

CHAPTER XIV
GAZETTEER

Ajodhyā— A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 7 miles north-west of Bishnupur. The village contains a charitable dispensary and the residence of one of the leading zamīndārs of the district.

Ambikānagar— A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated on the south bank of the Kāsai river, 10 miles south-west of Khātrā, with which it is connected by an unmetalled road. This village has given its name to a *pargana* extending over 151 square miles, and was formerly the headquarters of an ancient family of zamīndārs, whose history has been given in the article on Dhalbhūm.

Bāhulārā— A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated on the south bank of the Dhalkisor river, 12 miles south-east of Bānkurā and 3 miles north of Ondā. It contains a temple dedicated to Mahādeo Siddheswar, said to have been built by the Rājā of Bishnupur, which Mr. Beglar has described as the finest brick temple in the district, and the finest though not the largest brick temple that he had seen in Bengal. He gives the following account of it in the Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, Vol. VIII.

“The temple is of brick, plastered; the ornamentation is carefully cut in the brick, and the plaster made to correspond to it. There are, however, ornaments on the plaster alone, but none inconsistent with the brick ornamentation below. I conclude, therefore, that the plaster formed a part of the original design. The mouldings of the basement are to a great extent gone, but from fragments here and there that exist, a close approximation can be made to what it was; some portions are, however, not recoverable. The present entrance is not the original old one, but is a modern accretion, behind which the real old doorway,

with its tall, triangular opening of overlapping courses, is hidden. This old opening is still to be seen internally; it consists of rectangular opening, 41 courses of bricks in height, over which rises the triangular portion in a series of corbels, each 5 courses in depth; the width of the opening is 4 feet 10 inches. There is no dividing sill, and from the facade of the temple it is evident that the cell, with its attached portico in the thickness of the wall itself, stood alone without any adjuncts in front. There are, however, the remains of a *mahāmandapa*, which was added on in recent times; but it is widely different in construction and in material to the old temple, and is probably not so old as the British rule in India. The object of worship inside is named Siddheswar, being a large lingam, apparently *in situ*. I conclude, therefore, that the temple was originally Saivic. Besides the lingam there are inside a naked Jain standing figure, a ten-armed female, and a Ganesa; the Jain figure is clear proof of the existence of the Jain religion in these parts in old times, though I cannot point to the precise temple or spot which was devoted to this sect. The temple had subordinate temples disposed round it in the usual manner; there were seven round the three sides and four corners, and one in front, the last being most probably a temple to Nandi, the *vāhana* of Siva. The whole group was enclosed within a square brick enclosure; subordinate temples and walls are equally in ruins now, forming isolated and long mounds respectively.”

Bānkurā— Principal town and administrative headquarters of the district, situated in 23° 14' N. and 87° 4' E. on the Kharagpur-Asansol branch of the Bengal-Nāgpur Railway. The town is bounded on the north by the Gandheswarī, and on the south by the Dhalkisor or Dwārkeswar, both rivers uniting at a place called Bhūtsahar, 3 miles to the south-east. For municipal purposes, it includes the adjoining villages of Rāmpur, Nūtachati, Kendudī, Lokpur, Rājgrām, Kānkāta, Pātpur, Gopīnāthpur, Ladihā, Murrā, Kethiārdānga, and Demurāri Gopīnāthpur, the area thus grouped together for administrative purposes being 5.96 square miles. The town proper is, however, little more than a mile in length from west to east and slightly over half-a-mile in breadth from north to south. The population,

according to the census of 1901, is 20,737, of whom 19,553 are Hindus, while 993 are Muhammadans, and 158 are Christians.

Before the opening of the railway, Bānkurā was a small and somewhat straggling town, but since then it has been expanding greatly, and new houses are springing up in every quarter. The number of those roofed with tiles or built of brick is still comparatively small, however, and almost all are thatched with straw. The public buildings, e.g., the public courts and offices, hospital, zenāna hospital, jail, post office, and Zilā school, lie in the south-western quarter of the town near the residence of the Collector, a fine bungalow in spacious grounds known as Hill House. A little further off in the same direction is the European quarter, with the circuit house, between which and the public offices are the police lines, these being the old barracks formerly occupied by the troops stationed at Bānkurā. There are three main roads running from west to east through the town, of which the middle one is lined with shops and is known as the bazar. This is the mercantile quarter, the principal merchants being mostly Mārwarīs. There is also a circular road called the Pilgrim Road, as it was made, about 20 years ago, in order to divert the stream of pilgrims, which formerly passed through the centre of the town on the way to Purī, and thereby to diminish the danger of contagion and disease. It branches off from the Bānkurā-Rānīganj road at the village of Kesiākol north of the Gandheswarī river, which it crosses in a southerly direction, joining the Bishnupur road a little to the east of Bānkurā at the tank called Nabīn Dattā's tank. Two markets are held within the municipality, one in the town and the other in the suburb of Rājgrām. The former, which belongs to the municipality, is held in a masonry structure built by public subscription in 1866, the greater portion of the cost being contributed by Rai Gadādhār Banerji Bahādur of Ajodhyā. The latter was constructed in 1888 at the cost of the municipality.

The town itself is modern, and there is no building of antiquarian interest. There are a few Hindu temples and a Muhammadan mosque, the oldest temple being that of Raghunāth at Rāmpur, which bears date 1561 of the Saka era or

A.D. 1640. A number of the modern buildings owe their origin to the enterprise of European missionaries. The first missionary who worked here was the Rev. J. Weitbrecht of the Church Missionary Society, who used to visit the town from Burdwān as far back as 1840. He never resided in Bānkurā, but established several schools, the chief of which, founded in 1846, has since become the Zilā school. The first European missionary who made his residence in Bānkurā was the Rev. J. R. Broadhead of the Wesleyan Mission, who commenced work in the year 1877 and resided here for 10 years. During that time he built the present girls' Training school in the Mission compound, the church, and other property belonging to the Mission in Lālbazar to the east of the town. In 1889 the Kuchkuchiā High school was started by the Rev. W. Spink, and the work thus begun has been carried on steadily. The Wesleyan Mission now maintains a large college and High school, a Middle Vernacular school, a female Training school, and three Primary girls' schools. The work in connection with the Leper Asylum on the outskirts of the town is also under the supervision of members of the Mission, though the buildings, which were erected in 1902, belong to the Mission to Lepers in India and the East. The town also owes to the Mission the Central Hall near the post office, built by the Rev. J. W. Duthie in 1899.

The climate of the town is dry and healthy, and the place is now beginning to be regarded as a health resort for Indian gentlemen, especially for those suffering from febrile complications, with the result that several residents of Calcutta are building houses in the town. The drainage is naturally good but there is difficulty in obtaining a good supply of drinking water during the hot weather. In the months of April, May and June, the water in most of the tanks becomes scanty, and it is necessary for the people to get water from the Gandheswarī and Dhalkisor rivers. The railway station is situated about a mile from the town itself and has removed the difficulty of communication which formerly existed, but cart and passenger traffic is still impeded to some extent by the rivers on either side. On the north there is a causeway across the Gandheswarī river, but it is often impassable for days at a time, when

the river rises in flood during the rains. On the south the bulk of the traffic is brought by bullocks and bullock carts along three main roads to the south-west, south and south-east. As the river Dhalkisor flows from west to east along the southern portion of the town, each of these roads has to cross the river before reaching the town; and as there is no causeway across this river, and it is a wide stretch of sand during the hot weather, the difficulty of bringing fully loaded carts across it is considerable.

