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NOTES

ON THE

ABORIGINAL PROBLEM IN THE MANDLA DISTRICT

BY

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Aboriginal Tribes Enquiry Officer

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NOTES ON THE ABORIGINAL PROBLEM IN THE MANDLA DISTRICT

1. *Route followed.*—I entered and left the district by the Seoni road. The 12½ miles of unmetalled road between Keolari and Nainpur is for the most part bridged, and the surface far superior to that of the Mandla-Bilaspur road, save in a few patches where it was once boulder-soled. The completion of this road by raising these 12½ miles to Class I and by diverting the road near Mandla, so as to avoid the unnecessary double crossing of the Banjar, which in the rains stops all traffic while in the fair weather the very bad temporary bridges are a danger to motor-axles, is a badly needed link in road communication, but is not included in the list of roads drawn up in 1937 for aboriginal tracts.

2. Three nights (20th, 21st and 27th) were spent at Mandla where on the 21st and the 28th I interviewed local officials of all departments, Roman Catholic and Anglican Missionaries, the office-bearers of the District Council, the members of the Gond Maha Sabha, and others. Most of the 22nd was spent in Dindori, and that night and those of the 23rd and 24th at Patan with Mr. Elwin, in whose company I visited Karanjia, Kabirchabutra and Sanwarachhapar. From Patan on the 26th I motored *via* Chauradadar to Chara, the forest rest-house in which is just inside the Baiga Chak, visiting thence with the Divisional Forest Officer, Silpuri (Baiga) village and *bewar* cultivation on the 26th and, with the Ranger of Karanjia, on the 27th, by forest roads, the forest villages of Khapripani (Gond), Jalda and Baona (both Baiga), returning thence by forest and District Council roads to Chara *via* Labeda (Gond), Ghopatpur, Amadongri and Bajag. On the 27th I returned to Mandla *via* Mawai, Motinala and Bichhia.

3. The Deputy Commissioner had kindly prepared for me notes by each local departmental officer on the work of his department in the district.

4. *Administrative arrangements and trial of cases: Tribal Panchayats.*—Mandla has under the Deputy Commissioner at present only two assistants, one of whom is Treasury Officer and Headquarters Magistrate, and the other Sub-divisional Officer and Sub-divisional Magistrate for all three tahsils. Normally efforts are made to post another assistant during the touring season to take charge of Mandla Tahsil as Sub-divisional Officer. This ought to be a permanent arrangement, at least as soon as Mandla is linked by an all-weather road with the two other tahsils. The break in continuity caused by an officer being in charge of Mandla for only seven months a year is bad; that tahsil has a 51.2 aboriginal percentage of population. At least the arrangement should be that the permanent assistant should be Sub-divisional Officer, Mandla, in the open season, and do headquarters work only in the rains, the relieving man in the open

season doing headquarters work. But until there is a permanent staff of three assistants, there will always be a tendency (as during this summer) to keep the staff down to two owing to leave and other service exigencies. One assistant cannot effectively tour the whole district, especially since the abolition of Honorary Magistrates and the posting to Dindori of a Tahsildar without first class magisterial powers. This large and backward aboriginal area, particularly in the *malguzari* villages, needs constant and intensive touring if the Gond and Baiga are to be freed from tyranny. In the rains the distance of Mandla from Dindori, approachable generally only *via* Jubbulpore, is a great handicap. Even in winter letters may take a long time to pass between the two. Niwas is cut off from both. District Council meetings in the rainy season are often impossible.

5. A resident Sub-divisional Officer at Dindori would be a boon. He should be a young and active man, possibly an Assistant Commissioner, and given a good allowance, *i.e.*, the normal allowance of a resident Sub-divisional Officer, *plus* bad climate allowance.

