

P R E F A C E

The Santals make the major tribal group in Birbhum district. They are locally known as 'Majhi' and belong to the scheduled tribe as per article 366(25) under the 'Constitution of Indian Union'. In origin they belong to Austro-Asiatic Kol group which branched from the great Austric family. They like to identify themselves as Hor (Man) and not the Santal (Bodding, 1983)¹. According to 1981 Census, more than 9 per cent of tribal population are Santal, live in India and most of them are found concentrated in Chotanagpur Plateau region. 'The tradition of the Santals represent them as a race wandering from one country to another until they found their present home in Chotanagpur and the adjacent districts (O'Malley, 1984)². They settled down in the Chotnagpur Plateau region during the 18th century (Troisi, 1976)³. Towards the end of the eighteenth century a large scale movement of the tribal groups took place when they moved into the Rajmahal hill areas. Once settled down, they hardly moved from their homeland which is quite uncommon among the other tribal groups in the Chotanagpur region. At present, the majority of the Santals are concentrated in the districts of Dumka (Santal Parganas), Rajmahal, Pakur, Hazaribagh, Monghyr, Purnea and Singhbhum of Bihar; while in West Bengal, they are found concentrated in the districts of Bankura, Midnapur, Purulia, Bardhaman and Birbhum, besides, they are also found in Balasore

(iv)

and Mayurbhanj districts of Orissa (Fig. 1a). In West Bengal, they are mainly concentrated in the western part, comprising the districts of Midnapur, Purulia and Bankura. This has been the case even in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. 'In the western jungle they are the sole population; in a large tract towards the north they form nineteenth twentieth of it; in the plains the proportion is much smaller; and indeed the race gradually slides into the low caste hindus' (Hunter, 1965)⁴.

At present, 130,507 (1981) Santals are living in Birbhum, constituting about 6.2 per cent of the total population, and 89.8 per cent of the tribal population. In this area they are concentrated in the western part as the figs 2 and 3 (distribution of tribal people) show. The number gradually decreases towards the east. They form, by and large, an immigrant race within the present jurisdiction of Birbhum district although various authors like Hunter, Dalton, Risely and administrator Mc. Alpin etc. of the eighteenth century portrait Birbhum as the homeland of the Santals. In fact, the boundary of this district ^{was} extended further west, covering a good part of the Chotanagpur plateau during that period. It is necessary to note here that the administrative boundary of the district changed for several times (Fig. 1) with an effect on the distribution of area, population etc. As mentioned earlier, towards the end of the eighteenth century, Santals started to migrate into Rajmahal hills and a separate

CHANGES IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY OF BIRBHUM DISTRICT, 1781 - 1947