Bānkurā Subdivision— Western subdivision of the district, lying between $22^{\circ} 38'$ and $23^{\circ} 38'$ N. and between $86^{\circ} 36'$ and $87^{\circ} 25'$ E. with an area of 1,921 square miles. The subdivision is bounded on the north by the river Dāmodar, which separates it from Burdwān, on the south by Midnapore, on the east by the Bishnupur subdivision, and on the west by Mānbhūm. It is composed of undulating country covered in many places with scrubby jungle, coppice wood and rocky boulders. The soil is mainly laterite, and sub-soil water is found at a depth of 30 to 50 feet, after impinging on hard solid rock. To the east it merges in the alluvial plain, but to the west the surface is more irregular, the undulations become more marked, and numerous low jungle-clad hills occur. Few of the hills are of any great height, but Susuniā is 1,442 feet and Bihārīnāth 1,469 feet above sea level. Here, and especially in the Khātrā and Raipur thanas to the south-west, the scenery is very like that of Chotā Nāgpur. The principal rivers are the Dāmodar to the north, the Dhalkisor and the Gandheswarī, which unite at a distance of about 3 miles from Bānkurā, the Sālī, which is a tributary of the Dāmodar, the Silai, the Jaypandā and the Kāsāi, which flow through the south-west, and the Bhairabbānkī, which flows through south of the subdivision. These rivers are hill streams, which rise in flood during heavy rain and speedily subside; but at times the floods in the Dhalkisor, Dāmodar, Silai and Kāsāi last for days together.

The population of the subdivision was 712,055 in 1901, as compared with 692,357 in 1891. The density of population is not great, for the subdivision, which lies on the fringe of

the Chota Nāgpur plateau, and is less fertile and less thickly peopled than the Bishnupur subdivision, supports only 371 persons to the square mile. It contains 4,069 villages and one town, Bānkurā, the headquarters of the district.

Bishnupur— Headquarters of the subdivision of the same name, situated in $23^{\circ} 5'$ N. and $87^{\circ} 20'$ E. a few miles south of the Dhalkisor river. For municipal purposes the town is held to include a number of villages, the area within municipal limits being 8 square miles, but the town proper is only about 2 miles in length. It has a population, according to the census of 1901, of 19,090 persons.

Historically, Bishnupur is the most interesting place in the district, as it was the capital of the Rājās of Bishnupur, who, even as late as the period of Muhammadan rule, though nominally tributary to the Nawābs of Murshidābād, frequently exercised independent powers. A sketch of the history of the house has been given in Chapter II, and it will be sufficient here to state that in the 18th century the family rapidly declined. They were impoverished by the ravages of the Marāthās, and the famine of 1771 depopulated their territory and completed their ruin. The misfortunes of the Rājā were aggravated by family dissensions and by the crushing weight of land revenue, which he was unable to pay, so that eventually his estate was sold by Government for arrears of revenue in 1806. Their estates thus lost, the Rājās were dependent upon pensions granted by Government and some revenue-free property which they had originally assigned to various idols. The income of this *debottar* property was small, however, and liabilities had been incurred which no Rājā could clear off. So far from decreasing, their debts continued to grow, and gradually most of the *debottar* property had to be mortgaged or sold to meet the demands of creditors.

The last of the Rājās was Rām Krishna Singh Deb, who died leaving no son. In obedience, it is reported, to the wishes of the Rājā, the eldest Rānī transferred the property by a deed of gift to Nīlmani Singh, a nephew of her husband. He, in his turn, became heavily involved in debt, and what little *debottar* property was left was alienated by an *ijārā* lease for 51 years,

which, however, is said to be ignored by his widow. Government has granted a pension of Rs. 75 to the Rājā's widow for her maintenance and for the education of her son, a young boy, named Rām Chandra Singh Deb. Other recipients of pensions are a niece of the late Rājā and two other widows. Though the title of Rājā died with Rām Krishna Singh Deb, and his descendants are in such reduced circumstances the leading representatives of the family are still popularly called Rājās or Rānīs, as the case may be, and are treated with great respect by the people.

Other branches of the family are found in Jāmkundi, Indās and Kuchiākol, a separation having been effected after the struggle which, as related in Chapter II, took place at the end of the 18th century between the ruling Rājā, Chaitanya Singh, and his kinsman, Dāmodar Singh. Dāmodar Singh made himself a new home at Jāmkundi, where he commenced building fortifications, which were never completed. The descendants of Chaitanya Singh are found in the ancestral home at Bishnupur and also at Indās and Kuchiākol.

Evidence of the power once held by the Rājās of Bishnupur is afforded by the remains still found in the town, though there is little beyond a number of temples and some ancient tanks to justify the tradition that "Bishnupur was the most renowned city in the world, and more beautiful than the beautiful house of Indra in heaven". The buildings, it is said, were of pure white stone; within the walls of the palace were theatres, embellished rooms, dwelling houses and dressing rooms; and there were also a treasury, houses for elephants, barracks for soldiers, stables, storehouses, armouries, etc. The city was once strongly fortified by a long connected line of curtains and bastions, measuring seven miles in length, with small circular ravelins covering many of the curtains. Within this outer line of fortifications, and west of the city, lies the citadel, and within this again the Rājā's palace. What the palace may have been in the palmy days of its ancient chieftains it is difficult to say, but at present an insignificant pile of brick buildings, surrounded by ruins, marks the site. A number of fine temples still remain,

however, to attest the former prosperity of the Bishnupur Rāj. These temples are situated partly in the modern town of Bishnupur, partly inside the old fort, and partly near Lālbāndh, a fine large sheet of water south of the fort. In the town are the temples known as Malleswar, Madan Mohan, Muralī Mohan, and Madan Gopāl; in the fort are the Syām Rai, Jor Banglā, Lālji and Rādhā Syām temples; while the Lālbāndh group includes three temples bearing the collective name of Jor Mandir, the temples called Kālā Chānd, Rādhā Gobind, Rādhā Mādhab, and another undated temple, called Nandalāl. Other undated temples in the fort are a duplicate of the Jor Banglā temple and a few minor shrines near the Rājā's palace; and in the town close to Madan Mohan is another undated temple in a dilapidated state.

According to Dr. Bloch, Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey, Eastern Circle, the twelve dated temples range in chronological order as follows* :

Date in Malla year	Date A.D.	Name of temple	By whom built
928	1622	Malleswar ...	Bīr Singh
949	1643	Syām Rai ...	Raghunāth Singh, son of Bīr Hāmbīr Singh
961	1655	Jor Banglā ...	Ditto Ditto.
962	1656	Kālā Chānd ...	Ditto Ditto.
964	1658	Lālji ...	Bīr Singh, son of Raghunāth Singh.
971	1665	Madan Gopāl ...	Siromani, queen of last Rājā.
971	1665	Muralī Mohan ...	Id. (called Chūḍāmani in the inscription).
1000	1694	Madan Mohan ...	Durjan Singh
1032	1726	Jor Mandir ...	Probably Gopāl Singh
1035	1729	Rādhā Gobind ...	Krishna Singh, son of Gopāl Singh
1043	1737	Rādhā Mādhab ...	Chūḍāmani, queen of last Rājā.
1064 (Saka 1680)	1758	Rādhā Syām ...	Chaitanya Singh

* Report. Arch. Surv. Bengal Circle, for 1903-04, and Report. Arch. Surv. Ind. for 1903-04. A different chronology is given by Mr. Beglar in Reports Arch. Surv. Ind. Vol. VIII. pp.203-205.

Regarding their general features Dr. Bloch writes: "It is not on account of their age or their historical associations that these temples claim the interest of archaeologists, but because they represent the most complete set of specimens of the peculiar Bengali style of temple architecture. This style has not yet died out. It will be familiar to any one who has taken a trip up the Hooghly river from Calcutta. All along the banks of the stream one meets with rows of six to twelve tiny little shrines with curved roofs, arranged in a line, and over these rise here and there larger buildings with one to five or even more small towers. The general principle upon which the last type is arranged is fairly simple. The temple consists of a square building with a curved roof; upon this rises one tower in the centre, either alone or surrounded by four, eight, and even twenty-four small corner towers. According to their number, the temple is called *pancharatna*, *navaratna*, etc. The main building has an open gallery, generally on three sides only, which surrounds the inner chamber or *thākurbāri*, the room where the image is placed upon the *vedi* or altar. Stairs lead up to the towers of the roof. The outside walls are covered all over with small curved brick panels, the carvings representing religious scenes, generally from the history of Krishna, or similar favourite subjects.

