

## Preface

The history of the Jalpaiguri District is a relatively neglected field of research investigation. Whatever writings have been done so far have been either reiteration of the position held by the official chronicler employed by the local chieftains or the positions held by the British officials. Both of them do not qualify for any guidance for contemporary policy decisions after serious academic scrutiny. Besides, they do not appear to be tenable in many areas in whatever micro-study we have already done. In addition to it what is being felt now is that no scholar has so far explored and far less used the privates papers of the local chieftains, zamindars and jotedars to closely examine the system of land control, nature of intermediary tenure holdings, varieties of tenancy rights, production relations, impact of prices, market mechanism and the social structuration process.

The proposed scheme is addressed to the issues mentioned above to develop a full-fledged study of the Jalpaiguri district and to fill in the gaps in our knowledge for some practical purposes. The Census Handbooks and District Gazetteers too require updating of information for administrative purposes.

While the basic objective is academic the work, however, is needed for some very important practical purpose. The region being very close to Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan, a large number of immigrants from across the border have settled in this district and presumably threatening to marginalise economically and demographically the original inhabitants of this region. The original inhabitants are Koch, Rajbansi, Mech, Dhimal, Totos, etc., and in the wake of large scale migrations of the people from different ethnic and socio-economic background, a good part of land being transferred from the locals to the immigrants. Besides, in the service sectors too, marginalisation of the locals is being felt. The land reforms which the Government of West Bengal has already done certainly reduced the unbridled authority of the landholders and they granted some tenancy rights to the occupancy ryots and bonded labourers. But the evil still persists. What we have felt in the course of our investigation that the crisis may be attributed to the genesis that remained embedded in the colonial policy decisions and perhaps it has not been properly addressed. Consequently, articulation of local resentment in the form of separation movements are taking place and violence is being restored to in the absence of constitutional redress. An effective intervention is immediately needed and the study purports to explain with primary data the total dislocation caused by the Colonial administration and has been perpetuated and aggravated over the years in the post-independence era for either lack of knowledge or due to pressure group politics, stifling the process of economic and social development in this sensitive region.

The proposed work purports to contribute to the understanding of the history of Jalpaiguri region which still remains a grossly neglected area of study.