

CENSUS OF INDIA, 1911.

VOLUME V.

**BENGAL, BIHAR AND
ORISSA AND SIKKIM.**

PART I.

R E P O R T

BY

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OF THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL STATISTICAL SOCIETY,

SUPERINTENDENT OF CENSUS OPERATIONS, BENGAL.



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PREFACE.

THE report to which this is a preface deals with the results of the census of 1911 in the Presidency of Bengal, the Province of Bihar and Orissa and the State of Sikkim, which have an aggregate area of nearly 200,000 square miles and a population of 85 millions, or over one-fourth of the total population of India.

The late appearance of the report is due to causes beyond my control. Since the census of 1901 Bengal has undergone two partitions, and Sikkim has been detached from it—changes which have involved the preparation of fresh statistics for the census of 1911 and also for each preceding census. It is perhaps almost superfluous to explain that if the census figures of any given area are to be of value for comparative purposes, those of previous censuses must be accessible. Accordingly, before the census of 1911 took place, figures were compiled for Bengal as constituted after the partition of 1905, for the only available figures related to the province as it stood in 1901. After the census of 1911 was concluded, tables showing its results were prepared for the two provinces of Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam as then existing. While this work was in progress, the repartition was announced, and the figures both of the census of 1911 and of each census since 1872 had to be worked out afresh for the Presidency of Bengal and the new Province of Bihar and Orissa. All this involved additional labour and delayed the preparation of the tables and report. On this account also I have not been able to take up all the subjects prescribed for the report, and have had to curtail the discussion of some of those with which I could deal.

The arrangements for the census followed the lines laid down in 1901, and a brief summary of them is all that is required. The first step was to obtain an accurate and up-to-date record of all inhabited areas, i.e., to prepare a register in which every occupied village or collection of houses was entered. This is not altogether an easy task in some areas, where the villages are small clusters of houses scattered through the jungle, which are commonly deserted by their primitive inhabitants when anything untoward happens. In such cases it is believed that the village has incurred the anger of some evil spirit, and the people abandon the site and build their houses elsewhere. The village register having been compiled, each district was parcelled out into census divisions. The smallest unit was the block, which consisted of 40 to 50 houses, for which one enumerator was responsible. The blocks were grouped together by circles, each of which was under a supervisor: ordinarily about 10 to 15 circles, i.e., 400 to 600 houses, were assigned to each supervisor. The circles again were grouped together by charges, which, as a rule, corresponded to police-stations. The Charge Superintendents, who were responsible for the operations throughout each charge, were themselves subordinate to the Subdivisional Officers and to the District Census Officers, who were appointed for each district.

The actual enumeration was conducted by an improvised agency of supervisors and enumerators, who were drawn from the ordinary population. In Bengal as constituted at the time of the census 23,000 supervisors and 326,000 enumerators were employed. In many localities it was no easy matter to obtain a sufficient supply of men who could read and write, and a long training was necessary before they could understand the duties required of them. Even where suitable men were available, their natural reluctance to serve without pay had to be overcome, and the lesson brought home to them that the census was conducted by, through and for the people, and that, perhaps for the first time in their lives, they would be actively discharging a public duty.

When they had been appointed, their first duty was to number every house, a house being defined as the residence of a commensal family. The application of this definition gave rise to numerous knotty questions, which illustrate very forcibly the differences in local conditions in a large and heterogeneous province. How, for instance, were the village dormitories, in which aboriginal boys and girls sleep, to be treated? Was a separate number to be given to each house in the Paharia villages, on the summits of the Rajmahal Hills, where each married couple has a separate hut, but the whole family have their meals together in another hut. Again, how were the numbers to be affixed? The Paharia huts, for instance, are mere shanties made of branches and poles fixed in the ground, and no number could be painted on them. So, the numbers had to be put on slabs of wood, which were either stuck on the walls or hung from the eaves. The Paharias did not leave them there, but carefully wrapped them up in rags and kept them in the bamboo baskets which form their strong boxes.