"In Bishnupur this type is represented by the temples of Syām Rai and Madan Mohan, built of bricks, and by those of Lālji, Rādhā Syām and Madan Gopāl, built of laterite. The first temple is perhaps the oldest specimen of the *pancharatna* type that exists in Bengal. Nowhere outside Bengal proper has this style of temple architecture been found, and owing to the late date of all the existing specimens, it is difficult to decide whether it existed at all in pre-Muhammadan times. The curved battlements of the roof, made in imitation of the roof of the ordinary village hut, certainly must have been peculiar to the architecture of Bengal before the Muhammadans took over the country, for they have introduced it into their own buildings, evidently adopting merely one of the characteristic features of the architecture of the country. Another type of modern Bengali temple is represented by the Jor Banglā in Bishnupur. In general plan it differs little from the previous type. The central *thākurbāri*

or sanctuary is surrounded on four sides by a gallery and has a few small side chambers, one for the stair leading up to the tower on top of the roof. But there is a conspicuous difference in the elevation of the main building. As its name Jor Banglā or double bungalow implies, it looks like two Bengali huts joined together. The roof likewise has one tower in the centre. The type is not so common as the *pancharatna* or *navaratna* types, but is found in other places besides Bishnupur".*

Altogether four distinct types may be distinguished. The first has a single square tower and is represented by the Malleswar temple. The second has a single tower resting on a square building with the curved Bengali roof; the best examples of this type in brick are Madan Mohan, and in laterite Lālji and Rādhā Syām. Of the *pancharatna* type, with five towers on the same building, the best example in brick is the Syām Rai temple, and in laterite the Madan Gopāl temple. The fourth type is the Jor Banglā type with two buildings shaped like a Bengali hut joined together, with a small tower on top. Among these temples the Madan Gopāl temple is unique, as it is the only specimen in laterite of the *pancharatna* type. The Jor Banglā temple is, however, perhaps the most interesting one from an archaeological point of view. The Syām Rai temple has the finest specimens of carved tiles, its walls being covered with carvings in brick; and the Madan Mohan is also a fine building in fair preservation, with a deep masonry water basin outside the temple court to the north. The oldest of the temples is Malleswar.

The materials of which the temples were built are either brick or laterite, which is easily obtained in the district. The brick temples are richly covered with carvings, and in spite of the unsuitable material, the laterite temples also have carvings here and there, but most of the latter have been covered by plaster and cement.

Besides these temples, there is a curious structure outside the fort called the Rāshmancha, a high structure which was formerly used for putting up idols during the Rāsh festival in honour of Krishna. It consists of a square chamber, surrounded

* Report. Arch. Surv. Ind. for 1903-04.

on each side by three galleries, with ten, eight and five arched openings respectively, and covered by a large pyramidal roof. Unfortunately, the building is in a very bad state of repair, and it would be too costly to restore it. The masonry work seems to have been put up in a hurry; and it is now partly fallen and loosened everywhere, so that the restoration of the building would practically involve dismantling and rebuilding it entirely.

The fort is surrounded by a high earthen wall and has a broad moat round it. The approach is through a fine large gateway built of laterite, with arrow slits on either side of the entrance for archers or riflemen. This gateway, which is known as the *Pāthar darjā*, i.e., the stone door, has a double-storeyed gallery on each side of the central passage, but the floor of the upper storey, which was originally supported by horizontal laterite beams, is now broken. In the western wall of the fort is a curious old building consisting of four solid brick walls with no entrance except from above. It has no roof, and, according to local tradition, was a dungeon in which criminals were thrown and left to die of starvation, their sufferings being aggravated by the nails which studded its bottom and sides. It appears more probable, however, that it served the prosaic but more useful purpose of a water-reservoir. The fort enclosure is a picturesque place and would be not unlike an English park, were it not for the numerous temples scattered over it.

There are also a number of cannon lying about uncared for. One of these is a remarkable piece of iron ordnance, apparently made of 63 hoops or short cylinders of wrought iron welded together, and overlying another cylinder, also of wrought iron, the whole being well welded and worked together. The indentations of the hammers and the joining of the hoops are still painfully visible. Though exposed to all weathers, it is still free from rust, and has a black polished surface. Its extreme length is 12 feet $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the diameter of the bore being $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the muzzle, and $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches throughout the remainder of its length. It is now lying half buried in the ground, and a similar gun is said to be at the bottom of one of the lakes. Tradition states that a deity gave them to one of the old Rājās

of Bishnupur, and the one still above ground is held in great veneration by the people. It is known as Dalmardan (commonly pronounced Dalmadal), and popular legend relates that in the reign of Gopāl Singh, when Bhāskar Pandit attacked Bishnupur at the head of the Marāthās, the god Madan Mohan himself fired it and repelled the invaders.

On a high rampart just outside the fort gate are four more cannon, made of wrought iron, about 5 feet long and varying in thickness from 6 inches at the muzzle to a foot at the breach. The muzzle of one is shaped like a tiger's head and has ornamental bands round the barrel; the others are plainer, but have one or two ornamental bands. Two have burst, but the other two are still fired once a year to announce to the dwellers in Mallabhūm the time of the Sandhi Pūjā on the second day of the Durgā Pūja festival. One of the former shows clearly enough the way in which it was made. Long bands of iron are placed horizontally on small iron hoops forming the bore, and this again is covered with larger wrought-iron hoops welded together, which form the outside of the barrel. It is said that there were formerly many more of these guns, and that the others are now buried in the moat at the foot of the ramparts, having been wantonly thrown down into it.

A quaint legend attaches to the introduction of the worship of the god Madan Mohan mentioned in connection with the Dalmardan gun. According to some, the idol of this god was originally in the house of a Brāhman named Dharani, who was a resident of a village in *pargana* Bishnupur. According to others, it was in the house of a Brāhman of the same name in Bīrbhūm, part of which lay within the territory ruled over by the Bishnupur Rājās. Rājā Bīr Hāmbīr, it is said, saw this idol while out hunting, and attracted by its beauty and by a sweet scent, resembling the perfume of a lily, which emanated from it, determined to secure it. The Brāhman, however, would not part with the idol, and the Rājā therefore stole and brought it to Bishnupur. The Brāhman went out in search of his beloved idol, and at last came to Bishnupur; but the idol was kept concealed, and the whole town echoed with *Harisankīrtan*, under the orders of the

Rājā. In despair, the Brāhman was about to drown himself in the river Birai, when a woman told him that the Rājā had hidden away the idol.

The Brāhman accordingly confronted the Rājā, and threatened that unless he showed him the image of the god, he would kill himself. The Rājā promised to show it to him next morning, and ordered his artisans to prepare a figure which should be its exact counterpart. This he tried unsuccessfully to palm off on the Brāhman, and at last had to show him the real idol. The Brāhman, however, still refused to part with it, until the god Madan Mohan himself appeared in a dream, and told him that he was pleased with the Rājā and would not leave him. After that, Madan Mohan remained at Bishnupur, enjoying the devout veneration of its Rājās, and numerous stories are told of his divine powers. The original idol was at last lost by Rājā Mādhab Singh, when *pargana* Bishnupur was sold for arrears of revenue. The Rājā went to Calcutta to prefer an appeal and thus regain his zamindāri, taking the idol with him, as he used to worship it every day. There he took a loan from Gokul Mitra of Bāghbazar, pledging the idol for its repayment. The Rājā lost his case, and Gokul Mitra would not allow him to take the idol away until he had paid off his debt. As the Rājā could not do this, the idol was kept in Calcutta, and there it has remained ever since.*

LAKES

In the vicinity of the town and within the old fortifications there are seven picturesque lakes, called Lālbāndh, Krishnabāndh, Gāntābāndh, Jamunābāndh, Kālīndibāndh, Syāmbāndh and Pokābāndh; the gardens and pleasure grounds of the ancient Rājās are said to have been laid out along the Lālbāndh. These lakes were made by the ancient Rājās, who taking advantage of the natural hollows, built embankments across them so as to confine the surface drainage. They served to furnish the city and fort with a never failing supply of good fresh water, and also helped to flood the moats round the forts, adding greatly to the strength of the place. But unfortunately these lakes have

* Other traditions regarding the loss of the idol will be found on p.33.

now silted up, and a considerable portion has been cultivated and turned into paddy fields.