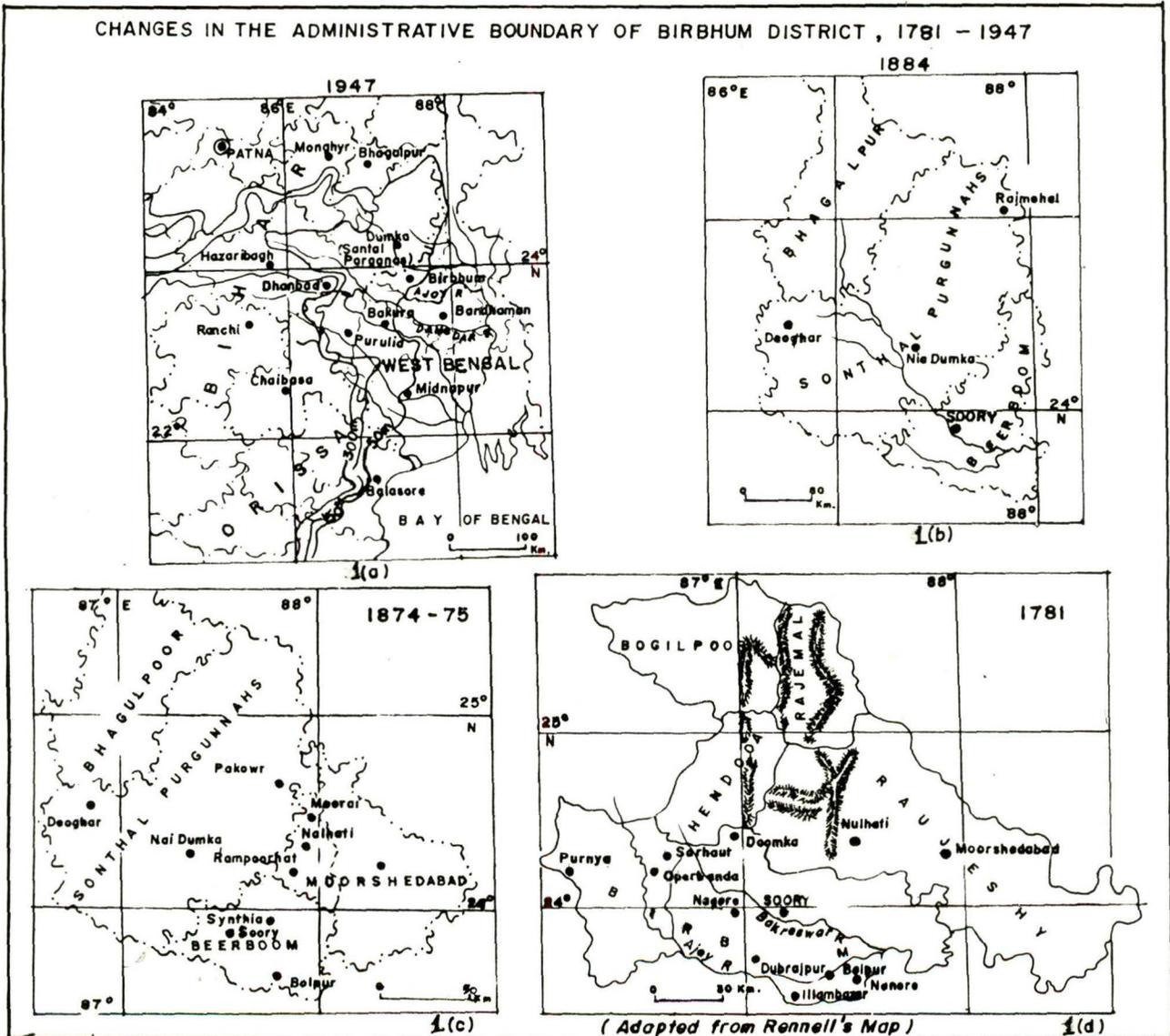
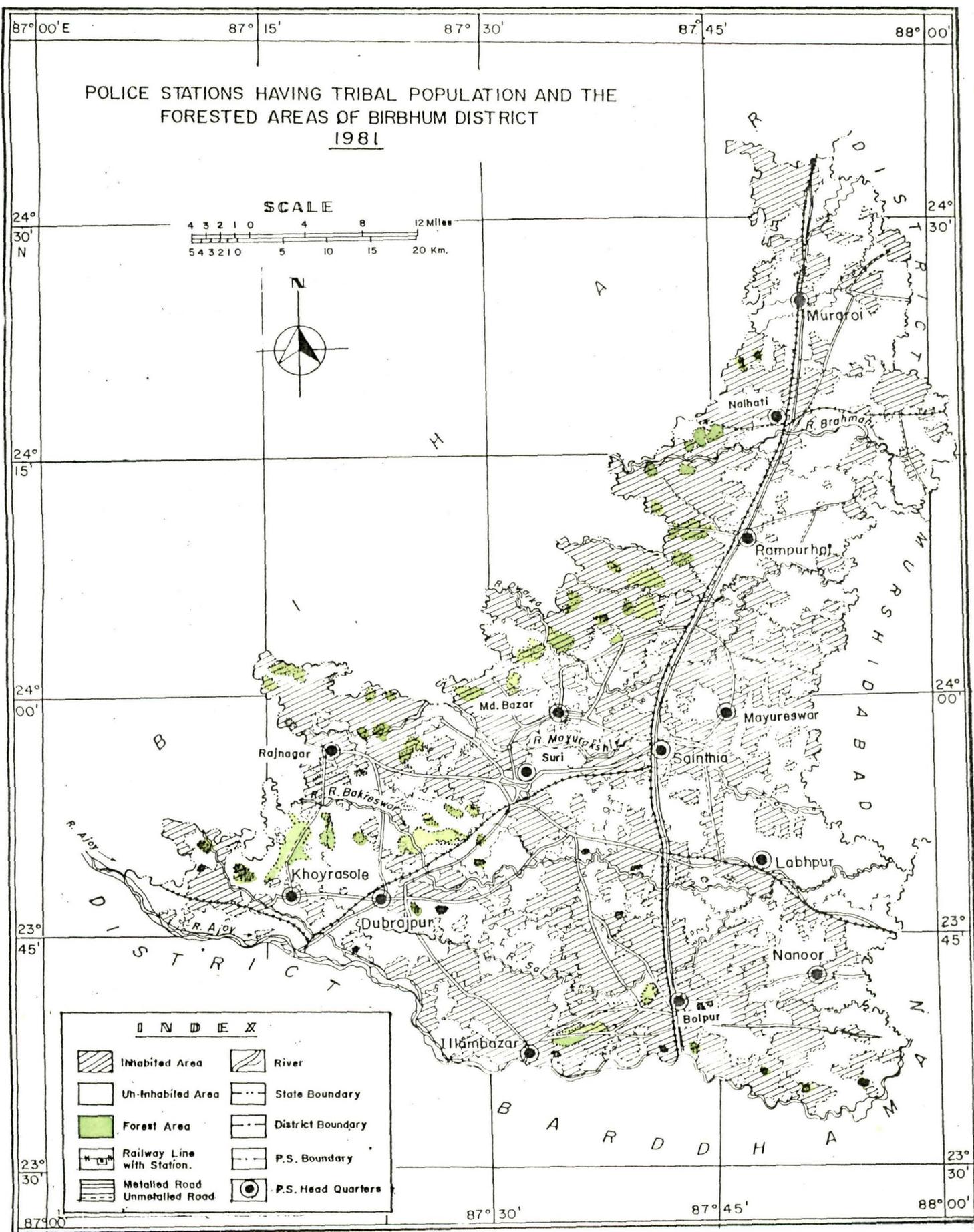
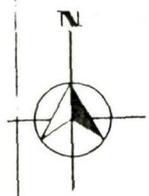
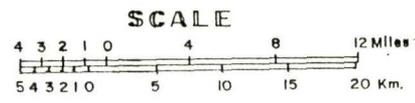


