

CHAPTER II

HISTORY

LEGENDARY HISTORY

The early history of the Dinajpur district rests on a number of vague traditions and legends. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton refers to the extreme obscurity of these traditions, owing to the Hindus, by whom they have been preserved, having been at one time nearly eradicated. The historical account given below is mainly based on that of Dr. Buchanan Hamilton supplemented by a history of the Dinajpur Raj, from the pen of Mr. E. B. Westmacott, who between 1868 and 1877 spent some six years in the district, first as Joint Magistrate and subsequently as Collector.

The earliest legends place the district under the Government of Parasuram, a powerful monarch, whose capital was Mahasthan in Bogra. This monarch is believed to have been a sixth incarnation of the god Vishnu. Later, dinajpur is mentioned as the home of the Hindu sage Valmiki, who gave shelter to Sita, the exiled spouse of Ram, King of Ajodhya (Oudh) and the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. Tarpanghat on the Karatoya river in the Nawabganj thana is still pointed out as the place where Valmiki bathed and performed religious rites, and a mound of bricks near by,

known as Sitakot, is said to have been the residence of Sita. We next find Bali Raja, an Osur or worshipper of Shiva, governing the country. He is chiefly known as being the father of Ban Raja, a mighty hero with a thousand arms, who fought with Krishna, King of Brindaban and Mathura, and the 8th incarnation of Vishnu. The latter is said to have invaded the country and defeated Ban Raja, who, however, was saved by his patron Shiva, and escaped with the loss of 998 of his arms. Malarial fever is said to have made its first appearance during this war. The thana of Gangarampur is full of relics of Ban Raja. At Bannagar on the east bank of the Punarbhaba are to be seen the ruins of a town and palace where this prince is supposed to have lived. About 6 miles south of the thana is Tapandighi, the largest tank in the district, said to have been dug by him. Here tradition says he swung for 1,000 years from hooks passed through the skin of his back, in honour of Shiva. At Bannagar are the sacred pools Amrit Kunda and Jivat Kunda bestowed by this god on Ban Raja, and originally endowed with the properties of conferring life and immortality. Another large tank Kaladighi, dug by orders of Kala Rani, queen of Ban Raja, lies about two miles to the east of the thana. Traces of this prince are found in Nawabganj thana also, where some ruins in a forest are said to be the remains of one of his residences. The next great personage about whom tradition gathers is Virat Raja. This monarch was a contemporary of Bhagadatta, King of Kamrup, and the Karatoya formed the boundary between the two kingdoms. In his days Dinajpur was called Matsya Desha, or the fish country. He is said to have helped Judisthir, the eldest of the Pandavas, in his fight for the supremacy of India. There is considerable doubt as to whether this monarch preceded or followed Ban Raja. Traces of Virat Raja are to be found at Kantanagar in the Birganj thana, where the remains of an old fort are pointed out as the place where he kept his cattle, while Ghoraghat, in the south-west corner of the district, derives its name from the fact that Virat Raja kept his horses there. Some nine miles south-west of Ghoraghat are the ruins of his palace. Bhim, the warrior hero of the solar race, and brother of Judisthir, appears to have visited the district in Virat's reign and some stone implements of agriculture attributed to him are still preserved near Parbatipur.

It is not until we get to the Pal dynasty that there is THE PAL DYNASTY

much foundation for the stories told about the successive rulers of the district. The Pal Rajas were princes of Gaur, a name which seems to have applied rather to the whole province, of which Dinajpur formed the principal part, than to the city of that name situated in Malda, which was probably not built till later. The founders of this dynasty appear to have come from western India and to have become Buddhists. Traces of them are found in various parts of the district, but principally in the south-east. An inscription on a pillar near Mangalbari, in Patnitola thana, known to archaeologists as the Badal pillar and to the villagers in the vicinity as Bhim's Oxgoad (Bhimer Panthi) gives a genealogy of the family, and mentions especially Rajas Devi Pal, Sura Pal and Narayan Pal as the rulers of an important kingdom with many subject chiefs.