Apart from the remains described above, there is little of interest in the town. It contains the usual subdivisional courts and offices, two Munsifs' courts, a sub-jail, High school, dispensary and inspection bungalow, which call for no description. The railway station is situated a mile from the town proper. The portion of the town occupied by the subdivisional offices goes by the name of Marāthā Chhāunī, i.e., the Marāthā camp; and south of it lies the entrance to the old fortifications which is called *Bir darjā*, i.e., the warrior's door. In the town proper the paucity of good, substantial brick dwelling-houses is somewhat noticeable. The people say that the chief cause of this was the rapacity of former Rājās, which rendered it dangerous for anyone to show signs of wealth. Under these circumstances, mud and thatch proved safer than brick and mortar; and though the immediate cause has been long since removed, the modern townsmen adhere to the unpretentious dwellings of their forefathers. Another striking feature is the number of stagnant tanks dotted all over the town, which are often a source of disease. The chief industries are the manufacture of brass and bell-metal utensils, conch shell ornaments, silk fabrics and tobacco. The silk fabrics and tobacco have more than a local reputation, and the scented tobacco made here is said to be one of the best brands in Bengal.

Bishnupur, it may be added, was formerly famous for its musical institutions, and there are still several Indian musicians of some renown, as well as a musical school.

Bishnupur Subdivision—Eastern subdivision of the district, lying between 22° 54' and 23° 25' N. and between 87° 15' and 87° 46' E., and extending over 700 square miles. It is bounded on the north by the river Dāmodar, on the south by the districts of Hooghly and Midnapore, on the east by Burdwān, and on the west by the Bānkurā subdivision. The subdivision is for the most part a flat alluvial plain presenting the appearance of the ordinary paddy fields in Bengal, but in the western portion, and in the tract bordering on the Midnapore district, the land

is undulating, the soil is lateritic, and the surface is covered with low scrub jungle. The principal rivers are the Dhalkisor, Birai and Sāli. The Dhalkisor flows nearly through the middle of the Bishnupur thana west to east. The Birai is a tributary of the Dhalkisor, and the Sāli enters the subdivision from the west and falls into the Dāmodar. The population was 404,356 in 1901 against 377,311 in 1891, the density being 578 persons to the square mile. It contains 1,523 villages and two towns, viz., Bishnupur, its headquarters, and Sonāmukhī.

Chhātnā—A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated on the Bānkurā-Puruliā road, 8 miles west of the former place. It contains a police outpost and a station on the Bengal-Nāgpur Railway. There are some remains of archaeological interest, of which the following account is given by Mr. Beglar in *The Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, Vol. VIII*. "The principal remains consist of some temples and ruins within a brick enclosure; the enclosure and the brick temples that existed having long become mere mounds, while the laterite temples still stand. The bricks used are mostly inscribed, and the inscription gives a name which I read as Konaha Utara Rājā, while the *pandit*, read it as Hamira Utara Rājā; the date at the end is the same in all, viz., Saka 1478. There are 4 different varieties of the inscriptions, two engraved and two in relief; the bricks were clearly stamped while still soft and then burnt. Tradition identifies Chhātnā with Vāsuli or Vāhuli Nagara. At Daksha's sacrifice, it is said, one of the limbs of Pārvatī fell here, which thence derived its name of Vāsuli Nagara or Bāhulyā Nagara, a name mentioned in the old Bengali poet Chandidās. Its present name Chhātnā is derived from a grove of *chātim* or *chātni* trees, which existed here. The Rājās of the country were originally Brāhmins and lived at Bāhulyā Nagara. One of them would not worship Pārvatī under her form of Vāsuli Devī, and her favour being withdrawn from him, he was killed by the Sāmantas (Saonts?) Sāntāls, who reigned a long time. At last, the people rose up and killed all the Saonts they could; one man only escaped by hiding in the house of a low caste potter (Kumhār). For this reason, to this day, the Saonts will eat and drink with the Kumhārs.

"To this man Vāsuli Devī appeared in a dream, and encouraged him to try his fortune assuring him of success. The man was filled with profound respect for her, and having undergone various fasts, etc., he gathered together 11 other Saonts and kept wandering in the jungles. One day, when very hungry, they met a woman with a basket of *kendus* on her head. She, pitying their condition, gave them one apiece from her basket; they asked for more, and she gave; but one of them impatiently snatched away one from her. However, the 12 Saonts were refreshed, and the woman was highly pleased. Calling them, she said— "Go into the jungle and take 12 *kend* or *kendu* saplings, and go and fight for your Rāj; Vāsuli Devī and I will restore your Rāj". They accordingly sallied out, killed the Rājā, and obtained possession of the kingdom again. These twelve ruled jointly; the man who had snatched the *kend* fruit died first; the remaining eleven ruled by turns till, finding it too troublesome, they agreed to give the sole power to one of their number. The descendants of these men are the present Sāmanta Rājās, who call themselves Chhatris.

"The temple is ascribed to Hamira Utara Rājā and the legend about it is that Vāsuli Devī one night appeared in a dream to the Rājā, and said— "Behold, certain cartmen and *Mahājans* are passing through your territory and are at this moment under a particular tree; they have with them a stone in which I have taken up my abode. Take it and set it up to be worshipped, for I am pleased with you, and will remain with you". The Rājā, accordingly sent men and stopped the *mahājans* and cartmen, and seized the stone in payment of ground rent for the ground they had occupied during the night. He then set it up in the temple which we now see."

Another version of these legends and a history of the family of the zamindārs of Chhātnā will be found in the article on Sāmantabhūm.

There is a tank at Chhātnā called Bolpokharia. Although small in area, it is deep, and its water never fails. It is believed to be very ancient; indeed, the family records of the zamindārs of Chhātnā refer to it as in existence before the reputed date

of the foundation of their family (1403 A.D.). A quaint legend attaches to it. It is said that in the days when the Rājās of Chhātānā were very powerful and the goddess Vāsuli was very much revered, a girl about 8 years old asked a *sāṅkhārī*, i.e., a woman selling shell bracelets, who was passing by the side of the tank, to give her some bracelets. The woman having enquired who would pay the price, she replied that her father was a certain Deghoria who worshipped Vāsuli, and that he would pay her out of the money kept in the wall of his house. On this, the woman gave her the ornaments, and going to the Deghoria informed him of what had happened and asked for the price of the bracelets. The Deghoria, who had no daughter, was surprised, and his surprise became the greater when he found money at the place mentioned. He then went with the woman to the Bolpokharia tank, and there two hands decorated with the shell bracelets appeared above the water.

Chhinpur—A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated about 5 miles south-east of Ondā, and 6 miles west of Bishnupur, at a distance of about a mile south of the Bānkurā-Bishnupur road. It contains a ruined temple built of laterite, which is said to have been erected by the Bishnupur Rājās. It is known as the temple of Syāmsundar Thākur, as it used to contain an image of that deity before it became dilapidated.

Dhalbhūm—A name given to *parganas* Supur and Ambikānagar, i.e., the tract of country comprised within the Khātrā thana. According to tradition, this tract was originally ruled over by a Rājā of the washerman caste, called Chintāmani Dhobā; and the *pai* or grain measure used in these *parganas* is still called *Chintāmani pai*. Legend goes on to say that Dhalbhūm was wrested from him by one Jagannāth Deb of Dholpur in Rājputāna, who went on a pilgrimage to Jagannāth (Purī), and on his way back paid a visit to the Nawāb at Cuttack. The Nawāb called him "Shāhāzāda" meaning a prince, and the quick-witted Rājput at once begged that the title thus given might be confirmed. Pleased by his ready address, the Nawāb gave him some of his troops to enable him to win the title by carving out a principality for himself. Jagannāth Deb then came to Supur,

attacked and defeated Chintāmani Dhobā, and became Rājā of Supur. In commemoration of this conquest, Jagannāth Deb was called Dhabal, and enjoyed the title of Shāhāzādā bestowed on him by the Nawāb. After 32 generations had passed, the Supur Rāj, as it is locally called, was divided in consequence of a disputed succession, Tek Chandra, the elder son of the Rājā, receiving a $9\frac{1}{2}$ annas share, and the younger Khargeswar a $6\frac{1}{2}$ annas share. The former continued to live at Supur, and the latter settled at Ambikānagar about 8 miles from Supur. The descendants of Tek Chandra became heavily involved in debt, and the greater portion of the Supur estate has consequently been sold. The residence of the present representative of this branch of the family is at Khātrā about two miles south of Supur. The descendants of Khargeswar still live at Ambikānagar, but their estate has been sold in satisfaction of debts. Both families are Kshatriyas by caste, and are related to the families of Bishnupur, Raipur, Syāmsundarpur and others.