6. But to the ryot always the main trouble is the distance to which he has to go to attend the tahsil headquarters whether for revenue, civil or criminal cases or for payment of land revenue. There are few all-weather roads, in fact only the Mandla-Jubbulpore and Dindori-Jubbulpore. A journey in the rains from Mawai, *e.g.*, or Bichhia to Dindori is very troublesome. On arrival at Court the Gond may be kept waiting for a day or two or find that the Tahsildar is away or too busy to take his case, and he is then told to go away and return a week or 10 days later, perhaps for another abortive visit. Conversely, with the Tahsildar and Naibs all at Dindori, touring is not systematized over the tahsil, nor is there always someone on the move to suppress *malguzari zulum* or the oppressions of the petty official.

7. Though there is not much complaint about having to go to the tahsili for payment of land revenue, yet I saw at Dindori the patel of Rahngi Raiyatwari, 31 miles from Dindori, who had walked in for two days to pay the land revenue of his village and would take two days to return. He had been to the *patwari* before leaving to ask him to fill up the *chalan* for the payment of the revenue into the treasury. The *patwari* had refused to do this, despite standing orders; possibly, if I had not been present when he arrived at the tahsili, the *wasul-baqi-navis* might on this account have refused to accept the land revenue, although the patel had brought the full demand. The patel could of course have sent the money by a revenue money-order, if the *patwari* had filled it up for him. Many patels and *malguzars* do in fact make use of revenue money-orders; but it is complained that nearly every postmaster demands a *manul* for the issue of such orders, while since the recent order that *patwaris* should first fill up the money-order forms for them, patels also are often mulcted by *patwaris* also. The Bhumijan Sewa Mandal every year has helped a large number of *lambar-dar* and *raiayatwari patels* by getting these revenue money-orders written for them.

8. Mr. Elwin welcomed the idea of a system akin to the Bombay *petha* system whereby, in Dindori tahsil, *e.g.*, instead of having the Tahsildar and Naib-Tahsildars concentrated at Dindori the Tahsildar himself might remain at Dindori and do the magisterial and other work for Dindori and Shahpura Revenue Inspector's circles, but there should be for the rest of the tahsil two Naib-Tahsildars, one for the Mawai Revenue Inspector's circle and one for the Bajag circle, with headquarters possibly at Marfa and Bajag respectively. Thus the aboriginal could get more immediate attention to his cases and could be saved long and abortive visits to the tahsili.

9. The difficulties are obvious. The first is the necessity of a second officer at tahsil headquarters to look after the sub-treasury in the Tahsildar's absence on tour—not necessarily insuperable if, *e.g.*, the Hyderabad system of recruiting a graduate as "*peshkar*" or head clerk of a tahsili could be adopted; even now the Qanungo of a tahsili not infrequently takes charge of a sub-treasury, while Bombay presumably has solved this difficulty. The second is expense. Possibly this could be met if the Revenue Inspectors could be appointed Additional Naibs, and graduates recruited for these special posts on a better scale of pay than ordinary Revenue Inspectors. The scheme recently proposed by the Deputy Commissioner of "Camp Courts" to be held at fixed centres at regular times by touring magisterial Naibs is a step in the right direction, but the chief cases in aboriginal areas to be tried are, under the present law, first class complaint cases—adultery and defamation.

10. Such cases are almost always "settled" by the tribal *panchayat* of the village from which the girl elopes, but that *panchayat's* decision is not necessarily recognized by the *panchayat* of the village to which she elopes with her new husband. The only way then by which the former husband can get back his marriage expenses is by going all the way to Mandla to file a complaint under section 497, Indian Penal Code, in the Court of a Magistrate of the First Class. The Bhumijan Sewa Mandal settles on the average about 30 such cases a month, and the *panchayat* themselves often bring them to the Mandal for seeking the moral influence of Mr. Elwin, who was once an Honorary Magistrate, or of his colleague Mr. Shamrao Hiwale, to persuade the parties to abide by the *panchayat's* decision.