A large tank or dighi in the Bansihari thana bears the name of Raja Mahipal, who, according to an inscription found at Nalanda, reigned about A. D. 856. The village of Mahipur and pargana Mahinagar in the vicinity are apparently connected with the same monarch. The sites of the palaces of a number of other princes of this dynasty are to be seen in Bogra, and there is reason to believe that the province of Gaur under their rule extended from Rangpur to Monghyr, and was famous throughout India. There is no certainty as to how long the rule of these princes lasted, but before the Muhammadan conquest in A. D. 1203, the Sen dynasty had supplanted them, and had made the city of Gaur, the ruins of which are still to be seen in Malda, their capital. It is believed that the Pals retired before them into Kamrup.

THE SEN DYNASTY

The Sen kingdom was divided into six provinces, the central one being Gaur, surrounded by the other five, Barendra, Banga, Bagri, Rarh and Mithila. Notwithstanding the statement made in the Badal pillar inscription that the Pal kingdom was bounded on the north by the Himalayas, it is improbable that the rule of the Pals or their successors the Sens extended to the northern portion of the Dinajpur district, and the fact that the Muhammadan power which overthrew the latter had an outpost at Damdama on the Punarhaba, some 18 miles south of Dinajpur, shows that the kingdom of Gaur extended no further north than this. The fact that there are no remains connected with the Sen dynasty in the district would seem to indicate that their

rule was a short one. Adisur, the first of the line to succeed the Pals, reintroduced Brahmanism, and brought several families of Brahmans from Kanaouj in upper India. The most famous member of the family appears to have been his son Ballal Sen, who is credited with the reorganisation of the caste system, and the introduction of Kulinism. These rulers resided sometimes at Gaur and sometimes at their earlier capital Bikrampur, near Dacca. The last of them, Raja Lakshman Sen, made Nadia his capital, and after his defeat by Bakhtiyar Khilji, the Viceroy of the Afghan Emperor of Delhi, escaped in a boat to Bikrampur, from which place he made terms with the conqueror.

Bakhtiyar Khilji, after destroying Nadia, made Gaur his capital. The early Muhammadan rulers of Gaur were for about a century and half no more than the viceroys of the emperor of Delhi, but the great power enjoyed by them, and the distance of their seat of Government from Delhi, tempted them finally to assert their independence. Ala-ud-din, who reigned from A. D. 1340 - 42, was the first to refuse tribute. His successor, Shams-ud-din, was attacked by the Emperor Firoz Sha, and forced to fall back upon Ghoraghat. Terms were arranged between him and the Emperor, and the latter returned to Delhi, leaving him in enjoyment of his post. At the beginning of the 15th century Gonesh, a Hindu Hakim or Raja of Dinwaj, and the ostensible founder of the Dinajpur Raj, becoming powerful, defeated Sahab-ud-din, ruler of Gaur, and seized the reins of Government in favour of his son, Jadu or Jital. The latter became a convert to Muhammadanism and adopted the name of Jalal-ud-din. There is some doubt as to whether this Jalal-ud-din really was the son of Gonesh, as we hear of the latter defeating and imprisoning him. He again came to the throne, on the death of Gonesh probably, and is notorious for having compelled all the Hindus in Dinajpur, except those who escaped into the neighbouring kingdom of Kamrup, to embrace the Moslem faith. Jalal-ud-din was succeeded by his son Ahamad Shah, who, after a reign of three years, was murdered in A. D. 1426. This ends the connection of the family of Gonesh with the Government of Gaur. From the time of Jalal-ud-din to that of Husain Shah (A. D. 1497 - 1521) little is known of the history of Dinajpur. There is reason to suppose that in the reign of Husain Shah the Hindu chiefs in the northern portion of the district began again to show signs of activity,

THE AF-
GHANS



as we find the former strengthening the military posts at Damdama and Ghoraghat, apparently as a defence against some menacing power or powers in the north and east. The remains of a fine military road constructed by this ruler, and extending across the south of the district, from Damdama to Ghoraghat eventually formed the basis of a District Board road, which is still kept up. It is possible that Mohesh Raja, the remains of whose palace are to be seen near Hemtabad, and who was a person of some consequence, lived about this period, and that Husain Shah was the Muhammadan ruler who overthrew him. Notwithstanding this apparent activity and the part of Husain Shah in protecting his frontier, history shows that during all this period the viceroys of Bengal were more occupied with the course of affairs in Delhi than with their northern boundary, and during the wars between them and the emperors of Delhi their Hindu subjects found ample opportunity of acquiring wealth and power.