Dharāpāt—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated about 5 miles north of Bishnupur, at a distance of 2 miles to the west of the Bishnupur-Pānāgarh road. It contains a temple dedicated to an idol called Syām Chānd Thākur, commonly known as Nengtā Thākur; legend relates that on the death of the founder of the temple the deity performed his *srāddha* ceremony. The reputed founder of the temple was one Advesh, Rājā of Dharāpāt; and the temple has an inscription in Bengali characters, in which the date 1626 or 1616 Saka (A.D. 1704 or 1694) can be made out. Barren women of the locality visit the shrine, and worship the idol in the hope that by doing so they will be blessed with offspring.

Ekteswar—A village situated about 2 miles south-east of Bānkurā on the north bank of the river Dhalkisor. The village derives its name from a temple dedicated to Siva, called Ekteswar, which is said to have been built by the Rājās of Bishnupur. A well in this temple contains the symbol of Siva, a lingam called *anādi*, as it is believed that it sprang up miraculously and was not fashioned by mortal hands. Large gatherings, of which a description is given below, take place here every year on the penultimate day of the month of Chaitra, and besides

that the shrine is visited daily, especially on Mondays, by Hindus who come to make offerings or to worship the god. The following account of the temple is given by Mr. Beglar in *The Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, Vol. VIII*.

“The temple is remarkable in its way; the mouldings of the basement are the boldest and the finest of any I have seen, though quite plain. The temple was built of laterite, but has had sandstone and brick additions made to it since. There are traces of three different restorations or repairs executed to this temple. The first was a restoration of the upper portion, which had apparently fallen down. In the restoration, the outline of the tower and the general appearance of the temple before its dilapidation appears to have been entirely ignored, and a new design adopted. After this, repairs on a small scale were carried out, of which traces are to be seen in various patchy portions of brick and mortar. Lastly, a series of brick arches were added in front of the temple. The object of worship inside is a lingam, which is said to have thrust itself up through the ground. Several pieces of sculpture, both broken and sound, and almost all Brahmanical, lie in groups on platforms outside, none of any special interest and none inscribed.”

Every year the *Charak pūjā* is observed at this shrine with great enthusiasm. The festival, or *parab*, commences in the middle of the month of Chaitra. On the fourteenth day before the end of the month the *pāt bhaktā*, as the chief devotee is called, shaves and prepares himself to live the life of an ascetic till the close of the festival. Long before the dawn of the next day, the loud sound of the drum awakens the sleeping inhabitants of the neighbourhood and reminds them that the great *parab* has approached. On this day the *pāt bhaktā* is admitted, for the time being, into the order of devotees, and wears the *uttariya* or sacred thread. Thenceforward, he daily takes out from the temple the *pāt* or sacred seat, consisting of a wooden plank studded with iron nails and having an iron pillow, and bathes it in a neighbouring tank. From day to day the number of devotees increases. Clad mostly in coloured clothes, with nothing but coloured napkins to protect their heads and

shoulders from the summer sun, these devotees proceed in batches to and from the temple, with baskets of flowers or garlands in their hands, followed by the beating of drums, repeating loudly and fervently the various names of the god Siva. On the 27th day of the month the majority of the *bhaktās* become initiated; and on the 28th (or the 29th, if the month has 31 days) on what is known as the *Phalbhāngā* day, they eat nothing but fruit, and have by immemorial custom liberty to take fruit from any tree or garden they like. The next day, known as the *dadurghatā* day, is the most important day of the festival, for it is the *parab* or *gājan* day.

On this day a *melā* or fair is held within a spacious compound adjoining the temple, which is attended by thousands of people of all classes, male and female, young and old, from every part of the neighbouring country, all in their best attire. The crowd becomes larger as the day advances, and is at its largest in the afternoon. The whole place is a lively market where articles of the most miscellaneous description, including toys and clay figures for children, are exposed for sale. Just before evening the *pāt* is taken to the river *ghāt*, is there worshipped by the devotees, and is then carried back to the temple, with the *pāt bhaktā* lying upon it, on his back, followed by the crowd of devotees. The pathway from the river *ghāt* to the temple is filled with a long procession of devotees, attired in their peculiar manner, with reeds, baskets of flowers, and garlands in their hands, round their heads, and round their necks. They have fasted the whole day, and have not had even a drop of water to moisten their lips, but repeat as usual, in loud voices, the various names of the great deity, and scatter flowers over the *pāt*; here and there one sees solitary *bhaktās* not walking on foot but rolling on the ground towards the temple. Later on the pathway is illuminated, not by oil lamps or candles, but by numbers of female devotees carrying on their heads earthen pots filled with burning charcoal, kept alive by pouring powdered resin over it. As night advances, the crowd gradually withdraws, and only a few spectators remain to pass the night in the holy place. Among other ceremonies performed in the darkness which follows, a great fire is lit, which is said to be an imitation

of the cremation of a *sati* or virtuous wife with the corpse of her husband, the ceremony being therefore called *satīdāha*.

The last (*Sankrānti*) day of Chaitra was the day set apart for *Charak* or swinging, which was formerly regularly practised but has now been given up. Early on the morning of the *Sankrānti* day, a ceremony known as *āgun sannyās*, i.e., walking over burning charcoal, took place. A long post of strong *sāl* wood, over 30 feet high, was set up in the open plain adjoining the temple. The top had a strong pivot, to which was affixed a large cross-beam, about 24 feet long, which revolved round it, about two-thirds being on one side and one-third on the other. A long rope was tied firmly to and suspended from the end of the smaller portion of the beam. At the other end was fastened another short rope with a large hook affixed to its lower end. This structure was known as the *charak gāchh* or swinging tree. On one side of it, a raised rectangular platform, about 20 feet high, was formed by placing four beams upon four posts planted in the ground with slender cross-beams over them.

When the people were ready, the *charak* post was sanctified by a priest with the customary *pūjā*. The smaller arm of the whirling cross-beam at the top was turned and brought over the wooden platform. The man who was to swing climbed the platform by a temporary staircase of wood with some other devotees, while two more stood below holding the longer rope in their hands. When he was ready, they would reduce the pressure on the rope, so as to make the arm of the cross-beam on their side go up and the other arm bend down. The hook was then thrust through the flesh on the back of the man; but if he showed any signs of fainting, he was not allowed to undertake the risk of swinging. Otherwise, he was lifted off his feet by the men below pulling down the other end of the beam; and one or both of them holding the large rope went quickly round the post, so as to whirl the man in the air. This continued for 10 or 15 minutes, according to the man's power of endurance, the devotee all the while uttering the names of Mahādeva and scattering flowers upon the assembled

worshippers below. His turn being over, the others would follow him one by one until it was time for them to disperse.*

Indās—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 10 miles north of Kotalpur. It is the headquarters of a thana, and contains a High school and sub-registry office. Some descendants of the Bishnupur Rājās reside in the village.

