

GEOGRAPHICAL AND STATISTICAL
REPORT

OF THE

DINAGEPORE DISTRICT.

MAJOR JAMES L. SHERWILL

BENGAL STAFF CORPS,

REVENUE SURVEY DIVISION, LOWER PROVINCES.

1863.

Calcutta:

PRINTED AT THE BENGAL CENTRAL PRESS,
5, Council House Street.

1865.

These have been defined on the professional maps by distinguishing colors, and named after the pergunnah of which each one is chiefly composed. Some of these blocks contain portions of as many as 25 pergunnahs.

There are 9,425 villages, containing an average area of $311\frac{1}{2}$ acres, but those to the North of the District are much larger than those to the South, which average only 210 acres, or less than one-third of a square mile.

Number and size of villages.

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES.

The District of Dinagepore is everywhere intersected by rivers, dry water-courses, small streams, and ditches.

The principal Rivers are Kurrotceca, Juboona, Attrai, Poornababa, Nagur, Coolik, Mahauddy, and Tangun. Some of the minor ones to the South are the Gookseo, Toolseegunga, Kharre, Tillai, Cheerce, Chota Juboona, Hurunbattee, Issamuttee, and to the North the Deepa, Gogra, Kankra, Tinaic, &c.

The Kurrotceca is a sluggish and tortuous river, navigable for large boats during the rains, and for small boats and canoes during the dry season. The principal grain marts are Rancegunge, and Ghoraghat, and further South, in Bograh District, the large towns of Seebgunge and Bograh. The town of Nawabgunge is situated on the banks of the old Kurrotceca.

The Juboona is also navigable for large boats during the rains, and possesses several large grain marts, Berampoor, Kantla, Hillce, Joypoor, Jamalgunge, &c. It bifurcates at Joypoor, and unites at Etakotta; the eastern channel is called the Chota, and the western the Bora Juboona.

The Attrai enters Dinagepore from Rungpore on the North-East, and after passing through this and the Rajshahyee Districts from North to South, falls into the Ganges at different points under different names. It is navigable for the largest boats during the rains, and for small ones and canoes during the dry season. It is a sluggish stream running in a wide channel, and constantly changes its course. The principal grain marts are Jubarree, Huringata Bazar, and Khansamagunge to the North, and Sunjeea, Fakcergunge, Pateeram, Puglebundur, Muddungunge, Baloghat, Rungmuttee, and Putnecollah to the South.

The Attrai being the more direct course of the old Teesta, whose waters were diverted into the Burmapootra in the year 1787-88, has suffered considerably in consequence, and the large grain marts to the North have declined in proportion.

The Poornababa River, a confluent of the Mahauddy, is also navigable for large boats during the rains, and for boats of 200 maunds to Nyabundur, till the 1st January, and for small boats and canoes the rest of the year. The principal grain depôts are at Beer-gunge, Kantanugur, town of Dinagepore, Nyabundur, Dumdumma, and Gungarampoor.

The Tangun, also a tributary of the Mahauddy, enters Dinagepore on the extreme northern boundary, runs through a stiff yellow clay soil, has steep banks, and its bed is confined

a great desire that our parties should destroy the herds of wild buffaloes which do them so much injury; and they would readily come 3 or 4 miles into camp to give notice when a cow had been killed by a tiger, in the hope that we would go and shoot it.

Domes and other low caste Hindoos hunt tigers, leopards, deer, and boars with packs of pariah dogs, and attack them with guns, spears, clubs, and bows and arrows. On coming on the scent of a tiger, the dogs give tongue, but will not approach beyond the bounds of prudence, or follow up a wounded tiger. These curs fearlessly attack the wild boar, and in their encounters with them, exhibit no little sagacity and courage. Many got killed and wounded in these sanguinary and unequal contests. The Domes replenish their packs by stealing dogs from distant villages, whom they keep tied up until they are trained and localized. From constantly feeding on pig's flesh, which is often in a putrid state, these dogs become mangy and die. Some zemindars keep shikarees, for the sole purpose of keeping down the wild pig, which would otherwise overrun the cultivation and drive away the ryots. This course is pursued by Mr. Payter in the Government Khas Mehals in Pergunnah Sagoonah.