The Muhammadan rulers of Gaur at this time were fanatics in religion, and were greatly under the influence of men dedicated to a religious life and called Pirs or saints. In every part of the district are to be found the tombs or monuments of these personages, many of them erected on the ruins of older Hindu buildings, probably temples, which in their iconoclastic fury they had destroyed. Many of these monuments are still resorted to by the Muhammadans of the district for purpose of worship. Some interesting mosques also, the remains of which are still to be seen, date from this period. Among the most noteworthy of these buildings may be mentioned the tomb of Pir Bazar-ud-din, near Hemtabad, which is still in a fair state of preservation, and shows distinct signs of having been built with the materials of some Hindu house, probably that of Mohesh Raja, in whose expulsion this saint had some hand. Not far from this is the ruin of a quadrangular pyramid called Husain Shah's *takt* or throne, or which the tombs of two other saints have been erected at some later period. The presence of this so-called throne of Husain Shah affords evidence that he was the Muhammadan ruler who defeated Mohesh Raja. The erection of such a pyramid would be a natural way of celebrating his victory. Near Damdama on the site of the Punarbhaba, the present Gangarampur thana headquarters, previously mentioned as having been a Muhammadan military out-

post, is a fine tank called Dhaldighi, evidently made for the benefit of the garrison, and on its banks are a small mosque and the monument of the saint Mullah Ata-ud-din. From an inscription on the mosque, the material of which tradition says were brought from Bannagar, it appears that it was built by the commander of the troops in the reign of Husain Shah. As I have said, the remains of these mosques and monuments are very numerous throughout the district, but few or none have any claims to architectural distinction, while extremely little is known of the so-called holy men in whose honour they were erected. One of the best known of these saints appears to have been Saiyid Nekmardan, in memory of whom a great fair or *mela* is still held at Nekmarad in the Ranisankail thana. No proper monument of this saint is preserved, but Nekmarad, the place where he lived, is regarded as especially holy.

Although the military posts at Damdama and Ghoraghat indicate that the northern boundary of the kingdom of Gaur, so far as the Dinajpur district is concerned, terminated here, yet there is little doubt that the Muhammadan generals made frequent expeditions into the regions further north, such as the raid in which Mohesh Raja fell, and it is even likely that individual leaders established themselves at least temporarily in favourable spots beyond the frontier. Two miles south of Raniganj in the jurisdiction of Atwari outpost, in the extreme north of the district, there is a very interesting fort attributed to Karam Khan, a Muhammadan general of this period. This is surrounded by a lofty double rampart and a moat, and contains a fine tank which, lying as it does east and west, indicates its Muhammadan origin. It is far the finest specimen of a fort extant in the district, and must have been in its day of considerable military strength. An interesting circumstance is the presence of a larger but much less scientifically constructed fort close to it, on the north, where a Hindu Raja is said to have lived, and to have carried on hostilities with the Muhammadan garrison. The history of the Afghan rulers of Gaur who succeeded Husain Shah, has little concern with the Dinajpur district. They seem most of them to have come to a violent end, and to have enjoyed reigns more or less to brief.

In A. D. 1526, the Moghals seized the empire of Delhi, and thirteen years later the Emperor Humayun invaded Ben-
T H E
MOGHALS

gal, and, after having forced the Afghan Shere Khan to retreat, seized Gaur, and established his general Jahangir Kuli Beg on the throne. Shere Khan, however, managed to rally the scattered Afghans, and falling on the Emperor on his way back to Delhi, defeated him and regained the sovereignty of Bengal. Shere Khan and his successors maintained their independence till A. D. 1576, when Daud Khan suffered defeat at the hands of the Moghals, and the whole of Bengal returned again to the dominion of Delhi. With Daud Khan ended the sovereignty of the Afghan princes of Gaur which had lasted nearly four centuries.

