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REPORT.

BY

J. McSWINEY, M.A.

OF THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE.

SUPERINTENDENT OF CENSUS OPERATIONS IN ASSAM.



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**PART I.
REPORT.**

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INTRODUCTION.

1. This is the fifth census of Assam, which in 1872, at the time of the first census of India, was included in Bengal and at the census of 1911 was part of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The different standards of accuracy of previous censuses are discussed in Chapter II: briefly that of 1872 is negligible and that of 1881 was not sufficiently supervised, but those of 1891 and 1901 are reliable. The population of Manipur in 1891 was omitted from the report of that year because of the loss of enumeration papers in the rising, but the population of Mokakchang subdivision of Naga Hills and an estimate of the population in North Lushai were added. In 1901 Manipur and the whole of the present Lushai Hills district were included. At the present census an unsurveyed tract of Sema and Eastern Angami villages, whose population amounted to 39,583, was the only addition to the area of the province.

2. The enumeration was mostly synchronous, but in certain areas, where on account of the scanty population and want of literate persons this was impossible, the counting spread over a period and in certain other places a modified form of synchronous enumeration was adopted. The synchronous system was enforced in all the plains districts, including the plains mauzas of Garo Hills, in Lushai Hills, in part of Khasi and Jaintia Hills, in Duars Bagari and Eastern Rengma of the Mikir hill tract in Sibsagar and in the valley of Manipur State. The modified synchronous procedure was adopted in the rest of Khasi and Jaintia Hills, in the Mikir hill tract in Nowgong, in mauzas Western and Naga Rengma of the same tract in Sibsagar, and in North Cachar. The census was non-synchronous in the hill mauzas of Garo Hills, in Duardisa and Borjar in the Mikir hill tract of Sibsagar, and in the Sadiya tract and amongst the Sarkari Nagas of Lakhimpur.

The whole province was divided into blocks containing an average of 35 to 40 houses in the synchronous tracts and about 80 to 90 houses in the rest: in the hills of Manipur the average was as high as 141 houses per block. Each block was in the charge of an enumerator; over him was a supervisor, who was in charge of a circle consisting on an average of 11 blocks and was subject to a Charge Superintendent, who had about 14 to 20 circles to look after. The Census Officer of each district was responsible for the adequate training of these functionaries, who were unpaid except in parts of the hill districts: at the top was the Deputy Commissioner of each district. Operations began in January 1910, when the area of each district was carefully distributed by means of maps and local enquiries into charges, circles and blocks. Next all the houses were numbered and finally the preliminary enumeration began by January 1911: the entries were mostly written on blank paper in order to avoid erasures by inspecting officers on the forms, and were copied on to the schedules by the end of February. On the night of the 10th March 1911 each enumerator in the synchronous tracts visited each house in his block, added the names of new arrivals and crossed out the names of those absent or dead. In the modified synchronous tracts the preliminary record was brought up to date on the morning of the 11th March from the reports of village headmen to the enumerators, who took up positions at convenient centres. In the non-synchronous areas no attempt was made to correct the preliminary record after it had been checked by inspecting officers. Special arrangements were made for large assemblies at fairs, etc., for mooring-ghats, and travellers by road, river or train: these are detailed in the administrative report of the census, which is published separately.

3. On the morning of the 12th March 1911 the enumerators assembled at centres and prepared abstracts showing the total population by sex and the number of houses in their blocks: the supervisor of each circle then sent similar totals to the Charge Superintendents, and the latter to the district Census Officer. The Deputy Commissioner then telegraphed the district totals to the Census Commissioner. All the figures except those of Lushai Hills were complete by the 17th March: the delay in Lushai Hills was due to difficulties in getting in the totals of Military Police outposts, the whole battalion being censused together, which was a mistake and kept the district totals back till 21st March: fortunately the wooden spoon was annexed by a Burma district. The final totals of the province were only 55 in excess of the provisional figures, which is equivalent to an error of '00007 per cent.: Lakhimpur and Cachar totals were wired on the

13th March and were less than the final figures by '044 and '074 per cent., respectively: allowance must always be made on these occasions for figures of travellers by steamer or road which were received after the district figures had been telegraphed.