11. If there were available local officials who could fulfil similar functions, preferably without court fees, it would be a great relief. Such cases should not be treated as criminal cases. The fine imposed by a convicting Magistrate is generally not more than Rs. 50, and even a junior Revenue Officer could be safely entrusted with this work, which depends more on common-sense than anything else. Behind a *panchayat's* decision there is still the weight of public opinion, even if it is made by the *panchayat* of another village. Everyone locally recognizes that the only honest thing to do when one man's wife comes to live with another is for the latter to pay back the first husband's marriage expenses, at least when the marriage now dissolved has been a first marriage. It is symptomatic of the demoralization of the aboriginals that so many new "husbands" nowadays try to evade this. The "price" of the woman falls with each fresh union contracted by her.

12. In Mandla District Mr. Elwin now doubts whether a circle *panchayat* could be satisfactorily constituted and trusted to fulfil the duty of overruling or enforcing the decisions of a village *panchayat*, because of bitter local experience gained from such examples as those of Dhokal Singh, former Chairman of the Dindori Local Board, and Hari Prasad Pradhan, who was the reader of Mr. Elwin as Honorary Magistrate. Both of these men were convicted under section 420, Indian Penal Code, for abusing the influence that they had acquired to extract money as fines for caste offences. I have myself heard that one of the present Gond members of the Dindori Local Board has established what he calls "Shivraj" in three villages, where he is prohibiting dancing, singing, eating of various foods and drinking under similar threats. The local Gonds are like a flock of sheep and will follow any person who stands up and announces himself as their shepherd, during His Excellency's recent visit a schoolmaster is said to have persuaded certain villages around Karanjia to avoid His Excellency on the ground that he was coming with 15 lorries to take the people away to fight in the present war; the villagers of Amaldahi Raiyatwari village decamped with all their women and cattle into the jungle for the whole day. Thus even if there still exist circle headmen of the aboriginals—as is alleged by some officials—to invest them with power might turn them into Dhokal Singhs. The village *mukaddam* is seldom a true headman; the post is underpaid and involves *diq aur taklif* so that often only a nonentity can be found to take the place. The patel of a *rayatwari* village is a more influential man. But it would be difficult in such an area as Dindori to find suitable *panchas* for an appellate or revisional *panchayat*, in Mr. Elwin's view. Thus to begin with at all events the aboriginal of Dindori would probably gain more from the jurisdiction of the tahsil being shared with the Tahsildar by local officers in charge of smaller or more accessible units than from group *panchayat* to enforce local *panchayat* awards. Some other remarks about criminal cases will be found in paragraphs 47 to 49 below.

13. Two other things have also to be emphasized. The first is the co-operation of local representatives of all Government Departments under the control of the Deputy Commissioner of the district, the Sub-divisional Officer for the sub-division and the Tahsildar for the tahsil. For any efficient district administration this is essential, but above all for any progressive policy in a backward area. In Mandla there seems to be too great a tendency towards the independence of each department. Secondly the best men should be selected for the backward areas and these areas should not be treated as punishment areas of places for posting men who have failed in a heavy tahsil. Most posts in Dindori and Niwas carry bad climate allowances. It might be better to describe them as special pay; the mere designation "bad climate allowance" is apt to beget applications for leave or transfer. Moreover there seems to be too much differentiation between different departments and

*Cf. Mandla District Gazetteer, paragraph 94: "In the majority of Gond villages there is no resident *Malguzar*. The headman, who may, or may not be titular *mukaddam* is known as the *Mandal* or *Bhoi*, if he has once been a *malguzar* or lessee. He is a man of substance, and cultivates several ploughs of land"

places; Mandla itself is not much healthier than the rest of the district, while the touring officers stationed there have to be out for 100 days or more in the malarious tracts. No such allowance is given, amongst others, to Revenue Inspectors or veterinary compounders or agricultural jamadars. I should be glad if the Deputy Commissioner would kindly let me have a statement of the grades and number of officials of all departments in the district who draw and do not draw the allowance, showing their scale of pay and of allowance, the tahsil in which they are stationed and whether they tour or not.