THE DIN-
AJPUR RAJ

In the reign of Akbar we find the first authentic traces of the great zamindari family of Dinajpur, with which for the next two centuries the history of the district is closely interwoven. To quote Mr. Westmacott : "In A. D. 1600, Akbar divided the empire into 15 Soobas, and made his son Selim Soobadar of Bengal. The Sooba was divided into 24 sarkars, and parts of six of these sarkars fall within the limits of the district of Dinageepoor. About the time of Akbar's settlement there was at Dinageepoor, at the place from which Gonesh, less than two centuries before, derived his title, a man, possibly of the blood of Gonesh, in possession of a considerable part of what are now the districts of Dinageepoor and Maldah. Buchanan calls him Kasi, but whether he is correct or not, the name is now utterly forgotten. His grave is shown at the door of the Mondeer in the Rajbaree, and offerings of cloth, curds, rice, and plantains are regularly made upon it. His life is reputed to have been very holy, and he is spoken of as a Brahmocharree, Mohonto, or Gosain. It is said that the nucleus of his estate was certain land with which an image of Kalee, named Kalika, and worshipped to the east, was connected, and that in addition to this he became possessed of an image of Krishna named Kaliya, endowed with the whole of the Sarkar, or Havelee, of Panjara. The estate of Dinageepoor was frequently spoken of as Havelee Panjara, even when it included land in several other Sarkars. Had the estate really been a debuttar, or endowment of gods, Raja Radhanath would probably have brought the fact forward as an argument, when in A. D. 1798 he urged all in his power to prevent the sale of the land on which the Rajbaree and family temples stood; but he does not mention it, and it is probably a tradition of recent origin. It is much more probable that the estate dated from

earlier times, possibly from those of Gonesh." It appears that this Brahmachari left his estate to a disciple, Srimanta Datta Chaudhuri, a Kayastha householder, who came originally from the east. He had a son and daughter, but the former dying without issue the estates fell to Sukdeb, the daughter's son. Westmacott describes this property according to the thana divisions they existed in his time as follows: "Including the whole of Thana Thakoorgaon in the north, the western boundary passes through Ranisonkoil, taking in Pergunna Borogaon, but excluding Kholora and Maldwar, and through Hemtabad, including Mohasoo but not Tajpoor, nor any part of Thana Kaliyaganj, except the northern corner which falls within Pergunna Bajitpoor. This line excludes the estates of Maldwar, Tajpoor, Horeepoor, and Chooramon, which were added to the Collectorate of Dinageepoor, but never formed any part of the zamindar's property. Passing southwards, the boundary takes in half of Thana Bansiharee and from Kordaho runs eastward excluding Pergunna Kordaho, across the middle of Thana Gangarampoor, through Patiram, excluding Pergunna Sontosh, and then finally turns northwards towards Thakoorgaon, including the whole of the Thanas Chintamon, Rajarampoor, Peergunj, and Beergunj. The northern and central part of the estate was in Akbar's Sarkar Panikot, the western in Sarkar Tajpoor, and Bongshiharee and part of Gangarampoor in Sarkar Jonotabad. Besides the lands within the boundary, much of the northern part of the district of Maldah including the old city of that name, belonged to the estate.

In the time of Sookdeb, or of his father, the family of Khetlal became extinct and its estates were divided, seven-sixteenths coming to Sookdeb Roy, whose father and grandfather may have inherited the office of Dewan from their ancestor, and the remaining nine-sixteenths falling to another officer, who founded the family of Bordonkootee or Idrakpoor, still in existence. The lands thus added to the estate are in Sarkar Ghoraghat and comprise the thanas of Nawabganj and Ghoraghat, and in Bogra the thanas Khetlal, Sheebgunj, Panchbibee, Bodolgachee, and Adamdighee, and perhaps more. Buchanan says that Pergunna Khatta in Bodolgachee was conquered and divided by the Rajas of Natore and Dinageepoor in Ramnath's time; and that Pargunna Khangor in Panchbibee was a joint acquisition with the

Jehangirpoor family in Ramnath's time; but Raja Gobindonath makes them part of Sookdeb's property. The Zemindars of Dinagepoor and Idrakpoor in place of dividing the lands, each retained a share in every village, which caused much inconvenience when in after days the one estate was under the Collectorate of Dinagepoor, while the other was under Rungpoor. Sookdeb Roy died A. D. 1677. It is said that the extent of his possessions induced the Mohammedans to bestow upon him the title of Raja, but the sunnud is no longer in existence. Nothing is known of his personal character, or of his history; he perpetuated his name by digging the tank of sookhsagor or the 'Sea of Pleasure'."