Jāmkundi—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 9 miles east of the Jayrāmpur outpost and about 12 miles north-east of Bishnupur. It was formerly the headquarters of an old family of zamīndārs belonging to a collateral branch of the Bishnupur Rājās. Rājā Gopāl Singh, one of the most famous Rājās of Bishnupur, who flourished in the first half of the 18th century, had two sons, the elder of whom succeeded his father, while the younger was given the *jāgīr* of Jāmkundi, which was afterwards converted into a zamīndāri. Dāmodar Singh, the claimant of the Bishnupur Rāj at the close of the 18th century, settled here and commenced making fortifications, which, however, were never completed. Nar Singh, the last of the line, died without issue, and his widow adopted Surendra Nāth Singh Deb, a son of Rai Rādhā Ballabh Singh Deb Bahādur of Kuchiākol. On his death in 1888, after he had attained his majority and succeeded to the estate, the zamīndāri reverted to the widow of Nar Singh. The village is also known as Telisāyar.

Khātrā—A village in the headquarters subdivision, situated 23 miles south of Bānkurā. It is the headquarters of a thana, and contains a Munsif's court and a sub-registry office. It has long been the headquarters of an influential family of zamīndārs, an account of whose history will be found in the article on Dhalbhūm.

Kotalpur—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 21 miles east of Bishnupur. It is the headquarters of a police station and contains a Munsif's court, sub-registry office, dispensary, and High school. Weaving is the principal industry, cloth for tents, bandages, etc., being manufactured in the village and in its neighbourhood.

* I am indebted to Kumār Ramendra Krishna Deb, Collector of Bānkurā, for the above account of the *Charak pūjā*.

Kuchiākol—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 10 miles south-east of Bishnupur and 5 miles south of the Jaypur police outpost. It contains a High school and Middle Vernacular school, and is a centre of betel cultivation. A large tank, called Telibāndh, on the north-west of the village forms the source of a small rocky stream. The village is the headquarters of a family of zamīndārs, belonging to a collateral branch of the Bishnupur Rājās. The founder of the family was Nimai Singh Deb, the second son of Rājā Chaitanya Singh Deb, who purchased 22 *mauzās* when *pargana* Bishnupur was sold for arrears of revenue in the beginning of the 19th century. His grandson, Rādhā Ballabh Singh Deb, received the title of Rai Bahādur in recognition of his good services and the public spirit he displayed during the famine of 1874.

Lokpur—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 4 miles north-west of Kotalpur. It contains a shrine held in great veneration by the Muhammadans of the neighbourhood, who make vows and offerings there. The local legend connected with this shrine is that many generations ago a saint named Ismail Ghāzi, who was a notable champion of Islām, warred against the Hindu Rājā of Garh Mandāran and was killed in battle. His head was removed miraculously, but a single drop of blood dropped on the spot where the shrine now stands. The latter is built of stone, and is said to have been erected in the course of a single night. The shrine is in charge of a family of local *fakīrs*, some revenue-free lands being assigned for its maintenance. In the adjoining district of Hooghly there is a legend that Shāh Ismail Ghāzi invaded Orissa with success and was falsely accused by a Hindu of attempting to set up an independent kingdom at Mandāran. He was called to Gaur and there beheaded by the order of Husain Shāh. The headless trunk straightway mounted a horse which stood near, and rode off to Mandāran, where it was buried. It seems at least an historical fact that Ismail was a general of Husain Shāh, who invaded Orissa in the beginning of the 16th century, gained a victory over the Orissan army and then returned to Mandāran (the modern Bhitāgarh in the Hooghly district), where he built a fort in which he lies buried.

Māliārā—A village in the north of the headquarters subdivision, situated a few miles south of the Dāmodar, 5 miles west of Barjorā. It contains a charitable dispensary and the residence of one of the leading zamīndārs of the district.

The family traces its descent back to Deo Adharya, who accompanied Mān Singh, the well-known Hindu general of the Emperor Akbar, to Orissa, but instead of returning to his country with Mān Singh, settled at Māliārā. Having subdued the robbers and dacoits who at that time ravaged the country under the leadership of 12 chieftains, he cleared away jungle, and brought the land under cultivation. Eventually he received a settlement of *tāluk* Māliārā from the Nawāb of Murshidābād, together with the title of Rājā; and after his death his descendants continued to hold it on payment of the fixed revenue to the Nawāb. According to the family records, the third of the line had a feud with the Rājā of Bishnupur, in the course of which he was treacherously killed after several battles, and his son Gopāl Dās Adharya was forced to pay revenue to the Rājā of Bishnupur. But the Bishnupur Rāj family declare that he was killed in open battle, after Bīr Singh of Bishnupur had been forced to invade his territory in consequence of his oppression of the people. However this may be, it appears that his descendants continued to pay revenue to the Rājās of Bishnupur; and at the time of the decennial settlement, Jai Singh received the settlement of his zamīndāri at the hands of the British Government. The present zamīndār of Māliārā is Bābu Rāj Nārāyan Chandrādhyā, whose rental is reported to be Rs. 20,733 a year, the land revenue demand being Rs. 4,377. He is a Kanauj Brāhman by caste, and is known locally as Rājā.

Raipur—A village in the extreme south of the Bānkurā subdivision, situated close to the southern bank of the Kāsāī river 36 miles south of Bānkurā. It contains a sub-registry office, police thana and charitable dispensary. It was for many generations the headquarters of an influential family of zamīndārs. Tradition relates that the founder of the family was a Chauhān Rājput, who came from Rājputāna during the reign of Mughal emperors, subdued the surrounding country, and assumed the title of Sikhar Rājā. The family founded by him

has continued in this part of the district and forms the subject of several traditions. The last Rājā of the family, having lost his principal general, Miran Shāha, in a battle with the Marāthās, committed suicide by jumping, with his wife and children, into a tank called Sikharsāyar. This is a large deep tank to the south of an old fortification called Sikhargarh, which is said to have contained the residence of Sikhar Rājā; ruins of buildings and temples are still to be found within it. On the western bank of the tank lies the tomb of Miran Shāha; he is regarded as a saint and vows are still offered at his tomb. It is said that, after the death of the last Sikhar Rājā, his *purohit* or spiritual guide succeeded him and lived at the village of Gurapārā near Raipur, but eventually the estate passed to Fateh Singh, a younger brother of Rājā Krishna Singh of Bishnupur, who had been driven away from Bishnupur, and taken shelter with the Rājā of Barābhūm. He overcame the last Rājā of the family of the Sikhar Rājā's *purohit*, settled at Raipur, and was granted a *sanad* by the Nawāb of Murshidābād, when he passed through this part of the country on his way to Orissa. The zamīndāri is involved in debt, and is now let out on *ijārā* to Messrs. Gisborne & Co. in satisfaction of debts.

Near Raipur there is a tank, called Sānkhāriā, on the bank of which is a shrine of the goddess Mahāmāyā. A legend is told about the tank similar to that already mentioned in the article on Chhātnā. The goddess, it is said, assumed the form of a girl and obtained a pair of bracelets from a *sānkhāri* or seller of conch shell ornaments. Next day a Brāhman saw the miraculous vision of a pair of hands, with these bracelets on the wrists, uplifted above the water of the tank. That night he dreamt that the goddess appeared to him and told him to go early in the morning to the tank, where he would find a piece of stone, on which her image would appear. The Brāhman did so, and having found the stone, installed it on the bank of the tank as the representation of the goddess Mahāmāyā. The Rājā of Raipur then built a shrine for her, and made grants of rent-free lands for the maintenance of her worship.

Sābrākon—A village in the extreme south-east of the headquarters subdivision, situated about 10 miles south of

Bishnupur, and 3 miles from Asurgarh. It contains a shrine with an idol of Rām Krishna, of which the following legend is told. A holy *sādhu* came from the north-west with two idols, one called Rām (Balarām) and the other Krishna, and lived in the jungle near Sābrākon. One day when he was away begging, the idols assumed the form of two boys and began to dance round the hut. A milkman happened to be passing by on his way to Bishnupur, and the boys handed him a mango, which they told him to give to the Rājā. On his arrival at Bishnupur, however, the milkman forgot all about it, and that night both he and the Rājā dreamed about the mango. Next morning, while he was going to the Rājā with the mango, he met a messenger who was coming for it. The Rājā, having heard his story, set out to see the boys, but they were no longer to be seen. He begged the *sādhu* to give him the idols, and the latter at last consented to give him one of the two. It is not known which he gave, and hence the idol is called by the joint name Rām Krishna. The Rājā erected a temple for the idol and made grants of land for the maintenance of its worship. The idol is of black stone and little bigger than half a cubit, but is regarded as being very beautiful. It is said that no bird can fly over the top of the temple, for on attempting to do so, it falls down senseless. The temple of Rām Krishna stands on the bank of a rivulet called Purānādhār, which is said formerly to have flowed round the temple; its dried-up bed can still be seen on the north and east.