FIG-1



POLICE STATIONS HAVING TRIBAL POPULATION AND THE FORESTED AREAS OF BIRBHUM DISTRICT
1981



I N D E X

	Inhabited Area		River
	Un-inhabited Area		State Boundary
	Forest Area		District Boundary
	Railway Line with Station.		P.S. Boundary
	Metalled Road		P.S. Head Quarters
	Unmetalled Road		

FIG- 2

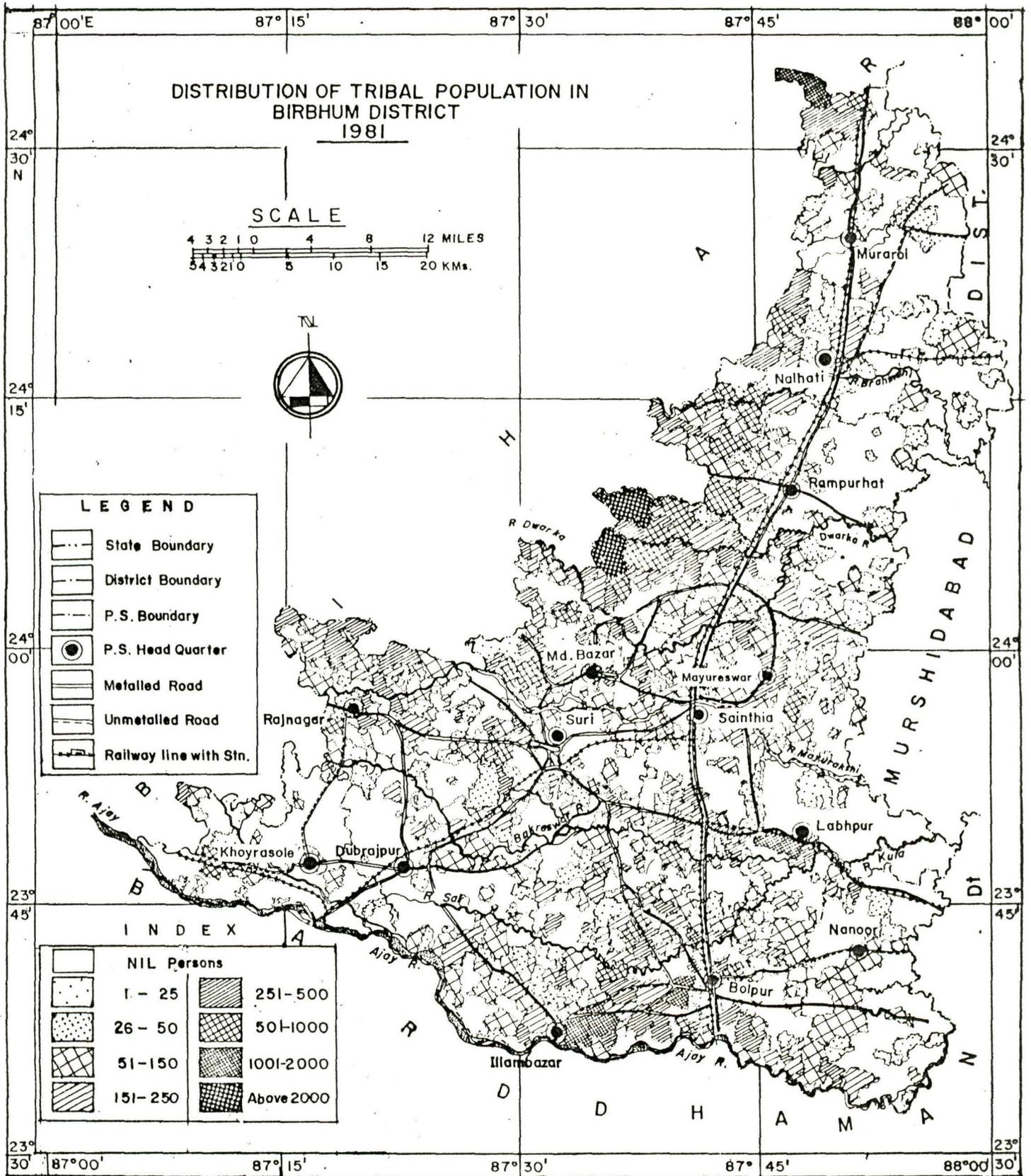


FIG - 3

administrative unit known as Damin-i-kho was created in 1833 to encourage the migrants. A good part of the Birbhum district was utilised to create the new administrative unit surrounding Rajmahal hills, which covered a portion of Dumka, Gadda, Pakur and Rajmahal subdivisions (Troisi, 1976)⁵. By the middle of the nineteenth century (1850), a large number of the Santals (82,795) came to be concentrated in Damin-i-kho area. Besides, they settled in varying numbers in other parts of Birbhum namely Deoghar, Operhandh, Krishnanagar, Shehna, Afzalpur, Nager, Nangulia, Nalhati, Kharbona and Mayureswar (Gupta, 1984)⁶. Soon after the great Santal Rebellion of 1855, the Damin-i-kho was abolished and a new administrative unit as Santal Pargana District was created in 1855-56. For this purpose, large part of Birbhum district lying in the west was transferred to Santal Parganas (Gupta, 1984)⁷. Thus, the Santal dominated area was confined to or around Birbhum district long before the creation of the present day boundary of the district (Fig.1).

The large-scale Santal movement during the end of eighteenth century was associated with three well-defined reasons. Firstly, large deforestation and influx of population in the Chotanagpur plateau region failed to support them with their cleared infertile uplands (Troisi, 1976)⁸. Secondly, introduction of the Permanent Zamindari settlement in 1793 created a new set of land lords. They appear to have migrated to this region towards the close

of the 18th century, being brought to clear the jungle and drive out wild beasts with which the district was then infested (Robertson, 1915)⁹. In course of time Damin-i-koh was created and the British administration and the local Zamindars encouraged the development of Santal settlements. Thirdly, the great famine of 1770 was another factor associated with Santal movement. Soon after the great famine of Bengal shortage of agricultural labour become acute in the district of Birbhum. During that period the Santals were invited as agricultural labour and this jungle-loving tribe started to settle down where they found suitable land, particularly around the forests which were still present as small pockets in the plains of Birbhum. During the period of the formation of 'Damin-i-koh', a number of British planters set up Indigo plantations in Bengal which created a great demand for labour. Banks of Santals along with other tribesmen were recruited by Indigo planters. Further, the construction of the East Indian Railway Loop Line in 1854 also gave rise to a great demand for labour. The landless Santals took up this opportunity of getting direct employment (Datta-Majumdar, 1955)¹⁰.