Sukdeb left three sons, of whom the eldest died young, the second reigned for five years, from A.D. 1677-1682, and was succeeded by the youngest, Prannath, who reigned for forty years. A sanad, dated A.D. 1679, granted by Azim-ud-din Mahmud in the reign of the Emperor Alamgir, is still preserved in the Rajbari, in which the succession of some one to Sukdeb's property is recorded. Unfortunately the name of this successor is obliterated.

The ousting of the Afghans from Bengal appears to have brought that province little closer to the throne of Delhi than it was under its former governors. The rule of the Mughal viceroys was a repetition of that of their predecessors, so far as their relations with the Emperor were concerned. The constant bickering that went on with the central power distracted their attention from their Hindu subjects, and the Raja of Dinajpur was permitted to rule undisturbed over some three-quarters of a million of people, on condition of paying a certain portion of his revenues to the Subahdar of Bengal.

Prannath reigned for forty years and is credited with having made considerable addition to his ancestral property. He appears to have been a powerful and unscrupulous prince, and the additions referred to were probably acquired by force of arms. It is hard at this distance of time to ascertain exactly what these lands were, but tradition says that besides Pargana Maligaon forming the eastern half of thana Bansihari, and a considerable area in Malda, he absorbed some 12 small estates which were surrounded by the Raj property. He has commemorated his name in various parts of the district. Twelve miles south of Dinajpur town on the

Murshidabad road is a fine tank named Pransagar, or the "Sea of Life" which he constructed. This is still in a perfect state of preservation, and probably through the interest taken by the family in their illustrious ancestor, it has been kept free of the weeds and jungle, which spoil the appearance of many of the old tanks in the district. Twelve miles north of the town on the Darjeeling road is the temple of Kantanagar, built, though not finished, by this prince. It is picturesquely situated on the banks of the Dhepa, and is a fine specimen of the part of the time, being decorated all over with terra-cotta reliefs. In the course of centuries this temple fell into considerable disrepair and was greatly damaged by the 1897 earthquake. It is now in process of restoration by the present Maharaja Girijanath Roy Bahadur. Prannath's favourite country seat is said to have been at Prannagar, on the road between Birganj and Thakurgaon, but the remains of the original buildings have almost disappeared.

During the reign of Prannath Mir Jafir became Subahdar of Bengal and signalised his rule by making a new settlement of the province. This superseded that of Todarmal made in the reign of the Emperor Akbar. This new settlement divided the province into Chaklas, and the principal Hindu subjects of the viceroy become Chakladars, and were made responsible for the collection of the revenue. The most important of these zamindars adopted the title of Raja, and many of them retain it to this day. Having no son, Prannath adopted a young relative named Ramnath, who on his succession to the *gadi* paid a succession fee of Rs. 4,21,450 to the Subahdar of Bengal. This prince is popularly supposed to have been even more powerful and unscrupulous than his predecessor, and to have been in addition a warrior of considerable personal prowess. His mail shirt and spear were preserved in the Rajbari down to a late period. He seems further to have been a *persona grata* with the Subahdar of Bengal who granted him three sanads, conferring on him additional estates in thanas Patiram, Patnitola and Gangarampur. Ramnath conquered and dispossessed the zamindar of Gobindnagar, near the present village of Thakurgaon, employing a Brahmin to steal his protecting deity or family idol Gobinda, and thus causing his downfall. The conqueror subsequently constructed a canal connecting Gobindnagar on the Tangan with Prannagar near