Sāmantabhūm—A name given to the tract of country now comprised within the Chhātnā outpost. The traditional history of this tract is that it was conquered in 1325 Saka or 1403 A.D. by one Sankha Rai, a Sāmanta or general of the emperor of Delhi, who had fallen into disfavour and returned to his home at the village of Bāhulānagar. The tutelary goddess of the village was Vāsuli, who appeared to him in a dream and instructed him to proceed towards the east and settle at a village called Chhātnā, where there was a tank called Bolpokharia, where the goddess said she would come after two generations. Sankha Rai accordingly came to Chhātnā and having settled there, enriched himself by giving protection to all silk-merchants who passed through this part of the country. His grandson, Hāmir

Uttar Rai, enlarged the territories to which he succeeded and was given the title of Rājā by the Muhammadan Nawāb. He was, we are told, a pious Hindu, who revered Brāhmins, cherished the poor, and spent his days in the worship of the gods. His piety was rewarded; for one night he dreamed that the goddess Vāsuli appeared before him, and said— "I am pleased with your devotion and have come from Bāhulānagar with a band of traders in the shape of a grindstone. Go thou, therefore, to them and bid them give you the grindstone." The Rājā obeyed the goddess and placed the stone in a temple which he had built for it. On the stone there appeared an image, and from that day to this it has been worshipped as the goddess Vāsuli.

This Rājā was succeeded by his son Bīr Hāmbir Rai, during whose reign one Bhawānī Jhārāh, with the assistance of the Rājā of Pānchet, attacked Chhātnā and nearly extirpated all the members of the Rāj family, the Sāmantas. Twelve of them escaped and fled to Sīda (now in Midnapore), but after a time came back to Chhātnā, killed the usurper, and regained the Rāj. These twelve were sons of Bīr Hāmbir Rai and ruled over the Rāj by turn for a month at a time. during their reign, it is said, Nisanka Nārāyan, a Kshatriya of Sikāri Fatchpur, came to Chhātnā on his return from Jagannāth, and found such favour with the twelve brothers that they gave him one of their daughters in marriage, made him ruler of the country in their stead, and bestowed upon him the title of Sāmantābanināth, i.e., king of the land conquered by the Sāmantas. This title the representatives of the family still hold.

Of the three successors of Nisanka Nārāyan tradition has nothing of interest to relate, but the fourth of the line founded by him, Khara Bibik Nārāyan, is said to have given shelter to the Rājā of Pānchet, when he fled from his territory on account of some domestic feud, and to have built a temple for the goddess Vāsuli in 1656 Saka or 1636 A.D. He was killed by his son, Swarūp Nārāyan, during whose time the Marāthās made an inroad into his territory. The Rājā, we are told, defeated them in a pitched battle, cut off the heads of 700 of them, and sent them to the Nawāb of Murshidābād who, pleased with this heroic deed, granted the Rājā a rent-free *pāttā* of the whole zamīndāri,

which grant was called *Hindu Hārāmi*. He was succeeded by his son Lakshmī Nārāyan, who for some time enjoyed the zamīndāri rent-free, and when the British dominion was established, went to Midnapore and took settlement of it at an annual revenue of 2,144 sicca rupees. Of the zamīndārs who succeeded him there is little of interest to relate. In the time of the rebellion of Gangā Nārāyan, the then proprietor of the estate rendered loyal aid to Government; and during the Mutiny Ananda Lāl sent 400 men and a cannon to Puruliā to assist the authorities. The estate is now involved in debt, and the greater portion of it has been let out in *ijārā* to Messrs. Gisborne & Co. The head of the family is still popularly called Rājā, although Government does not recognize the title.

Sārengā—A village in the extreme south of the Bānkurā subdivision, situated about 5 miles south-east of Raipur. There was formerly an indigo factory here; and the place contains a station of the Wesleyan Mission, of which an account will be found in Chapter III.

Simlāpāl—A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated 24 miles south of Bānkurā. It is the headquarters of an old family of zamīndārs, who trace back their descent to one Srīpati Mahāpātra. According to the account given in the article on Tungbhūm (compiled from information furnished by former zamīndārs of Syāmsundarpur and Phulkusmā). Srīpati Mahāpātra was the spiritual guide and general of Nakur Tung and was given a grant of *pargana* Simlāpāl when the latter conquered Tungbhūm. But the Simlāpāl family state that Srīpati Mahāpātra came from Bīr-Rāmchandrapur in Cuttack to Simlāpāl, while on a pilgrimage, and conquered the surrounding country, now known as *parganas* Simlāpāl and Bhālāidihā. At first, the whole zamīndāri was called *pargana* Simlāpāl, but after the death of the seventh Rājā, Chiranjib Singh Chaudhuri, it was divided, as in the case of the zamīndāris of Supur and Ambikānagar, Syāmsundarpur and Phulkusmā, between two brothers, Lakshman Singh Chaudhuri and Laskar Singh Chaudhuri. The elder brother got a 10-annas share, now called *pargana* Simlāpāl, and the younger brother a 6-annas share, now called *pargana* Bhālāidihā. The heads of both families, who are Utkal Brāhmins by caste, are generally

called Rājās and bear the appellation of Singh Chaudhuri; other members of the family are called Mahāpātras.

Sonāmukhī—A town in the Bishnupur subdivision situated 21 miles north of Bishnupur and 11 miles south of Pānāgarh railway station. It was constituted a municipality in 1886, the area within municipal limits being 4 square miles. The population, according to the census of 1901, was 13,448, of whom 13,261 were Hindus and 185 were Muhammadans, while there were two persons belonging to other religions. The town contains a High English school, sub-registry office, charitable dispensary, and inspection bungalow, and is the headquarters of a police thana; there is also a High school opened in 1887 in commemoration of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

Formerly a large factory of the East India Company was established here, and numbers of weavers were employed in cotton-spinning and cloth-making. One of the earliest notices of Sonāmukhī occurs in the records of the Board of Revenue, and consists of a complaint made by the Company's Commercial Resident stationed there regarding obstruction to trade by the Rājā of Burdwān, upon which an officer was deputed to make an enquiry, and the Rājā was forbidden to interfere in any way with the commercial business of the Company's factories. The introduction of English piece-goods led to the withdrawal of the Company from this trade, for the local products were not able to compete with imported European articles. Formerly also the town contained an indigo factory and a Munsif's court.

At present silk weaving, pottery making and the manufacture of shellac are the principal industries of the place. The industry last named was till 10 years ago large and prosperous, and there were several lac factories established by the local merchants in the Rānchī district, to which artisans were sent from Sonāmukhī. The town itself contains a temple called Girigobardhan, which is reported to be a fine specimen of architecture and sculpture. There are numerous tanks, the biggest of which in the centre of the town is known simply as the *Sāyar*. There is also a shrine dedicated to a local saint named Manohar, which is a place of pilgrimage visited by many

Vaishnavas. A large gathering of Vaishnavas takes place annually and lasts three days, commencing on Srīrāmnavamī day, i.e., generally in the month of Chaitra.