Game is moderately abundant, and very little molested, except by Europeans. Pigs and hog deer, as above stated, are hunted by the low caste Hindoos, but water fowl, snipe, land and water rails, hares, peacocks, black partridge, quail, and plovers, all of which are plentiful, are almost disregarded, and made no use of by the indolent and caste ridden population.

Fish is an important article of food in this District. The Bengalee ryot is very partial to fish, and many are the ingenious devices he resorts to for the capture of a few little brats, with which to prepare himself and family a curry. Most of the large rivers and perennial marshes contain large fish of good quality, but elsewhere, in the numerous small rivers, marshes, and tanks, the quality is inferior, and the dimensions small. During the rains small fish are found in every water-course, flooded field, and puddle. Great quantities of these are sold in the village hâts. During the hot weather fish is brought to market in a state verging on putrefaction, the stench of which, which is so offensive to the European, seems strongly to recommend it to the Native consumer. The supply of fish is inexhaustible.

The Julkur settlements in this District are not yet completed. The amount at present paid into the Treasury on account of fisheries is 232 Rupees, and it is doubtful if any more will be obtained. Most of the large fisheries belong to zemindars. The right of fishing in most of the small rivers and bheels is not reserved.

These consist of various kinds of lizards, water and land snakes, including the boa-constrictor, frogs, rats, mice, cockroaches, musquitos, in myriads, whose sting is very irritating, and often attended with festering when the part stung is much rubbed, Bats, musk rats, moles, centipedes, the very destructive white ant, also the red ant, which forms pendent nests from trees, and whose sting is painful, bees, wasps, &c.

Annual fairs are very common throughout Dinagepore, and are mostly held in April, which is the season of the year when the agricultural classes have most leisure; this is likewise the season of the year for celebrating marriages. The principal fair is that held at "Nekh Murd," about 40 miles north-west from Dinagepore.

Fairs and markets.

"Nekh Murd" Fair.

It takes its name from a Mussulman saint who is buried there, and at whose shrine, or "Durga," it is customary to make offerings. The fair takes place about the 10th or 11th of April (1st of Bysack), and lasts about a week or ten days. It is principally a cattle fair. The number of people who attend this fair fluctuates, from year to year, between 100 and 300,000. The following is a rough estimate of the numbers of horned cattle, elephants, horses, &c., &c., brought to the fair for sale in 1861:—

30,000 oxen.
 8,000 ponies of kinds.
 5 or 600 horses.
 200 elephants of all sizes.
 12 camels.
 1 rhinoceros.

The oxen come principally from Purneah and the surrounding Districts, and are bought up by agents from Mymensingh, Sylhet, and various other localities. The ponies are mostly Bhootan hill ponies, brought down by the Bhooteahs. The horses all Cabuls and country bred animals from Arrah and that neighbourhood, and even from more distant places. Elephants are brought from the Morung and Assam; the principal purchasers are the rich zemindars of the Dinagepore and neighbouring Districts. Camels are brought down from the North-West, laden with goods; they are very few in number, and are generally sold to Mussulmans, who eat them on occasions of great feasting.

People from all parts of Northern India frequent this fair. Moguls and Affghans bring dried fruits, embroidered saddlery, daggers, swords, looking-glasses, &c. Seikhs may be seen manufacturing combs out of ivory and sandal-wood. The hill tribes bring down blankets, woollen cloths, walnuts, musk, ponies, and yâk tails. The Nepaulese sell Kookries and chirota leaf. Large quantities of real and imitation coral beads are exposed for sale by the Bankers of Dinagepore; much of the latter is bought by the unsuspecting Bhooteahs, who are now growing wiser. Besides the above, there are English piece goods, brass pots of all sorts and sizes, hookas, &c., &c. There seems to be a limited supply of grain for sale, not more perhaps than is required for actual consumption on the spot.

The Magistrate of Dinagepore and his assistants attend the fair to keep the peace.

That next in importance takes place at Gopeenath, just beyond the southern limit of the Dinagepore Survey, in Pergunnah KhotLall, District Bograh. It is held in March, during the Bengalee festival of "Dhole Jatra," and lasts a fortnight. There is an idol at Gopeenath, from which the place derives its name. It is an extensive cloth and cattle fair; brass-ware, spices, drugs, metals, &c., are

"Gopeenath" Fair.