

CHAPTER XII

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGES AND STAFF

IN 1760 the district of Burdwan together with Midnapore and Chittagong were ceded to the East India Company by Mir Kasim Khan on the deposition of Mir Jafar Khan. At that time Burdwan comprised the present district of Burdwan, Bankura, and Hooghly and one-third of Birbhum. West Burdwan was afterwards made into a separate district, and in 1820 Hooghly was also separated. Numerous minor transfers have been made to and from the district up to the year 1885, since when no change has been made. For purposes of administration the district is divided into four subdivisions with head-quarters at Burdwan, Asansol, Kalna and Katwa. The sanctioned staff subordinate to the Magistrate-Collector at the district head-quarters consists of five Deputy Collectors and occasionally a Joint Magistrate is posted here. A covenanted Civil Servant, assisted by a Deputy Collector and Sub-Deputy Collector, is in charge of the Asansol subdivision. The Kalna and Katwa subdivisions are managed by Deputy Collectors, who are sometimes assisted by Sub-Deputy Collectors. Public works within the district are in charge of the District Engineer, but the embankments and irrigation works are managed by the Executive Engineer, Northern Embankment and Drainage Division, whose head-quarters are in Calcutta.

REVENUE

Excluding land revenue the principal heads of receipt are Stamps, Excise, Cesses and Income-Tax. In 1907-08 the collections from these sources amounted (in round figures) to Rs. 19,40,000, of which Rs. 5,41,000 were realised from Stamps, Rs. 7,51,000 from Excise and Rs. 1,17,000 from Income-tax.

LAND REVENUE

The total number of estates borne on the revenue-roll of the district in 1908-09 was 5,276 with a current demand of Rs. 30,58,992. Of the number 5,024 estates were permanently settled estates with a demand of Rs. 30,35,561 ; the number of estate in 1887-88 was 4,937. The actual collections of land revenue have only increased by Rs. 5,000 during the past 30 years ; and in 1908-09 amounted to Rs. 30,68,999, of which Rs. 22,834 was realised on account of former years. The total land revenue demand is estimated at 25.15 per cent of the gross rental of the district. There are 153 Government estates consisting mainly of the lands acquired on the side of the Grand Trunk Road, and of small and unimportant estates bought in at revenue sales. Of these 120, with a demand of Rs. 6,457, have been leased to farmers for varying periods, and 33 are under direct management.

STAMPS

The receipts from judicial and non-judicial stamps increased from Rs. 4,07,000 in 1896-97 to Rs. 4,47,000 in 1900-01, and in 1907-08 amounted to Rs. 5,41,000. The expansion of industry and commerce, and the growing inclination towards litigation among the agricultural classes and petty landlords, is a sufficient explanation of the increase. Of the total receipt Rs. 4,14,000 or more than three-fourths, were realised from the sale of judicial stamps, including court-fee stamps ; while non-judicial stamps accounted from the sale of impressed stamps, which include besides general impressed stamps, salt and customs bonds, and bills of lading.

EXCISE

The receipts from excise rose from Rs. 2,75,000 in 1890-91 to Rs. 4,47,000 in 1900-01, and further increased in 1908-09 to Rs. 7,51,000, a figure which was only exceeded by three districts in Bengal, and which represents one-third of the total receipts for the entire division. The net excise revenue was Rs. 4,707 per 10,000 of the population, as compared with the provincial average of 3,191. More than two-thirds of the total excise revenue is

derived from the sale of ordinary country spirit and *pachwai*—the rice spirit which is consumed in large quantities by the Santals, Bauris, and Bagdis. In the same year the total receipt from these sources were Rs. 2,79,000 and Rs. 2,55,000, respectively. The manufacture and sale of country spirit is now carried on entirely under the contract supply system, a contract for the wholesale supply of spirit being given out to a firm of distillers. Local manufacture is prohibited and the contractors are forbidden to hold any retail licenses for its sale, but are allowed the use of distillery and warehouse buildings for the storage of the liquor. The right of retail vend is disposed of by separate shops, each of which is put up to public auction; and the retail vendors are forbidden to sell liquor except at the prescribed strengths, for which maximum prices are fixed. The returns for 1908-09 that there are 82 shops for the retail sale of country liquor, or one shop for every 32 $\frac{3}{4}$ square miles and for 18,688 persons; and the average consumption of the liquor in that year was 32 proof gallons per 1,000 of the population, a figure for larger than that returned by any other district in the division. The excess in the excise revenue from Burdwan as compared with the other districts in the division is almost entirely due to the exceptionally large consumption of *pachwai*. In spite of the abolition of 34 shops during the year the receipts on account of *pachwai* amounted to Rs. 2,49,000, or nearly half of the entire provincial revenue from spirits and fermented liquor amounted to Rs. 3,684, or more than twice the divisional average. The steady increase of recent years is attributed to the opening of new collieries and the consequent influx of highly paid labour.