the Punarbhaba for the purpose of taking the idol backwards and forwards between the two places. This canal is still in existence and is called the Ramdanra. Tradition says that in the reign of Ramnath, Saiyid Muhammad Khan, Nazim of Rangpur, stormed and plundered the Rajbari, near the town of Dinajpur, but whether the former drove him out, or came to terms with him, is not stated. In Stewart's *History of Bengal*, this Nazim of Rangpur is called Saiyid Ahamed, and this incident is thus described: "About this period Sayid Ahamed, the second son of Hajy Ahamed, who upon the succession of Shujaa Adeen Khan had been appointed Foujadar of Rangpur, and who is accused of having ruled that district with great oppression, having procured from Moorshudabad a considerable army, invaded Dinagepore and Couch Beyhar, and after compelling the Rajas to take refuge in the woods and mountains, got possession of those countries, together with the immense treasures which the Rajas and their ancestors had amassed." It is doubtful whether this catastrophe was so serious as Stewart makes out, as the Dinajpur Raj is generally supposed to have attained its greatest splendour under Ramnath, who reigned for a long time after this. After the retirement of the invaders, Ramnath reconstructed the Rajbari, and also dug the famous Ramsagar tank 4 miles south of the town on the Murshidabad road. This, like the Pransagar tank, is still well preserved, and with its fine embankments, dotted with palm-trees, is one of the most picturesque spots in the district. Ramnagar, a part of Dinajpur town, and Rajarampur, where he built a temple to Kafi, are called after Ramnath. Raja Ramnath died in A. D. 1760, and was succeeded by his son Baidyanath. The latter appears to have had some dispute with his other brothers about the succession to the property, as a manuscript signed by Muhammad Jafir Khan, Subadar of Bengal, is still preserved, in which Baidyanath is declared the rightful heir of his father. Baidyanath is said to have been of a quiet disposition and rather weak-minded, and to have allowed the Brahmins to get rather the upper hand of him.

THE BRITISH

In A. D. 1765, the British obtained the Diwani of Bengal, with the right of collecting the revenues, and in A. D. 1772 or thereabouts an English collector or chief of the revenue was appointed to the zamindari of Dinajpur. It is probable that the strictness with which the collection of the

revenue was henceforth made, under the new regime, is accountable for the decline in prosperity of the family, which began about this time. The Collectorate records do not begin till A. D. 1786, and the first Collector, Mr. Marriott, appears to have only been a Collector in the more limited sense of being responsible for the payment of the Government revenue. Mr. Redfern and Mr. Vansittart, who were appointed subsequently for short periods, were probably in the same position. Mr. Hatch, who was appointed Managing Collector of the Dinajpur Raj in 1786, and was vested with judicial powers and jurisdiction over the greater part of the area covered by the present districts of Dinajpur, Malda, and Bogra, was the first District Officer in the modern sense of the term. From this time on we have a regular record of the administration of the district.

In A. D. 1780, Raja Baidyanath died without an heir, and his widow Rani Saraswati adopted a young boy named Radhanath, and, on payment of succession fee of 730 mohars, obtained from the British a sanad declaring Radhanath successor to Baidyanath. This sanad detailed the lands composing the estate, and was signed by Warren Hastings. During the minority of Raja Radhanath the estates were managed first by Raja Devi Singh of Dilwarpur, in Murshidabad, and afterwards by one Janaki Ram Singh, brother of the Rani Saraswati. The latter kept great state in the Rajbari, but failing to understand the strictness of the British revenue system fell into arrears with his payments, and was removed by orders of the Board of Revenue. In A. D. 1787 Ram Kanta Ray, a relative of the family, was installed as manager. He seems to have discharged his duties well, but had little influence with the young Raja, whom his adoptive mother, incensed at the treatment meted out to her borthor, Janaki Ram, did all in her power to alienate from the English.