In February 1911, after they had been methodically trained in their duties, the enumerators conducted the preliminary enumeration, i.e., they entered all the necessary particulars in the schedules for every person ordinary resident in each house. The record thus prepared was systematically checked by superior officers in order to ensure its accuracy and also its absolute completeness. The final census was held on the night of the 10th March 1911, the enumerators going round to each house and revising the preliminary record so as to make it correspond to the state of affairs as then existing. In other words, they struck out the entries for all persons who had died or gone away since the preliminary enumeration, and added fresh entries for new-comers and for infants who had been born in the interval. Too high praise cannot be given to them for the thorough manner in which they fulfilled their duties, and for their assiduity in making sure that there were no omissions. As an instance in point, I may quote the experience of a small aboriginal tribe, who feared that some mysterious evil might befall them if they were counted, and fled from forest to forest, but failed to escape the enumerators. Mistakes were of course made, some of which show how simple-minded a few of the enumerators are. One man solemnly entered an idol in his schedule and gave particulars of age, viz., 200 years, and of language, viz., Hindi. Another recorded the language of a deaf-mute as

atpat (an onomatopoeic word describing the sounds he emitted). A globe-trotter described his occupation or means of livelihood as that of a tourist.

In many cases the enumerators had to face great difficulties, not the least of which was the danger of work in plague-infected areas, where they felt that they were fulfilling their duties at the risk of their lives. Many died of plague while engaged in the preliminary enumeration, and others on the day of the census itself. The local officers had the greatest difficulty in finding successors, often at a moment's notice; and as those who were appointed could scarcely be expected to take over the dead men's papers, the work in some cases had to be done over again. Elsewhere enumerators were exposed to attacks from wild animals in the jungles. One man who had left his home on account of the ravages of a man-eating tiger, but volunteered to show the enumerator the way to his old village, was carried off by the tiger just as he reached its outskirts.

The day after the census the preparation of the provisional totals was taken in hand, *i.e.*, the entries on the PROVISIONAL TOTALS. schedules were totalled up to ascertain the number of males and females and the aggregate population. This may seem a simple matter, but in Bengal (as constituted at the time of the census) it involved the collection of over a third of a million men at various centres and the compilation of figures for each census division. It is by no means easy to do this quickly where distances are great and the means of communication few. Nor is it easy to ensure accuracy when, as among the Santals, the enumerators are ignorant of the elementary principles of calculation, many not being able to post figures above 100. Lastly, there is the danger of loss or destruction of papers. In one district the provisional totals were delayed by one enumerator not having compiled his totals. The Subdivisional Officer went to the spot and found that the enumerator's house had been burnt on the night of the census, and with it the census papers and two of his wives. His block had of course to be censused again.

In spite of these and other difficulties, the provisional totals for the whole of Bengal were despatched within a week after the census. Their speedy collection and despatch are due to the excellent organization effected by the District Officers, the employment of all available means of transport (one of the most useful being the bicycle), and the indomitable energy of the census staff. In the Patna State the figures had to be despatched by couriers to the nearest telegraph station, a distance of 76 miles, and in Kalahandi they had to be sent 114 miles: in the latter State the authorities had, in the words of the Political Agent, "to deal with 1,200 square miles of the most awful country inhabited by the wildest of Khonds." The totals of these two States were wired on the 13th and 15th March, respectively. In the Darjeeling district the figures for the people living on a mountain 12,000 feet high and 50 miles distant from head-quarters reached Darjeeling within 36 hours of the census. In Singhbhum again many of the census staff had to march at night through forests infested by man-eating tigers carrying torches to scare them away, and completed in 10 hours marches which, as a rule, take two days. Bad weather had to be faced

in some places. The District Census Officer of one Bengal district reports that the men had to travel through a violent hail-storm and came in late at night, "all with hurts and bruises, but with the circle summaries and enumeration books dry. I had to give up the idea of sending any special messenger to head-quarters on such a fearful night, and early next morning I acted as special messenger myself and plied my bike on a muddy road of 32 miles and carried in the provisional totals safe." In this and other cases the reports are reminiscent of "How they brought the good news from Ghent to Aix."

The final results were obtained by compilation and tabulation, of which there are three stages, viz., slip-copying, sorting and compilation.

COMPILATION AND TABULATION.
Slip-copying is the process of copying the entries in the schedules on to slips. A separate slip is used for each of the persons enumerated, so that 85 million slips had to be used for the population dealt with in this report; but much labour is saved by the use of slips of different colours to indicate religion, of symbols to indicate sex and of abbreviations for the actual entries in the schedules. As in 1901, the greater part of the slip-copying was carried out in district offices. The slips when ready were sent to the central offices, where the sorting and subsequent operations required for the preparation of the final tables were carried out. In the central offices arrangements were made for copying the slips of the districts in which they were situated, together with some or all of the slips for other districts where there were difficulties in the way of getting the work done locally. For instance, the slips of Angul and the Orissa Feudatory States were copied at the Cuttack central office besides those for Cuttack: at this office no less than 6 million slips were copied. At one time the copying staff in the Bengal offices (excluding those in Eastern Bengal) numbered over 3,000, the total outturn in the week being nearly 10 million slips, and the daily average per man 590. The average is remarkably high, considering that the work had to be done in the height of the hot weather, and in some cases, where buildings could not be secured, in tents or verandahs.