14. *Police*.—I find the police well spoken of throughout the areas visited; I met various constables on *gasht* in the interior and saw none using *begaris* nor heard any complaint about police *begar*. In fact the one point in which Government publicity does not seem to have failed is the orders about the *begar* and *rasad* of subordinates, although in my opinion the rates in the local *nirkhnama* at least of Dindori are very low, even lower than the rates criticised in paragraph 3 (h) of His Excellency's note. Successive District Superintendents of Police have toured freely themselves and insisted on their subordinates touring, though constant sickness has in many a *thana* reduced the amount of touring.

15. His Excellency thought that Mawai is so unhealthy that the *thana* should be moved to a place on the Mandla-Bilaspur road. It has fine new buildings, and Mawai is a bazar village and centrally situated, whereas the Bilaspur road runs almost along the Baihar border. Shifting the *thana* would mean much inconvenience to the public and kotwals, and more trouble over investigations and prosecutions. The *thana* serves 114 revenue villages (of which five are uninhabited) and 24 forest villages, scattered over a large area. Crime is light, but much could be done if *begar* were made a cognizable offence and the police had rigorously to enforce the use of true weights and measures. The police say that they almost all have weekly attacks of fever, and when I visited Mawai two of the four constables had been sent to Mandla Hospital owing to malaria, and the wife and children of a Head Constable—the only policeman who keeps his family in Mawai—were down with fever; so was the veterinary compounder, as at the time of His Excellency's visit. But what is true of Mawai is also true of most other *thanas* in Dindori, including Bajag and Karanjia, both of which I visited, and Sannapur. At Bajag the *gashti* Head Constable had been sick off and on for six months, and one of the five constables is always on the sick list, and in both the latest inspection notes the District Superintendent of Police has commented on the effect of fever on touring. In Karanjia similar absence from duty owing to malaria is chronic. Sannapur is probably worse, and even Dindori and Shahpur suffer. Bajag, Karanjia and other places which have dispensaries are not as unpopular as Mawai and Sannapur, which have none. That, and proper anti-malarial measures, rather than closing down long-established *thanas* at recognized centres, seem to be the remedy. I note also that though Government provides mosquito-nets for the men, it provides none for their families; that while, e.g., at Mawai, the Sub-Inspector makes the men take their nets on tour, at Karanjia they say that they do not, as in these days

when a constable has to carry all his own kit he has to cut down the weight; and that *thanas* are not properly drained, none having septic tanks or mosquito-proof drains. At Karanjia all the drain gutters were broken and in the stagnant sullage the Assistant Medical Officer showed me mosquito larvæ. Samnapur *thana* is now visited once a month by the Dindori Assistant Medical Officer; the Bajag Assistant Medical Officer should similarly visit Mawai, but cheap plan dispensaries are essential there and at Samnapur. More will be said on anti-malarial measures under Public Health.

16. *Civil Justice*.—The Sub-Judge at Mandla is the only civil judge stationed in the district, apart from certain powers exercised by revenue officers. He also presides over the Debt Relief Court (see paragraph 24 below) and is a First Class Magistrate. Here I think all Sub-divisional Officers, Tahsildars and Naibs should have simple civil powers and take cases on tour, while the Sub-Judge should at intervals, both for debt and normal civil work, have to take cases at Dindori and Niwas. I do not believe moreover that debt relief work will help the aboriginal so long as applications have to come from the aboriginal debtor; as recommended by Mr. Symington [paragraph 217* (1)], the creditor should be compelled to lodge all claims against aboriginals with the Debt Court or the Tahsildar within a fixed period, after which no claim not so lodged should be enforceable at law. At Settlement however it was found that more than two-thirds of the tenants and ryots of Niwas and Dindori owed nothing at all, and only 5 per cent over Rs. 100 each.