The legend about the saint is as follows. There was a very devout Brāhman, named Srīrām Dās Adhikāri, at Sonāmukhī. One day, when he was worshipping his god Syāmsundar, the beauty of a milkmaid caused his thoughts to wander, and ashamed of his weakness he cut off his genitals and died. This Brāhman left a son and a daughter, both of whom were minors. Two days after his death, a Vaishnava came to the temple of Syāmsundar and stated that he had been sent by the deceased Adhikāri, who was going to brindāban, to look after his children and the god Syāmsundar. This Vaishnava was Manohar Dās. He brought up the children and married the daughter to a Brāhman, whose descendants became afterwards priests (*sebais*) of the deified saint. Manohar performed many miracles, cured incurable diseases, and after his death became the deity of the Tāntis (weavers) of Sonāmukhī, who then formed the bulk of the population of the town. The Tāntis set apart a small portion of their income for the maintenance of the shrine and for the celebration of an annual festival, besides gifts at the marriage of girls and other donations. A pair of wooden sandals are placed over the tomb, and are worshipped by the votaries.

Tradition says that the town owes its name to a goddess Sonāmukhī (the golden-faced), the nose of whose image was broken off by the famous Muhammadan iconoclast, Kālāpāhār.

Sonātapal—A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated 4 miles east of Bānkurā on the bank of the Dhalkisor. It contains a large temple ascribed to the Rājās of Bishnupur, of which the following account is given by Mr. Beglar in *The Reports of Archaeological Survey of India, Vol. VIII*. "Two miles north-east of Ekteswar is the village of Sonātapal; it is situated at the point where the Dhalkisor river splits into two to join again lower down. Of the two channels, the one to the left is the main one now, but, I think, the other one was the principal one before; the sandy bed marking its former extent shows

that it was larger than the left channel. Near the junction or fork of the two channels is a tall brick temple, solidly built of bricks measuring 12 inches by $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches; thirty-three courses of bricks with the interposed mud cement make up 7 feet of height. The temple is remarkably solid, the dimensions of the sanctum inside being only 12 feet square, but the great height and the material, brick, need a greater thickness than stone. The roof of the cell begins to contract by overlapping courses at a height of 18 feet. The overlaps are first of six courses each, then after four such overlaps there are five overlaps of five courses each, after which the overlaps are of four, and subsequently of three and of two courses each. The entrance is of the usual style of overlapping openings; it is 6 feet 1 inch wide. The overlaps are one of six courses, two of five courses each, seven of four courses each, five of three courses each, and one of two courses, there being altogether 61 courses disposed in 16 overlaps on each side to the point where the two sides of the triangle approach to within 4 inches of each other.

“The temple stands on a high plinth, now a shapeless mound. It does not appear, from the absence of the dividing sill in the opening, that the temple had any *mandapa* in front, and the facade is indeed complete as it is, there being no part or line where the walls of any chamber or structure in front could touch the present facade without hiding some ornament, or falling upon some moulding or ornamental sculpture. The long platform, therefore, in front of the temple (now a terrace of earth and rubbish), must have been meant for open air gatherings, as is common to this day, especially in *melās* or fairs, or for a subordinate temple facing the main one. Close to the temple, and on the low ground; which in floods is under water, are several mounds, which still yield bricks. The mounds, as well as the temple, are ascribed to Sālibāhan, and the mounds near the river are said to be parts of his *garh*, the other parts having been washed away by the left-hand channel, when the main stream first took that direction; the old name of the place is said by some to have been Hāmīradāngā. The temple was covered with plaster, and richly and profusely ornamented. The plaster,

from its ornamentation, corresponding in all parts with the cut brick ornamentation below, I consider to have formed part of the original design, and not, as is too often the case, added afterwards. The plaster has, however, come off in most parts; the top of the temple has disappeared long ago, and is now a shapeless mass of ruin, on which young trees are allowed to take root and flourish undisturbed. It is a pity that a fine temple, as this must have been, should have been allowed to decay.”

Susuniā—A hill in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated about 12 miles north-west of Bānkurā, rising to a height of 1,442 feet above sea-level. To the local sportsmen it is well known as the resort of bears, panthers, hyaenas, and other wild animals, which find shelter among its rocks and caves. The hill is also an object of interest to the Indian community from a religious point of view. There are two springs near the foot of the hill, and close to one of these is a shrine sacred to Nar Singh. Here crowds assemble every year, and in the usual Indian fashion commingle their devotions with the worldly occupations of sale and barter. Commercially, Susuniā is a valuable property, being to all appearances one vast quarry, practically inexhaustible, its circumference being over six miles. The mineralogical character of the stone is as follows. It is a pegmatite (quartz and felspar), in which the proportion of felspar is so small that it may be termed a hard, fine-grained, greyish-white laminated sandstone, with minute cloudy veins of bitaniferous iron in very fine granular specks of much brilliancy when seen in a bright light. The effects of these cloudy veins is to give to the polished surface of the stone the appearance of a very coarse, dull, yellowish grey marble speckled with black. Quarries were first opened in Susuniā in 1859 by the late Mr. Donald Campbell Mackey of Calcutta and were subsequently worked for many years by the Burdwān Stone Company. The Company, however, was obliged by financial considerations to close its operations, and disposed of its property in the hill. Recently, quarrying work was resumed during the construction of the railway through the district, when stone was required by the Railway Company for the line, Quarrying is carried on by blasting out large blocks,

which are afterwards split by steel wedges into the required sizes, and dressed in the usual way. As compared with the stone of some other Indian quarries, that of Susuniā is inferior to the products of Chunār and Mirzāpur, but is more valuable than that of Barākar.*

Telisāyar—See Jāmkundi.

Tungbhūm—A name given to the tract of country lying in the south of the Raipur thana. Tradition relates that it was so called after Nakur Tung, a descendant of Tung Deo, who came from the banks of the river Gandaki on pilgrimage to Jagannāth, where by the favour of the god Jagannāth, he was made king of Purī. His grandson, Gangādhar Tung, was informed by Jagannāth that after him there would be no king of his line in Purī, and that therefore his son should change his name and go to some other country, where he would be king. Accordingly, Gangādhar Tung's son, Nakur Tung, taking with him his wife, his treasure and some soldiers, left Purī in 1270 Saka (1348 A.D.), and after 10 years of wandering settled in 1358 A.D. at Tikarpārā, a village near Syāmsundarpur.

At that time, the part of the district now comprised within *parganas* Shyāmsundarpur, Phulkusmā, Raipur, Simlāpāl, and Bhālāidihā, was called Rājāgrām. It had hitherto been ruled by a Rājā called Sāmantasar Rājā; but this Rājā having, we are told, been destroyed with his whole family by "jumping into fire," the country remained without a ruler and was overrun by robbers. Nakur Tung, having subdued the robbers and taken possession of the country, called it Jagannāthpur in honour of Jagannāth, whose idol he had brought with him, and himself assumed the title of Rājā Chhatra Nārāyan Deb. He brought with him 252 families of Utkal Brāhmans, whose descendants are now numerous in this part of the district. To one of those Brāhamans, Srīpati Mahāpātra, who was his spiritual guide and had acted as a general during the campaign, the Rājā made over the territory now known as *parganas* Simlāpāl and Bhālāidihā, while a further grant of the land now called *pargana* Raipur was given to a member of the Sikhar Rāj family. During

* Susuniā Stone Quarries. *Statistical Reporter*. 1876.

the time of the sixth Rājā, Lakshmī Nārāyan Deb, who before his succession was called Syāmsundar Tung, a dispute arose between him and his brother Mukut Nārāyan, which ended in the apportionment of the Rāj between them. The portion that fell on the lot of the elder, is now called *paragana* Syāmsundarpur, and that which formed the share of the younger, Phulkusmā. The permanent Settlement of the two *parganas* was made with Rājā Sundar Nārāyan Deb and Rājā Darpa Nārāyan Deb respectively. The zamīndār of Phulkusmā has lost his property, as it has been sold in consequence of debts, while the representatives of the Syāmsundarpur family are in reduced circumstances, portions of the estate having been sold for liquidation of debts, while the remainder is encumbered.

To this day *parganas* Syāmsundarpur and Phulkusmā are generally called Tungbhūm or Tungābani, i.e., the land of Tung. Members of the zamīndār's family are styled Tung or Tungābanināth, and are also called Bara Tung and Chhota Tung respectively. They are Kshattrīyas by caste and are connected with the families of Bishnupur, Raipur, Supur &c.

Vishnupur—See Bishnupur.