Review of existing literature :

The Santals have no written record of their own. There are, however, many accounts written by foreign and Indian anthropologists, sociologists, social workers, and many other social scientists, devoted mostly to the physical characteristics, the religious belief, and practices, the marriage and kinship customs including the family size, fertility and the attitude towards family planning, the material culture, the social organisation, the social changes, the language and education of the Santals. Among the most important works on these people one may mention that John Shore (1795) first designated them as 'Soontars' in his article 'On Some Extraordinary Facts, Customs and Practices of the Hindus.' Another early writing is that of E.G.Man's (1867) 'Sonthalia and The Santals' in which he gave an analysis of the origin of the tribe, influences of other culture, religious beliefs and ceremonies. In 1873, Skrefsrud published 'A Grammer of the Santal Language' and in 1887 'Horkoren Mare. Hapramko Reak Katha in Santali' was published which is a collection of myths and legends. P.C.Biswas (1956) in 'Santals of the Santal Parganas' gave a systematic account of the manners, customs, laws and government, religious beliefs, origin and ethnological affinities of the Santals of Santal Parganas. H.C.Das's (1964), article 'Santal' and Charulal Mukherjee's (1962) 'The Santal' make an overall study of the Santals.

There are some other studies published in the form of books and articles dealing with the physical characteristics like blood group etc. by P.N.Bhattacharya's (1969) 'A General Study of the Santals of Santal Parganas; and S.S. Sarkar's (1938), 'The Racial Affinities of the Santal; There are many articles on their religious beliefs and festivals written by Indian and foreign scholars. Such as 'Festival Songs: The Santal Sohrae' by W.G.Archer (1944), A Note on Important Festivals among the major tribals of West Bengal by Sunil Kumar Basu (1969) 'Baha' The Santal Sal-Blossom Festival' by Charulal Mukherjee (1936) and A.C.Sinha's (1970) 'The Annual Festivals among the Santals'. Besides, P.O.Odding's (1940) 'Witchcraft among the Santals ; P.C.Biswas's (1935) 'Primitive Religion, Social Organisation, Law and Government among the Santals' and W.U.Culshaw's (1939) 'Some Notes on Bonqaism' have some works on the witchcraft, the religious gods and beliefs.

As regards particular social customs like marriage, the following studies are worth mentioning. W.G. Archer's (1945) 'The Forcible Marriage', Hamendra Nath Banerjee's (1963) 'A Santal Marriage'; Andrew Compbell's (1916) 'Santal Marriage Customs'; Uma Choudhury's (1952) 'Marriage Customs of the Santaks ; T.C.Hodson's (1952) 'Marriage Customs of the Santals'; Stephen H.Muremu's (1961) Her Bapla Puthi (Santal Marriage); Riseley's (1886) 'Primitive Marriage in Bengal'. These works give a clear idea about the customs and types of marriages prevalent among them. W.G.Archer's (1944); 'The Illegitimate Child in Santal Society', V.K.Kochar's (1962) 'Kinship Terms and Usages among the Santals of Bolpur Area,

Birbhum' and 'Nuclear Units in the Domestic Groups of a Santal village' (1965), Kanti Pakrasi & Viswanath Mukherjee's (1969) 'Marriage and Fertility among the Santals', Nirmal Kanti Saha's (1969), 'Husband, Wife and Children in a Santal village', Umesh Prasad Sinha's (1963) 'Attitude Towards Family Planning of Santal and Paharias of Santal Parganas', Sujit Som's (1967) 'A Demographic Note of a Midnapur Village', K.K.Verma's 'Socio-cultural Dimensions of Fertility: A Case of the Santal' (1970) and 'Culture, Ecology and Population - An Anthropolo Demographic Study' (1977), Jayanta Sarkar's two articles entitled 'Comparative Analysis of Death Rates among the Santals of two Bihar Villages' (1971), and 'Santal Birth Statistics' (1967) and L.A.Waddel's 'The Santal Migration' (1895), 'The Traditional Migration of the Santal Tribe' (1893) focus on the demographic aspects like marriage, birth, family size, and type, kinship and migration.

Furthermore, K.P.Chattopadhyay's 'Changes in Santal Economy' (1949), 'Santal Economy in Bengal' (1946) and 'Report on Santals in Northern and Western Bengal, 1945-1946' (1946), S.K.Chowdhury's 'Levels of living of the Santals of West Bengal' (1972) etc. gives an insight into the economy of the Santals.