17. The Sub-Judge (Mr. R. Trivedi) has in this and in Chanda District had considerable experience of aboriginal difficulties in civil cases. He is well aware of the difficulties to which a Gond ignorant of the Courts is put so long as Civil Courts have not the duty of ascertaining the true facts, but only of requiring the plaintiff and the defendant to put up such pleadings and evidence as they think fit to rely on or know how to adduce. Not only is the Gond often ignorant, but his pleader, not knowing Gond ways, will often persuade him to advance a plea based on Hindu ideas and clearly wrong. The difficulties are enhanced by the rulings of the High Court as to the civil law applicable to aboriginals, the absence of any authoritative exposition of their customs, and the consequent bewilderment of judge, pleaders and parties. The High Court has rightly ruled that Gonds are not Hindu and not governed by Hindu law; they are also not governed by the Indian Succession Act. In any case therefore of adoption, disputed succession, claims to property, guardianship, divorce or marriage, Gond custom has to be proved. A Gond does not know how to prove a custom. His pleader or his opponent's pleader knowing nothing of Gond custom tries to prove by obviously unreliable evidence that the family concerned followed in the particular matter the Hindu law.

18. Some marriage cases come also before the Civil Courts. Here they are generally suits for damages for adultery. If Rs. 100 is claimed on the pleader's advice, it costs the Gond

*Report on the Aboriginal and Hill Tribes of the Partially Excluded Areas in the Province of Bombay, by D. Symington, I.C.S. (Bombay Government Central Press, 1939, Annas 4).

Rs. 7-8-0 court fees, Re. 1-8-0 process fees, Re. 1-8-0 writing charges and Rs. 5 pleader's fee, total Rs. 15-8-0. If he gets a decree, execution costs will take 10 per cent of the sum decreed, and execution last three or four years. Therefore most such suits are compromised, just as the corresponding complaints filed under section 497, Indian Penal Code, before a First Class Magistrate are almost always compromised for Rs. 30 or Rs. 60, the Criminal and Civil Courts alike being used merely to get the *panchayat's* award enforced or varied. Defamation suits or complaints are similarly used to escape from a *panchayat's* decision, e.g., to outcaste. In some cases also, Mr. Kolte, Extra-Assistant Commissioner, pointed out, as the first husband waits till his wife gives birth to a child by the new "husband", the former consents or connives at the "adultery", and so acquittal should result. Another legal consideration is that to prove adultery you must prove that the woman is your wife; under tribal custom she is largely free to elope, and ceases to be your wife when she does so, so that a conviction under section 497 can only be justified by viewing tribal marriages as governed by the same considerations as applicable to Hindu or Muslim marriages.

19. The matter was further discussed with Mr. Elwin. He agrees that in the present state of civil law it is difficult for the Civil Courts to decide aboriginal suits as to property, etc., and that the only basis for providing judges with authoritative guidance would be a detailed investigation in every important aboriginal district (because custom varies locally) of actual cases in the light of successive settlement *khasras* and by the use of the genealogical method of anthropological enquiry. The investigation to be of any use would have to last for two years, and be made by a small trained staff under the control of an anthropologist. Russell and Hiralal give absolutely no sound guidance. Mr. Elwin thinks that this investigation should also codify the "tribal customs in respect of marriage and divorce, etc., as a preliminary to final removal from the law applicable to tribal areas of section 497 and some of the other marriage sections of the Indian Penal Code and probably also section 500. When according to the tribesmen a woman is free to leave her husband and to enter the house of another man, who is willing to take her as his wife, and when the act of entering the other man's house is practically tantamount to a divorce, it is difficult to see how in law the first husband can prosecute the second husband for adultery. The last husband can get compensation by negotiating with the new husband and only goes to Court when he does not get it. Another question for which legal provision is needed is how to secure compensation to a youth who has worked for anything from three to seven years as a *lamsena* or *gharjawai* for his ultimate marriage with his employer's daughter, when the girl either goes off or is given by her parents to another man. At present the tribal *panchayat* is powerless in this matter, and the *gharjawai* is unable to get any remedy in the Courts. So long as tribal cohesion was strong, such cases were rare, but as the tribe is being contaminated by outside contact, this form of dishonesty is becoming fairly common."