The balance of the excise revenue is almost entirely realised from the sale of opium and hemp drugs. In 1908-09 the duty and licence fees on opium brought in Rs. 98,000, which represents an expenditure of Rs. 643 per 10,000 of the population. The receipts for *ganja* (*Cannabis Indica*) and the other hemp drugs amounted to Rs. 87,000, representing an expenditure of Rs. 571 per 10,000 of the population as compared with the divisional average of 396. Opium and preparations of the drug are much used as a preventive or cure for malaria fever.

INCOME-TAX

In 1907-08 the total collections on account of Income-tax realised Rs. 1,17,000, which was paid by 1,242 persons. Owing to the unusual development of the coal trade in the district, a proposal has recently been made for the employment of a special assessment staff to revise the assessments in the colliery tracts in the districts of Burdwan, Manbhum and Hazaribagh. It is probable that such a revision might effect a very considerable increase of income from this source.

REGISTRATION

There are 16 offices in this district for the registration of assurance under Act III of 1887 (now Act XVI of 1908). The District Sub-Registrar deals as usual with the documents presented at the Sadar Office and also assists the District Magistrate, who is *ex-officio* District Registrar, in supervising the proceedings of the Sub-Registrars in charge of the other registration offices. The average number of documents registered annually during the quinquennium ending in 1909 was 44,428.80, but in the five years ending in 1908 it decreased to 44,245.80, the decreases being due to the conclusion of the settlement of the *chaukidari chakran* lands. The following statement shows the number of documents registered, and the receipts and expenditure at each office in 1908 :

Office	Documents registered	Receipt	Expenditure
		Rs.	Rs.
Burdwan	4,279	14,822	11,365
Khandaghosh	2,174	2,156	1,839
Memari	3,140	3,438	3,032
Jamulpur	1,315	1,388	1,926
Raina	3,681	4,047	2,285
Sahebganj	2,641	2,920	2,533
Mankur	3,180	3,619	2,072
Guskhara	2,171	2,432	2,825
Kalna	2,542	3,098	2,496
Purbasthali	1,544	1,995	1,936
Manteswar	2,890	3,404	2,695
Katwa	3,349	4,250	2,495
Ketugram	3,152	3,533	2,176
Mangalkot	2,851	3,140	1,824
Raniganj	4,447	6,547	2,464
Asansol	2,957	4,702	1,926
Total	46,313	65,551	45,889

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

The Civil Courts at Burdwan are those of the District Judge. There are five Subordinate Courts of head-quarters presided over by a Sub-Judge and four Munsifs, and an additional Sub-Judge is usually stationed here. There are also Munsifs at Asansol, Kalna, and Katwa, who are subordinate to the District Judge. The Munsif at Asansol is at present assisted by an additional Munsif; the civil work here is increasing considerably and it is probable that the additional Munsif's Court will be permanently retained. Criminal justice is administered by the Sessions Judge, who is also that District Judge, and by the Magistrate of the district, the Subdivisional Magistrates stationed at Kalna, Katwa, and Asansol, and their subordinates. Besides the Stipendiary Courts, there are benches of Honorary Magistrates at Burdwan, Raniganj, Asansol, Katwa and Kalna.