Besides, there are some other studies done by Kochar, Troisi, Dasgupta, Basu and others made on the social organisation, social structure, social movement and education of the Santals. There are some reports published by the government and other agencies on the Santals among which Mac Alipn's

Report on the Condition of the Santals in the Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapur and North Balasore', and P.M.Roberston's 'Final Report on the Survey and Settlement of the Santal villages of Rampurhat and Several other villages in the Rampurhat and Suri Subdivisions of the district of Birbhum (1915)' make significant contribution to the study of the Santals.

Objectives of the Study :

India is a country where different types of tribals are met with, constituting on the whole a considerable portion of the country's total population. The Santals form one of the largest tribal groups in eastern India, concentrated mainly in Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Tripura. Generally, the tribal people are identified as primitive, illiterate and backward communities. But the Santals are more adaptive, and their life-style is not so primitive like any other tribes. In Birbhum they comprise 6.2 per cent of the total population.

The major objective of this study is to make an assessment of the present status of the Santals and find out the changes in the life-style of this people as influenced by the larger society in the midst of which they still maintain this identity especially in socio-cultural terms. For this purpose emphasis was laid on focusing on the demographic character taking such parameters as age-sex composition, sex ratio, dependency ratio, marriage literally & religion etc for a detailed study. The paramount interest

of the study has been an attempt to reveal the nature and extent of economic as well as social transformation slowly taking place among this tribal community as a result of the constant exposure it had through the decades since Independence, and finally, to evaluate its effect on the behaviour of the people. Secondly, this study attempts to unfold the nature of their occupation structure and its changing character together with their economic status and social changes.

Methodology:

The work has been based on library work, field investigation and processing of data for analysis and preparation of maps, diagrams and tables etc. Library work has been done both at the pre-field and post-field stage. At the preliminary stage some basic information regarding area, population etc. have been collected from different sources available in libraries and similar organisations and administrative offices.

This was followed by field investigation made extensively in the rural areas of Birbhum district during 1989-90. The rural areas have been studied mainly because 98.9 per cent of the Santals live in the rural areas. Survey was made in those villages where the Santals are numerically dominant among the tribes. About 5 per cent of the total tribal inhabited villages have been selected from each police station of the district. The selection of these villages was based on systematic sampling (selected from group data) from district Census Hand book of 1981. There is no village level data on individual tribe in 1981 census for the selection of a

particular village for which information have been collected from concerned officers/administrative units and local people to confirm the size of the Santal people. After selecting the villages, the number of households was also determined for detailed study. About 25 per cent of the Santal households (based on 1981 census) has been selected from random sampling from every selected villages.

The information gathered through field investigation were compared with information available from secondary sources for obtaining a correct picture about the present situation.

For making intensive study at the micro level, 40 villages were selected representing each police station (Fig.4). The proportional share of the Santal population of those selected villages varies between 3.0 per cent to 100 per cent of the total population. In terms of the size of the Santal population, (Table-1) these villages may be grouped into 4 classes in the following order (Table-1).

Table - 1

Number of villages and percentage of Santal population.

<u>Percentage of Tribal Population</u>	<u>No. of Villages</u>
Less than 25	15
25 - 50	14
51 - 75	4
More than 75	7