Westmacott comments thus on this attitude of the Rani: "The Rance's fellings of hostility against the British rule are pardonable. Her husband for 20 years had reigned almost as an independent prince, and after his death her brother Janokee Ram had maintained an equal state. Suddenly her brother was called upon to pay his revenue with a punctuality never known before, and on default was sent in custody to Calcutta, and she never saw him again. The collections of the estate were taken entirely out of the hands

পরিগ্রহ সংখ্যা ১১৫৭
 তার সংখ্যা
 কোলা গ্রহণের নং দিনাজপুর
 ২/২/১০৭

of the family, and even the expenses of repairs of the Rajbaree and the monthly wages of the servants, were defrayed by Government orders without reference to her wishes. The herd of buffaloes belonging to the Rajbaree was sent to the uncultivated part of the district as a public nuisance, and man of the consecrated cattle were sold. The Raneé was not even allowed to take care of her adopted son, 9 or 10 years old, but he was made over for education to the manager, Ram Kanto Roy, for whom she had a strong personal aversion. At the same time the income of the zamindaree was being decreased by the abolition of all the illegal taxes and cesses which the Rajas had collected as long as she could remember and by the determination of Government that the family charities were to be paid out of the privy purse and not out of the Imperial revenue as heretofore. She was naturally in no temper to look on Mr. Hatch's reforms as beneficial or to acquiesce in the action of Government."

In A. D. 1792, Raja Radhanath was placed in charge of his estate, a year or so after the conclusion of the decennial settlement. For a year things went smoothly, but in A. D. 1793, when Mr. Hatch was promoted to the Board of Revenue, and Mr. Eliot succeeded him, the Raja adopted as his advisers the creatures of the former manager, Janaki Ram, and soon got the estate in difficulties. His mismanagement was carried so far that in 1794 his seal was seized and locked up in the Collector's treasury, and Ram Kanta Ray was again appointed manager. The Raja appears to have been reinstated about A. D. 1796, and lost no time in pursuing his former course of action. In A. D. 1797 arrears of revenue having accrued to the extent of some 70,000 rupees, by order of the Board of Revenue part of the estate was sold. In the following years, as the revenue continued to be in arrears, further sales were effected, and the affairs of the estate went from bad to worse. The Raja struggled to save his estates by raising money on mortgages, (one of his principal creditors being Ram Kanta Ray,) and buying back parts of his estate under assumed names. His own wife Rani Tripura Sundari and the old Rani Saraswati also purchased lands to a considerable extent. By the close of A. D. 1800 almost the whole estate had been alienated, and the Raja was virtually a prisoner in his own house, as his creditors were threatening to seize his person and have him impris-

oned. Raja Radhanath died in A. D. 1801 at the early age of 24. Opinions may differ as to the expediency of breaking up this large and ancient estate, but there can be no question that the policy of Government, however legal, was unduly harsh. The district of Dinajpur was remote from such great centres as Calcutta, Murshidabad, Patna, and Dacca, and this, combined with the fact that it had an evil reputation for unhealthiness, precluded wealthy purchasers from bidding for the estate lands. As a consequence, the lots into which the property had been divided fetched much less than their real value, some of them scarcely bringing in so much as the amount of their annual revenue. The rule of selling to the highest bidder was strictly complied with, and the principal purchasers were the estate servants, the amlas of Government, and local zamindars and merchants. It might be urged in defence of the policy pursued that such a large possession as that of the Raja of Dinajpur was a standing menace to Government, and that the breaking of it up was essential to the peaceful administration of the district, but there is nothing to show that such was actually the feeling of the British authorities.

With the breaking up of the Dinajpur Raj the history of the district ceases to be of interest to the outside public. The old saying that "happy is the country that has no history" may fairly be applied to Dinajpur, in which no important events of a political nature have occurred to disturb the even tenor of administrative and material development. The gradual rise in importance of agriculture, the progress of education, the development of the means of communication, and the improvement of the various branches of administration, are described in their appropriate chapters. But before bringing this chapter to a close, a few events, not treated of elsewhere, may be briefly mentioned.