CRIME

In the early days of the British rule the district had a very unsavoury reputation, and was overrun with dacoits who broke out from the wilderness of jungles and forest in the laterite country to the west to prey upon the unfortunate peasantry. In 1789 the Magistrate of Birbhum estimated that there were 2,000 dacoits in Birbhum, Burdwan and Rajshahi. These marauders, taking full advantage of the unsettled state of the country collected in large bodies, and on one occasion the officer charged with the duty of arresting one of their leaders asked for a battalion of sepoys and a howitzer. Frequently they were actively aided and abetted by the local zamindars or their servants. Of the dacoities committed in 1819 we read that one-half occurred in the estates of Maharaja Pratap Chand Bahadur of Burdwan, "a powerful and contumacious individual". But in his estates not a single dacoit was tried or apprehended. And in the next year the pargana of Burdwan was actually attacked by the orders of the Magistrate of Birbhum, as the zamindar would not appear to answer a charge of declining to aid

the Police. A report of the Judge and Magistrate in 1802 shows the difficulty with which our officers had to contend in dealing with crime :

"The Police establishments are certainly not adequate, the thanas are too few, and the establishments will not admit of the necessary detachments for the performance of the duties in the numerous populous villages under them and little assistance can be expected from the zamindary Pikes (*sic*) and village watchmen as these are generally found to be the offenders. The crime most prevalent is dacoity or gang robbery, which is frequently accompanied with murder." Raina thana was formerly a haunt of the Thags and in Bengal they were first found here in 1802. In 1817 it was estimated that their number was three hundred, including five Hindu and three Muhammadan women. Their descendants after the suppression of Thagi, according to popular rumour, turned to dacoity as a means of subsistence. Some of the stories still told about these robbers bear witness to their reputation for ferocity and strength, and show the terror in which they were held by the common people. One leader "could eat the raw flesh of three goats with two bottles of brandy and five pounds of bread a day." Another could fight single-handed with four soldiers. One woman of 35 years of age "twice plundered a big zamindar's house with the assistance of her husband and a sword." Another, a Muhammadan widow, at the age of 46 could ride a horse "as cleverly as an expert Captain or Colonel could do," and on one occasion, with the assistance of her old father, killed ten men who attacked them. Dacoities are still fairly common in the district, and the detection of the offenders is very difficult. It is an easy matter for the members of the gangs to conceal themselves among the numerous up-country coolies employed at the many collieries in the Asansol Subdivision, where the population is constantly fluctuating. Running train thefts are also exceedingly common between Asansol and Burdwan, and petty thefts and burglaries are very common in the Asansol Subdivision, especially in the neighbourhood of Asansol itself.

POLICE

The district is divided into 23 thanas with 9 outposts as

POLICE STATION. OUTPOST

Sadar Subdivision

Burdwan.	Bara Bazar.
	Birhatta.
	Muradpur.
	Noutonganj.
	Keshabganj.
	Kanchannagar.

Sahebganj.
Khandaghosh
Raina.
Satgachia.
Jamalpur.
Ausgram.
Galsi.
Memari.

Asansol Subdivision

Raniganj.
Kaksa.
Asansol.
Faridpur.
Barakar.

Katwa Subdivision

Katwa.	Dainhat.
Ketugram.	
Mangalkot.	

Kalna Subdivision

Kalna.
Purbathli.
Manteswar.

shewn in the statement in the margin. In 1908 the regular police force of the district consisted of the District Superintendent, and Deputy Superintendent, 8 Inspectors, 49 Sub-Inspectors, 68 Head-constables, and 552 constables, a total force of 679 men representing one policeman to every 3.9 square miles and to every 2,257 of the population. The rural force employed in the interior consists of 162 rural *dafadars* and 4,144 rural *chaukidars*, who are paid at the rate of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 a month, respectively. Until recently there were still many watchmen, who was maintained by the village community in which

he lived and whose duty was to guard the property and persons of his fellow-villagers from the attacks of dacoits, burglars and thieves. As a rule he himself belonged to some thieving gang and his engagement as watchman was simply blackmail. It is therefore hardly surprising to find that these watchmen were reckoned¹ "vile and abominable." The majority of these have now been replaced by paid *chaukidars* under Act VI of 1879 and the *chukidari* and *ghatwali* lands have been resumed and resettled with the zamindars.

There is a District Jail at Burdwan with accommodation of 271 prisoners, viz. 7 barracks for 195 male convicts and 1 for 19 under-trial prisoners, a female ward for 11 female convicts, 6 cells for male convicts, and a hospital with 36 beds for male convicts. There is also a female segregation ward with accommodation for four prisoners. The industries carried on are the manufacture of mustard oil, *daris* and carpets, *newar* tape, and wheat flour. The subsidiary jails at the 3 Subdivisional outstations have accommodation for 88 prisoners.

1. Dr. Buchanan's report on Purneah, 1810.