

Regional Structure of Bengal Agrarian Societies under Colonial Rule (I)

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Abstract

This paper presents regional variations within a Bengal district (the district of Bakarganj). Hitherto, socio-economic studies on Bengal have largely been based on the assumption that the district is the proper unit of investigation. This assumption is found to be grossly inadequate so this paper considers regional variations within a district. The key variables used are : geographical features, land-use, reclamation, population change, composition of residents according to their religion and caste, land-system, type of agricultural labor, and landlord-tenant relationship. The major findings of the paper are : (1) the district under research had two drastically different regions, (2) there existed a stratum of rich peasants under the guise of intermediate tenure-holders. Since many researchers have considered the district of Bakarganj a land of homogenous small peasants, the present paper departs from conventional historiography.

This is part of a much bigger project, covering almost all districts of Bengal.