

P R E F A C E

The election and setting up of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Jalpaiguri between 1958 and 1964 in accordance with the provisions of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1957 was expected to herald in an era of revival and activation of the rural economy. The emergence of a new leadership and the involvement of the rural people with the process of decision-making and implementation of different socio-economic measures designed to effect a break-through in rural life were the avowed objectives of the rural government. But soon the Panchayati Raj in our sample areas of Jalpaiguri district started limping. There were a number of inadequacies and one among them was perhaps the weak resource base of the Panchayats. Saddled with a wide variety of functions and starved of adequate fund, the Panchayats may not be expected to make a massive dent in the challenge of meeting the needs and aspirations of the rural people.

The present study starts with a theoretical discussion about the evolution of the Panchayati Raj movement in India and the pattern of Panchayati finance with a particular reference to intergovernmental fiscal cooperation. In the light of the field experiences an assessment has been made about the role of the fiscal instruments under the existing revenue structure in financing rural development, the scope and extent of financial devolution to the Panchayats and the direction and magnitude of

their efforts to mobilize resources for making themselves viable units of rural self-government. An analysis of the expenditure pattern of the sample Panchayats, the nature and types of activities now being undertaken by them for providing welfare services and socio-economic infrastructure and the nature and quantum of external finance has also been attempted to make the study more meaningful and revealing. Based on extensive and intensive field investigations, the study seeks to sort out the different problems relating to the financial administration of the Sample Panchayats and examine the scope of a more purposive utilization of the existing fund of the Panchayats. The study ends with a summary of the findings of the field study and concluding observations on the project.

The Left-Front Government came to power in West Bengal in 1977 and implemented the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973. For the second time since 1958 elections were held for the Panchayats throughout West Bengal in 1978. The present study also discusses, in brief, the approach of the Left-Front Government towards the Panchayati Raj. This is, however, well outside the period and scope of the study. But this may make the study more relevant and up-to-date.

I find no word appropriate enough to adequately express my gratitude and regards for my teacher Dr. Sib Nath Bhattacharya, but for whose constant encouragement and guidance the project would never have been completed.