On the death of Raja Radhanath in 1801, his widow adopted a child named Govindanath, who took possession of the remnant of the family estates in 1817. This Raja appears to have been a capable man and did a great deal to restore order in the affairs of the family and to regain some of its lost possessions. On his death in 1841, his eldest son having predeceased him, he was succeeded by his youngest son Taraknath, who died childless in 1865, leaving the property to his widow Rani Shyam Mohini. The latter adopted a son named Girijanath who is the present Maha-

raja. In 1874, the year of the great famine, the Rani earned the gratitude of Government by her generous contributions towards the relief of distress and received the title of Maharani in recognition of her services. Shortly after his accession to the *gadi* the title of Maharaja was conferred upon her adopted son. The family claim that this is no new honour, but merely the revival of the title given by the Emperor of Delhi to Raja Baidyanath shortly before the British occupation. For some reason, which is rather hard to explain, the title of Maharaja Bahadur fell into disuse after the British occupation and in the old records in the Collectorate the zamindar is invariably referred to as the Raja simply. It is said that after the mutiny of 1857, during which the Raja remained loyal to Government, the Governor-General Lord Lawrence, with a view to reviving the old titles asked to see the *farmans* which had been granted to the family in Muhammadan times. These were accordingly despatched to Calcutta by boat in charge of the principal agent of the estate, but near Navadwip on the Ganges the boat was overtaken by a violent storm and foundered with all on board. The *farmans* being all lost it was no longer possible to prove the Raja's claim to the higher title and the matter was allowed to drop. In 1906, just after the partition of Bengal, the further title of Bahadur was bestowed upon the Maharaja, for his loyal support of Government at a trying crisis. The privilege of maintaining a force of 100 armed retainers was also granted at the same time. The estate of the present Maharaja, though woefully diminished as compared with those of his ancestors, is still the largest in the district, and pays an annual revenue of about Rs. 1,75,000 on a gross rental of about Rs. 3,50,000.

In the early part of the last century there were many indigo factories in the district, but the business does not seem to have ever been a very paying one, and the factories have long since disappeared, though the remains of old vats may still be seen here and there buried in jungle. The planters did not usually grow their own indigo, but got the raiyats to grow it for them in consideration of advances made to them for the purpose. The growing of indigo never became popular with the cultivators as the landlords were against it and put an end to all chances of profit by exacting an extra heavy rent for land on which indigo was grown. The indigo-planters were unpopular with both landlords and

rai-yats, the former alleging that they were quarrelsome and overbearing in their manners and fond of interfering between themselves and their rai-yats, while the latter accused them of compelling them to grow indigo against their will and complained that the factory amlas cheated when measuring land and weighing the crop. The planters retorted by saying that the reason for their unpopularity with the zamindars was that the presence of members of the dominant race on their estates affected the prestige of these latter with the cultivators and prevented them from resorting so freely to the illegal extortions of which they were so fond. It is impossible to judge, at this distance of time, what the rights of the matter were, but it seems probable that the presence in the district of a body of Europeans who were not amenable, in virtue of their nationality, to the laws of the Company, must have hampered the district authorities considerably. The names of two of the earliest indigo-planters have come down to us. These were Mr. Carey and Mr. Thomas who in 1793 established factories at Madnabati and Mahipaldighi, respectively, with funds furnished by a Mr. Udney, an indigo-planter of Malda. Both the first-mentioned gentlemen were Baptist Missionaries and seem to have combined planting and indigo manufacture with mission work. Mr. Thomas was also a medical man, while Mr. Carey was something of a botanist and expert in agriculture. The latter established at Madnabati, a little place on the Tangan river in Bansihari thana, what is said to have been the first printing press in Bengal and edited a religious journal from there. He also translated the Bible into Bengali. In 1801 the missionaries converted and baptized a Mr. Fernandez, a gentleman of Portuguese extraction and independent means, who from that time on till his death in 1833 was the main stay of missionary work in Dinajpur. None of these gentlemen appear to have been attached to any society, but they nevertheless raised a considerable native church, the charge of which, after Mr. Fernandez' death, was taken over by the London Baptist Mission, whose representatives are still working here.

The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 left the district happily undisturbed. There is an amusing story of how a regiment of rebel cavalry advancing from the Jalpaiguri direction as far as Birganj, intent on looting the Dinajpur treasury, asked their way from some simple-looking yokels on the road.

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These directed them how to get to Dinajpur, but added that there was a European regiment stationed there, which had got wind of their coming and was advancing to attack them. Whereupon the sowars, thinking discretion the better part of valour, sheered off towards Malda and were no more heard of. The story of the villagers was fairy tale, as there were no troops at Dinajpur at the time.