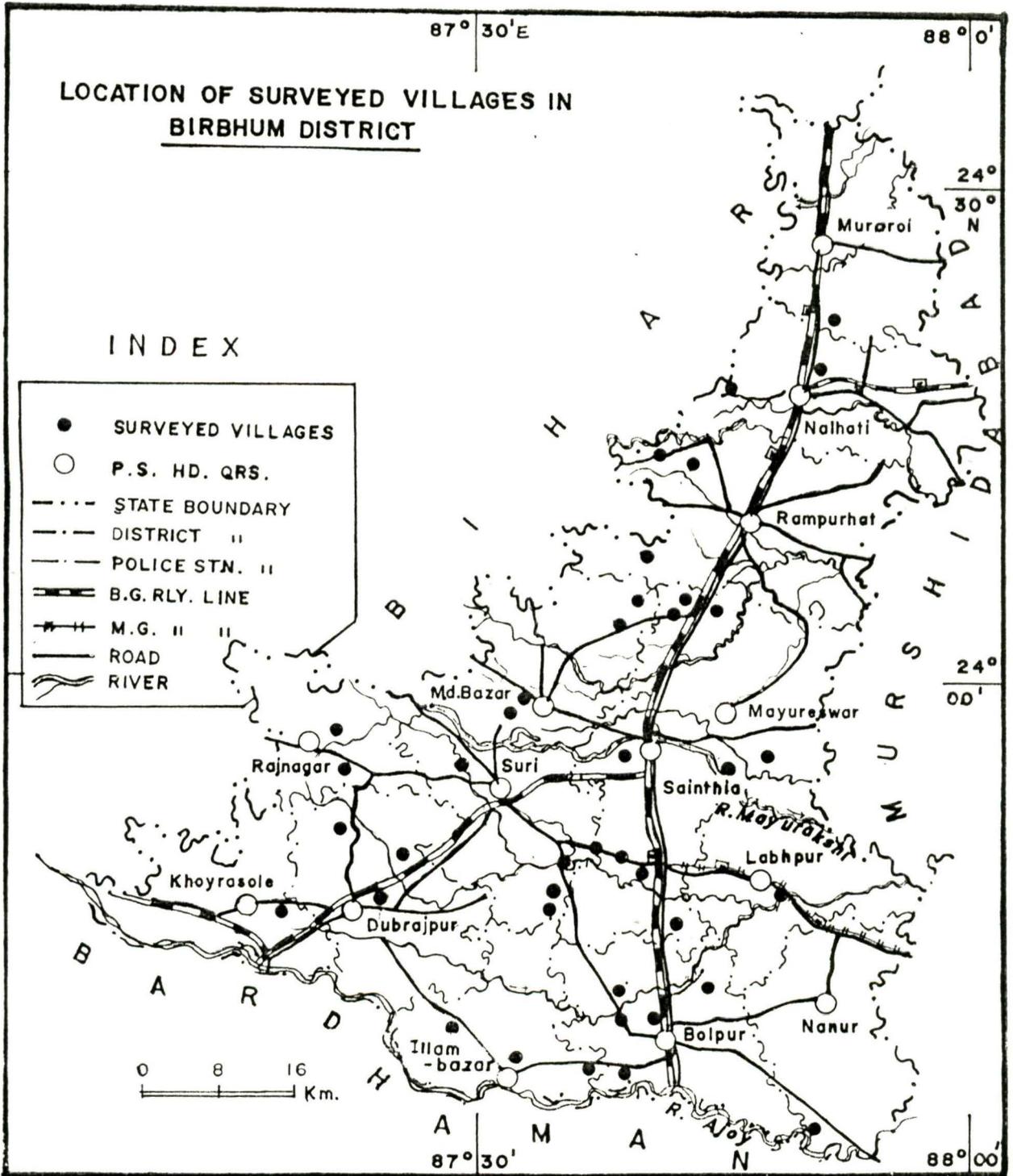


FIG. 4

Processing and analysis of both primary and secondary data have been done at the third stage following mathematical and statistical principles. In the processing of data, statistical methods like correlation, percentage have been applied. Based on this several tables, maps and diagrams were prepared which are included in the thesis.

Chapter Organization :

In the light of the available data and the theoretical and methodological approach outlined above, the entire work has been divided into seven chapters and each chapter is further divided into several sections and sub-sections. Chapter-1 introduces the Santals, the largest tribe in this area with its history, distribution and growth together with geographical background of the area they inhabit.

Second chapter deals with the composition and character of the Santal population in the light of age and sex composition, sex ratio, dependency ratio, marriage, education, language and religion.

In Chapter III a detailed study has been made on particular aspects like fertility, mortality and migration which having deep social bearing unfold the demographic situation in a larger perspective.

Chapter IV deals with the occupation structure of the people and its changing character concomitant with the economic changes of the country in general. Focusing on the primary, secondary, and tertiary activities

in total attempts have been made to identify the reasons behind the change mentioned above.

The economic status has been studied in Chapter V which involves income, expenditure, land-holding and indebtedness as the major aspects ultimately determining the status of this tribal community.

Chapter VI deals with the social changes among the Santals based on the scrutiny of such parameters like education, occupational character and infrastructural facilities, which acting as agents have a diversifying effect on the people.

Chapter VII gives the conclusion in which the major findings of the study have been summarised with observations, made on the basis of the field experience.