4. As soon as possible the schedules were sent to the headquarters, which were usually those of the district, so that the entries of each individual might be copied on to slips. These were similar to the slips used for the first time in 1901. The arrangements were generally in the hands of the Deputy Commissioners, but there was a Central Office under a Deputy Superintendent at Gauhati, where the schedules of Kamrup, Garo Hills and the subdivisions of Mangaldai and North Lakhimpur were copied by a staff which was the nucleus of the future sorting establishment. The schedules of Cachar and the subdivisions of Karimganj, South Sylhet and Habiganj were copied at the Central Office at Chittagong. The work of copying began on the 16th in March and was completed in the late province of Eastern Bengal and Assam on 10th June 1911. A gang of 8 to 10 copyists was placed under a supervisor and the work was paid for at the rate of 6 pice per hundred slips copied: the average daily outturn per copyist rose from 378 in the beginning to 601 when work was in full swing at the end of April. The maximum number of copyists employed in Eastern Bengal and Assam was 1,701. Special care was taken to ensure accuracy as well as large outturns and on the whole the work was well done: the office at Gauhati was the best in the late province at this branch of the work.

After all the entries had been copied on to the slips, the latter were despatched to the Central Offices for sorting and compilation of the tables: those of the Surma Valley and Lusbai Hills were sorted at Chittagong and of the rest of Assam at Gauhati. Sorting was completed by the end of August. During the process of sorting compilation began and was completed in the Gauhati office by the 11th November 1911, three weeks before either of the other offices finished. The compilation registers were sent to my office for check and comparison and a small staff was maintained in the Central Offices until 31st March 1912 for references and re-sorting, when necessary. The work done in the Gauhati office was excellent and in many ways the best: the staff was not recruited from the Land Records establishment as in 1901, and the sorters were mostly young men with all sorts of education down to the Lower Primary standard: this made the work of the Deputy Superintendent more difficult than elsewhere.

5. The only practical method of estimating the cost of the census in Assam, it seems to me, is to calculate the cost per thousand in Eastern Bengal and Assam up to 31st March 1912 and to add to this the additional cost per thousand in Assam up to the close of my office. The figures of expenditure I have taken are those of the Accounts Department, which show the extra cost of the census to Government: for example, my pay was not debited to census, but the extra expense which Government incurred by the fact of some junior officer acting in the post which I would have held. The larger the province is, the less per mille of population is the cost of the pay of the Superintendent and his deputation allowance. This and the fact that no extra expense was incurred on my account since April 1912 must be remembered when comparing the cost of the present census with that of the last. The accounts of 1912-1913 are not yet complete, but I have allowed for a staff up to 31st December next, which is the last possible date for closing the office, for a share of the cost of the Dacca office in April and May 1912 as estimated by the Superintendent of Census Operations, Bengal, for future press charges on the estimate of the Superintendent of the Secretariat Press who is printing the report, and for a deputation allowance for myself which has not yet been sanctioned. I have included the total cost of the census of Manipur, because the State paid us only for the enumeration forms supplied and have excluded the population of Hill Tippera State which supplied or paid for everything: I have added also the amount recouped from municipalities, because it was an item of expense, though it did not fall on Government.

The figures in the margin are the actuals for Eastern Bengal and Assam and the estimate for Assam. On this basis the expenditure per mille up to 31st March 1912 was Rs. 5-13-2 and thereafter Rs. 1-3-1, making a total of Rs. 7-0-3 per thousand censused. The cost in 1901 was Rs. 11-11-1 in Assam and just under Rs. 5 in Bengal. It is probable that, making allowance for the rise in wages within the last ten years, the latter low figure is impossible at the present day: it was partly due also to the very large population (over 78 millions) included in Bengal at that time.