20. Since my return from Mandla I have looked up Rule 46 of the Madras Agency Rules made under section 6 of the Scheduled Districts Act, 1874, as revised up to May 1938. This rule allows a Court, if it thinks a suit or issue fit for arbitration, to refer the suit or issue to arbitration before a *panchayat* of three or five members, as the Court may decide. The Court itself chooses one member to preside, and each party chooses one, when there are three. When there are five, "four shall be chosen by the parties having separate or conflicting interests in the subject in the suit in the manner prescribed by the Court." The *panchayat's* decision is filed then in the Court as a *razinama* petition. The Court has to satisfy itself that the parties fully understand the *razinama*, and then passes a decree thereon, but, for recorded reasons, may reject a *panchayat's* decision if it appears clearly unjust or inconclusive. Under Agency Rule 45 when there has been arbitration without the Court's intervention, any person interested in the award can get it filed in the Court and executed, after the other parties have been given a chance of being heard, and unless the award is *prima facie* illegal or defective or tainted with fraud of either party or corruption or misconduct of the arbitrator; a *panchayat's* award would come within the scope of this. Appeals do not lie in general from awards under Rules 45 and 46. Here is a clearly possible line of approach—Lists of suitable *sarpanchas* would be kept, and provisions based on these two Agency Rules applied to all matters usually decided by tribal *panchayats* and to simple civil suits or even minor criminal offences. This involves legislation, as so few of the tribal areas in this Province are Scheduled Districts, and, even to those that are, nearly all the Civil Procedure Code has long been applied.

21. *Registration of moneylenders* is still inadequate. In Mandla, Niwas and Dindori Tahsils 104, 18 and 27 only out of 202, 101 and 76 known moneylenders have registered. Mandla, Nainpur, Bamhani, Bichhia, and Pindrai in Mandla Tahsil, and Dindori, Bajag, Gorakhpur and Garhasarai in Dindori have several registered moneylenders. The list includes two Dutch Catholic Missionaries and an Indian Christian in Dindori Tahsil, and a retired Anglo-Indian Permanent Way Inspector at Nainpur. There are bad complaints against some moneylenders, one of whom at Bajag is said to "piss liquid fire" on the local Gonds.

22. *Bond-Service* is said not to be a problem by the local officers and by Mr. Elwin; but the Sub-Judge had heard of cases, and the matter needs looking into.

23. *Free legal advice* for aboriginals is badly needed. There have been some bad cases of lawyer-exploitation of them.

24. *Publicity*.—Something is wrong with the district publicity arrangements. Government may secure from the legislature a valuable provision such as the new section 88-A added to the Tenancy Act by Act III of 1938; *begar* however goes merrily on and landlords appear to interpret sub-section (1) of the section as authorizing *begar* if it be paid for (sub-section (2)

as drafted unfortunately does not penalise compulsory *paid begar*). Government sets up a Debt Relief Court in Mandla under the latest debt legislation; the Presiding Judge foregoes his vacation to deal with the work; but there is such ignorance of its provisions that up to May 20, 1940, the Court had received only 58 applications involving Rs. 1,66,707 debt from non-aboriginals and a mere 3 involving Rs. 445 debt from aboriginals; of these 41 and 3, respectively, had been conciliated for Rs. 77,205 out of Rs. 97,476 and Rs. 269 out of Rs. 445, respectively. There had been no previous debt conciliation in Dindori and Niwas. Not only did I find Dindori Tahsil villagers ignorant of the existence of the Court, but also Father Van Dorst, one of the Roman Catholic missionaries working in villages close to Mandla. No one around Patan, Mr. Elwin included, knew of the existence of the Government seed-store at Garhasarai, and, although a "Farmers' Day" at the Dindori farm is said to have attracted "thousands", such work as the farm may be doing is not publicised, at least in the aboriginal villages. It has been located at Dindori, in the heart of the chief non-aboriginal tract of this mainly aboriginal area. The Baiga of some villages were not aware of the concession restoring to them the right of carrying their bows and arrows. Subordinates are still able to get hold of the produce of a day's fishing by telling Gond fishermen that they have broken the law prohibiting fishing; near Jalda a party of Baiga boys, and near Labeda as my car came along the forest road a party of Gond youths and girls fishing in a forest stream immediately hid in the deep bed of the stream, possibly on seeing the Ranger's uniform. There is general ignorance of the locality of the nearest medical and veterinary aid, and no advance intimation of visits of travelling dispensaries or the propagandists of the Agricultural, Veterinary and Co-operative Departments. There is general ignorance about bazar dues leviable by District Council contractors, weights and measures and permissible rates of interest. Further instances could probably be multiplied. Government's case goes by default among the aboriginals. I am not however in favour as yet of special propagandists. They will only act as Dhokal Singh and others have acted unless under firm control and kept in the camp of a touring officer. The only safe propaganda is through schools, dispensaries and touring officers. Our departmental demonstrators however often do not know the local Eastern Hindi dialect (akin to Chhattisgarhi and Bagheli), far less Gondi and Korku, and have no training in village or aboriginal psychology. Parrot-like the average man repeats the same standardised talks and lectures in language unintelligible even to the villager who has learnt to talk standard Hindi, and the villager gapes and goes on. In a Baiga village to which free quinine had been sent through the forest *patel* (a Baiga), the *patel* had thought that he had to distribute all that was sent among the villagers, and this had worked out to exactly one pill per head, carefully treasured away.

