

The only road in these Pergunnahs is one said to have been made by one Rajah Pertab Audit, from Bussuntpoor to Ramnuggur, the present residence of the descendants of the Rajah, and known as the Rajki Bund. In many places, however, this road, from want of repairs, is hardly distinguishable from the surrounding fields. There are several minor roads or foot-paths, leading from one village to another, but they are only temporary, and no vestige of them remains after the rains.

The rivers of note are the Jaboonah and Khalindee, varying from 150 to 350 yards in breadth. The former is the channel for the conveyance of fire-wood from the Soonderbunds to Calcutta. There are numerous tidal streams running inland from these rivers, the chief of which are the Koollea Khal, Durmoosalee Khal, Nowtollah Khal, Huldar Khal, and the Koolkooli Khal. These, with many other smaller ones, scatter and lose themselves in the interior—in short, these Pergunnahs are intersected in all directions with khals varying from 5 to 50 yards in breadth, empty at low tide, but still impassable on account of the puddle in their beds. The larger ones are all dammed up during the summer months, and all communication with the main streams cut off, to prevent the salt water getting to the fields. These bunds are opened out during the cold weather, when the crops are gathered in, and the rise of the water less. This varies in the rivers from 8 to 14 feet at spring tides. There are no ferries yielding a return to Government in these Pergunnahs, but there are several zemindaree ferries of ghauts as they are called, for the convenience of the inhabitants,

* At Mokoondpoor is an old square mud fort, said to have been made by Rajah Pertab Audit.