Sorting is the process of arranging the slips under the heads required for the various final tables, counting the slips as thus arranged, and entering the number on forms provided for the purpose, which are called sorters' tickets. This operation was performed in the central offices, of which there were seven for the area dealt with by me. They were situated at the following places and sorted for the population noted against each, viz., Berhampore (9 millions), Bhagalpur (7½ millions), Cuttack (9 millions), Gaya (6½ millions), Hazaribagh (5½ millions), Hooghly (10 millions) and Patna (9½ millions). While sorting was in progress, inquiry was made into doubtful entries, which often raise questions which it is difficult to solve. One tribe, for instance, was entered as Jhar Manjhi, i.e., men of the woods, or Makarkhia, i.e., monkey-eaters. On inquiry it was ascertained that they went by no other name, and that they did not know their original habitat and could only give an account of their recent wanderings. Specimens of their language were then obtained, and it was ascertained that they were Birhors, which also means men of the woods.

Sorting was followed by compilation, or the process of combining the figures in the sorters' tickets, so as to obtain the totals for the district. The compilation registers, in which the figures were entered, were despatched as soon as they were ready to my office, where a detailed examination of the statistics was carried out, doubtful entries checked and discrepancies inquired into. This is an operation of the greatest importance, as errors in compilation affect, not merely units, but hundreds and thousands. After this the tables were prepared and the report was written. The statistics are numerous enough, but some desired to utilize the census record still further. One Bengali gentleman wanted copies of all the entries—1½ million in number—that were made in the schedules for members of his caste. Another Bengali gentleman calmly asked for the names and addresses of all literate persons in the province, in order that advertising circulars might be sent to them. He naively pointed out that this would swell the postal revenue besides developing trade.

The accounts of census expenditure were maintained separately for the provinces of Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam during the two years 1910-12, and jointly, for Bengal and Bihar and Orissa in 1912-13. Divided proportionately according to the population of the two provinces as now constituted, the aggregate cost is Rs. 2,67,322-10-8 for Bengal and Rs. 2,05,550-10-11 for Bihar and Orissa, representing an incidence of Rs. 5-12-4 and Rs. 5-5-7 respectively per head of the population. The average cost is higher than in 1901 owing mainly to the fact that wages have risen in the interval, so that the staff engaged in compilation and tabulation had to be paid more. Additional expenditure, moreover, had to be incurred in consequence of the repartition of Bengal, which necessitated the compilation of revised statistics for the two provinces.

I cannot acknowledge too fully the services of the large body of private individuals and Government officers who conducted the census and brought it to a successful conclusion. The census laid a heavy burden on the District Officers and their subordinate staff, which they loyally bore without increase of establishment. Their self-sacrifice materially helped to keep down the cost of the operations. My grateful acknowledgments are further due to a large number of official and non-official gentlemen for interesting reports on ethnological and sociological questions, which have been freely drawn upon in this report. I also desire to mention the good work done by the Presidency Jail Press, under the supervision of Mr. J. Gray, in printing and despatching the forms which were used at various stages of the operations. Their aggregate number exceeded 70 millions, and they had to be printed in six different characters, viz., English, Bengali, Kaithi, Devanagari, Oriya, and Nepali Hindi: some Tibetan forms were also printed by the Secretariat Press at Darjeeling.

My special thanks are due to the following Deputy Magistrates and Deputy Collectors for the services which they rendered as Deputy Superintendents of Census in charge of the central census offices mentioned against their names:—Babu Brajendra Nath Ray (Hooghly), Babu Nilmani Dey (Bhagalpur), Babu Manmatha Nath Sen (Cuttack), Maulvi Abdul Kadir Khan (Patna), Babu Anadi Ranjan Bose (Gaya) and

Babu Krishna Gopal Ghosh (Berhampore). Much useful work was also done by my Head Clerk, Babu Harendra Krishna Mitra, whose previous experience was a valuable asset. Lastly, I am greatly indebted to Babu Naba Gauranga Basak, Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector, who, as my Personal Assistant, was closely associated with me in the preparation of the tables and of the report. Two of the chapters and part of a third were written in collaboration with him, and all the diagrams, maps and subsidiary tables were prepared under his supervision.

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