

## Preface

The present study, taken up in 1976, was based mostly on field data collected through personal contacts and investigations. The area covers all the five districts of North Bengal lying north of river Ganga; they are Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, West Dinajpur and Malda. In taking up this study the major idea was to find out the characteristic features of the settlements which differ largely from their counterparts in the southern part of West Bengal. The differences were due to various reasons, but North Bengal — representing five districts mentioned above — with a somewhat different physical setting and having remained shutout and neglected for a long period could not have a similar manifestation in human activities. The remoteness of the region largely removed <sup>barring</sup> during the most recent few decades has an appreciable effect on the economy as a whole, no doubt, but the different types of settlements originating over a period of more than a century have not undergone any detectable change in their character so far as their genesis is concerned. This happens to be the most interesting point, guiding the entire work.

In analysing the existing character of the settlements attempts have been made at defining their origin, character, nature of function, landuse, housetypes, etc. Each of these items have been dealt in separately so as to make the identification between the types of settlements and their functions, etc. becomes clear. Thus, as it will be found, the genesis has a bearing on the economic and cultural manifestations of the rural settlements of