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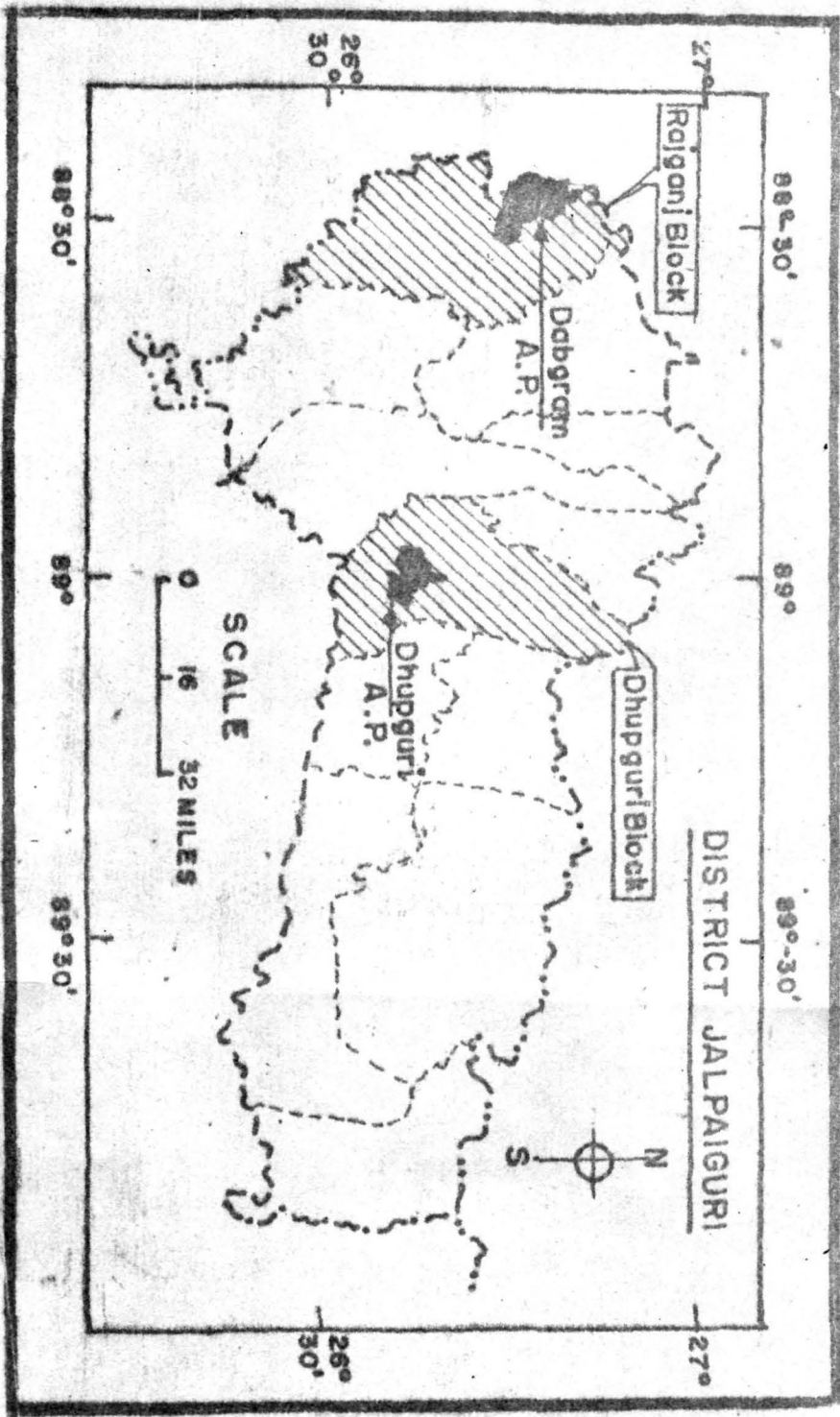
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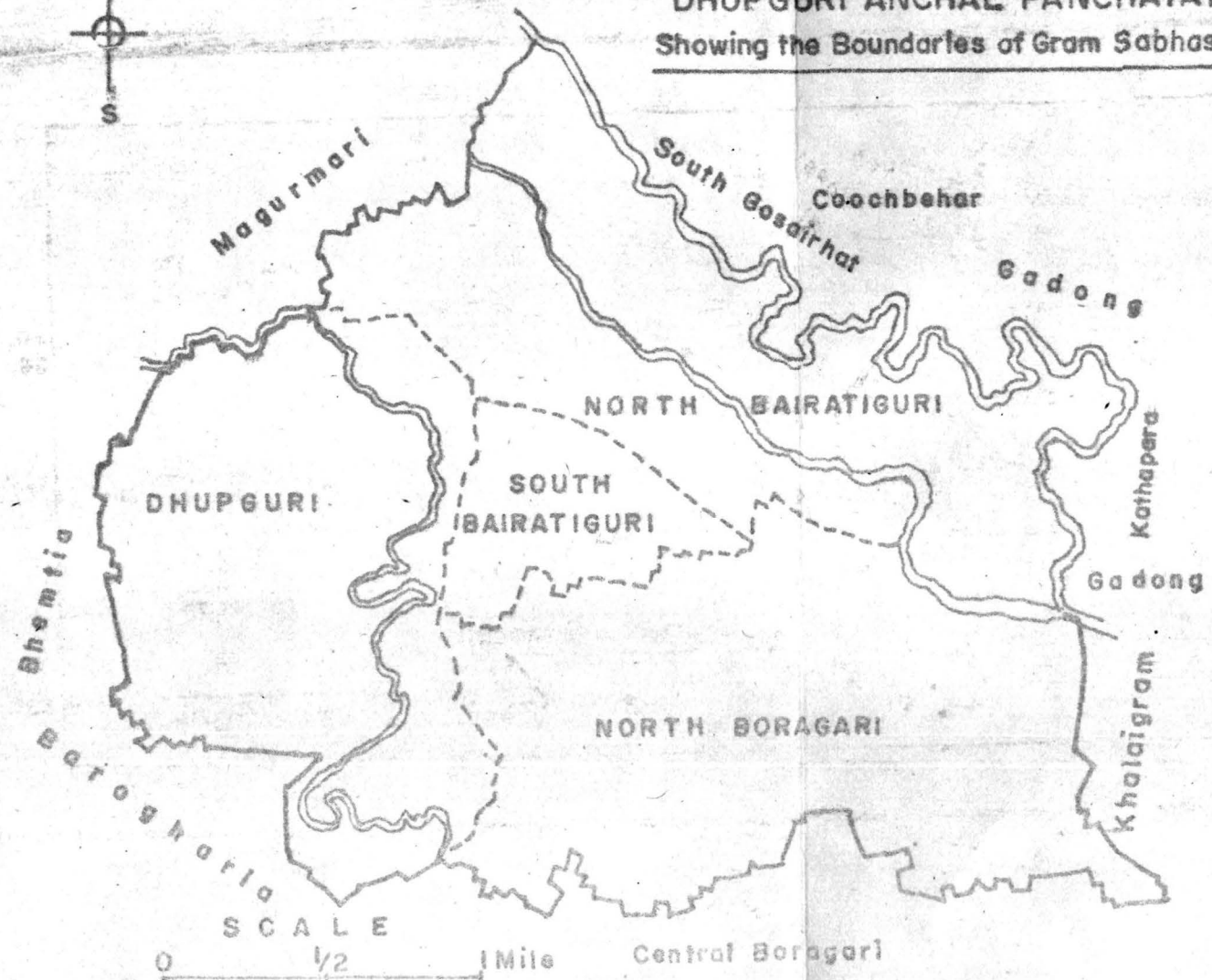
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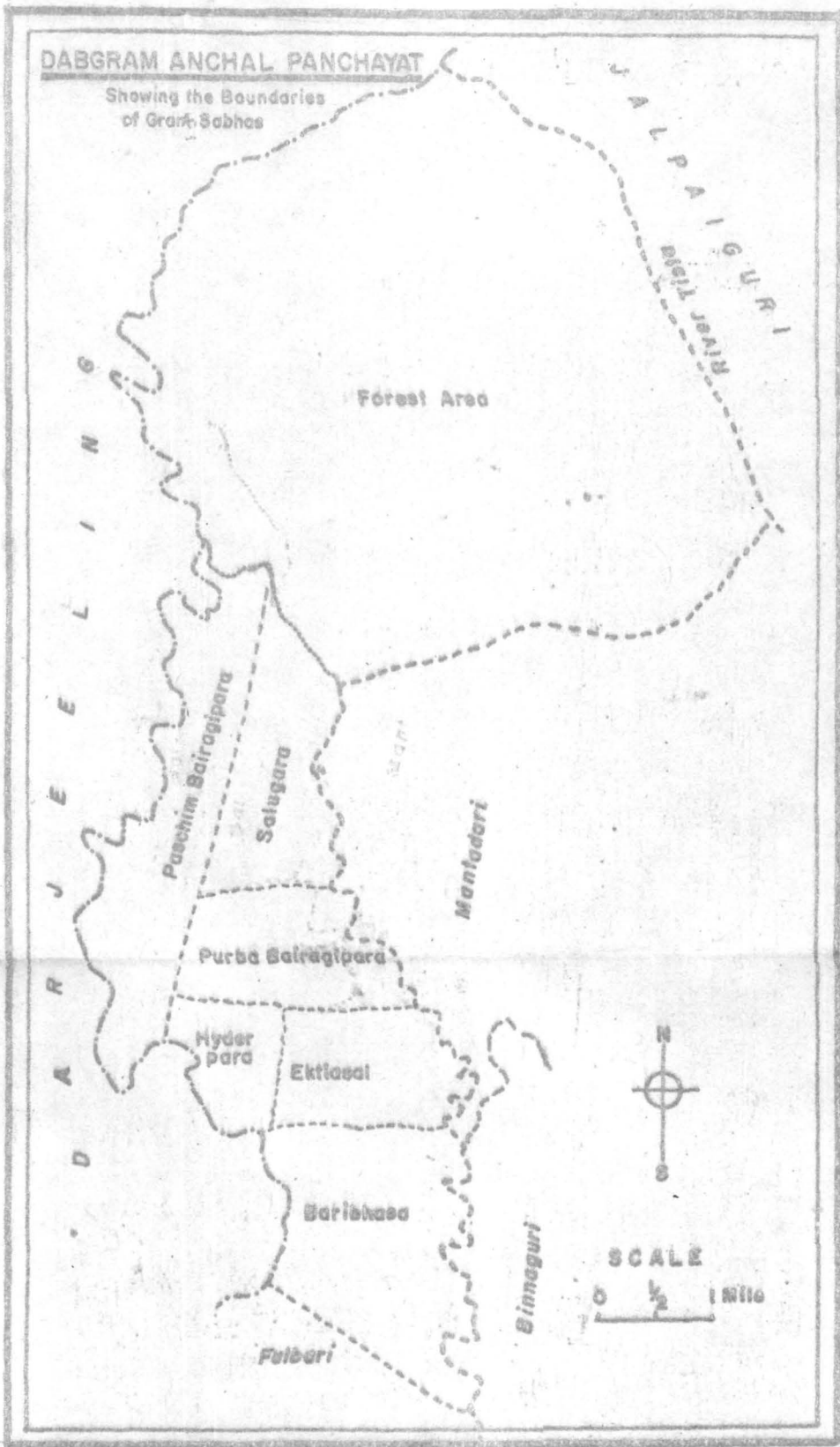
DHUPGURI ANCHAL PANCHAYAT
Showing the Boundaries of Gram Sabhas



SCALE
0 1/2 1 Mile
Central Boragari

DABGRAM ANCHAL PANCHAYAT

Showing the Boundaries
of Grant-Sabhas



A P P E N D I X II

SAMPLE ANCHAL PANCHAYATS AND GRAM
SADHAS AT A GLANCE