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Eastern Bengal and Assam (191-1912)	2,00,350	6	6
Assam (1912-1913)	8,100	0	0

6. I doubt if the course of census operations, any more than that of true love, has ever yet run smoothly anywhere, but probably the operations, part of the results of which are materialised in the present report, constitute a record. They began in April 1910 in the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam with the appointment of Mr. J. Donald, I.C.S., as Provincial Superintendent: in November 1910 Mr. Donald was compelled to take leave, when he had brought the arrangements for the actual enumeration practically to a conclusion and I was appointed to act temporarily in his place. Unfortunately he was unable to return to duty in time and I continued the work in Eastern Bengal and Assam until 31st March 1912. From 1st April my duty was confined to Assam alone, while the work in connection with Eastern Bengal was undertaken by Mr. L. S. S. O'Malley, I.C.S., Superintendent of Census Operations in Bengal, who retained charge also of the new province of Bihar and Orissa. Those who have any idea of the labour of compiling statistics will perhaps appreciate the labour incurred in, firstly, preparing complete tables in manuscript for every census back to 1872 for the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam and, secondly, after nearly half the tables of that province for 1911 were actually set up in type at Dacca, of removing the figures for Assam, substituting those of the two Bengal divisions which were added to Eastern Bengal to form the new Presidency, and striking new totals in every case. The present Bengal tables were printed at Dacca under the supervision of Rai Bahadur Jamini Mohan Das, my senior Deputy Superintendent. The actual work of compiling separate tables for the present census of Assam began in February 1912 and was practically completed in manuscript at Dacca by the end of April, when a separate staff was transferred to Shillong to work directly under me. I was appointed Director of Land Records and Agriculture in Assam from 1st April 1912, and, as I was able to complete only two chapters of the present report before that date, the rest of it has been written during such time as I was able to spare from my other duties, of the routine portion of which I was relieved for six weeks by the kindness of Mr. A. W. Botham, I.C.S.

The printing misfortunes that dogged our footsteps at the beginning are described in the Administrative Report and need not be detailed here. It will suffice to say that the paper for schedule forms arrived at Dacca about three months behind its time, the printing contractor's arrangements broke down in the most hopeless fashion and I was compelled to arrange as late as January 1911 for the printing and cutting of the slips by the Dacca Jail Press. These accidents appear trifling now, but they were the cause of very serious difficulty and anxiety, because the time to make new arrangements was very short and the work large in quantity and difficult of execution: I hope that my successor will fare more easily.

7. Without the cordial assistance of the Deputy Commissioners a census would be impossible: to each and all of them and to the Census Officers of each district I am indebted for their continued exertions from the beginning to the end: in most districts their responsibilities continued up to the completion of slip-copying. In addition to the actual enumeration there were many ethnographical and other enquiries imposed upon them; their reports have made possible the inclusion of almost everything of a non-statistical nature in this volume: the reader will be able to appreciate how much is due especially to Lieutenant-Colonel J. Shakespear, C.I.E., D.S.O., Political Agent in Manipur, to the Reverend Mr. Pettigrew of the same State, and to Lieutenant-Colonel H. Cole, I.A., late Superintendent, Lushai Hills. In addition I received a great deal of interesting information from Indian correspondents which has added considerably to what I have been able to write on the subjects connected with the caste system: amongst them Babu Aghornath Adhikari of Silchar and Mr. G. G. Phukan of Sibsagar deserve special mention. Lastly I come to the Deputy Superintendents, Rai Bahadur Jamini Mohan Das, Babu Atul Chandra Dutt, both at Dacca, Babu Abhaya Shankar Guba at Chittagong and Srijut Radhanath Phukan at Gauhati: to these officers are mainly due the accuracy and expedition of the work of tabulation, which enabled us, in spite of our bad start, to receive the congratulations of the Census Commissioner on getting in our first table at the beginning of September 1911 before all the other large provinces except the Punjab. To Rai Bahadur Jamini Mohan Das, now Additional District Magistrate of Dacca, I owe more than I can explain: he was my guide, philosopher and friend at the beginning and loyal assistant to the end without him I doubt if the first and last census of Eastern Bengal and Assam would not have been a failure.

Acknowledgments.

In conclusion, I have to thank Mr. A. B. Smart of the Shillong Drawing Office for preparing the sketches from which all the blocks appearing in the letterpress were reproduced by Messrs. Thacker Spink of Calcutta; Mr. E. Hill, late Superintendent of the Dacca Government Press and now at Ranchi, for his care in selecting the type and the arrangement of the tables printed for Assam and for Bengal; and to Mr. H. H. King, Superintendent of the Assam Secretariat Press, who has been responsible for the printing of this report and who was handicapped by having to wait for the restoration of the Shillong Press by the return of type and men from Dacca.

Shillong,
September 28th, 1912.

J. McSWINEY,
Superintendent of Census Operations, Assam.