TENANCY AND LAND ALIENATION LEGISLATION

25. *The Land Alienation Act*.—Of the present Land Alienation Act, Mr. Lillie (paragraph 8 of the current Settlement

Report) observed that it had certainly achieved its object of protecting the aboriginal proprietors from unfair exploitation—

“The ground lost by aboriginals since Settlement in small shares is 15 mahals approximately, largely previous to the passing of the Land Alienation Act. The process which the Act interrupted is readily discernible in the Dindori Tahsil, where it is usual to find in villages owned by Gond *malguzars* one or two small shares that have passed to non-aboriginals, generally Banias resident in Mandla. Since 1916, this process by which ultimately the whole village passes to non-residents has been materially checked. Whether the Gond *malguzar* is good or not for the general prosperity of his village is a question on which two opinions are possible. But to my mind the fact that he is invariably a resident cultivator, and is on friendly terms with his tenants, whom he treats well, far out-weighs his defects of improvidence and intemperance. In any case nothing can be said in support of these to whom his villages usually pass, through usury, deceit and trickery. They are nearly always oppressive Banias, who treat their villages on the most strict commercial lines, levy all sorts . . . of illegal dues, and have no regard whatever for tenants’ rights and interests. The men to whom such villages would pass, if the Act were not in force, are those to whom the small shares have already been transferred, and neither I nor any Revenue Officer with experience of the district would hesitate to describe them as worst possible landlords.”

Thus the Act has done much for aboriginal *malguzars*. But elsewhere experience has shown far too much leasing by them to non-aboriginals; such leases up to 20 years are valid under section 11 of the Act. I should like from the Deputy Commissioner a statement of such leases now current in the district. Of aboriginal *malik-makbuza* no figures are given in the Settlement Report: but in the whole district there were only 625 *malik-makbuza*, holding 4,059 acres, of which more than half were in Mandla Tahsil: probably very few are aboriginals. The Act has been applied only to Gond, Raj-Gond and Baiga proprietors. Are there no Pardhan (which includes Pathari) or Kol *malguzar* or *malik-makbuza* in the district?

26. *Tenants*.—Aboriginals formed 55 per cent of the tenantry at Settlement (Gond 51 per cent, Baiga 3 per cent, Pathari or Pardhan 1 per cent: some aboriginals must also have been included in others, 18 per cent). About 63 per cent in Dindori and Niwas, and 51 per cent only in Mandla were aboriginals. It is observed at paragraph 7 of the Report that the aboriginal tenant had been driven out from the Haveli of Mandla. But I gathered from Mr. Elwin and others that there is no great immediate danger of the expropriation of the aboriginal in Dindori and Niwas Tahsils if he is allowed the right to transfer his land, because he can always get fresh land in several *malguzari* and *raiya-wari* villages, particularly the latter. But between 1910 and 1930 the *raiya-wari* area available for allotment fell from 155,000 to 67,000 acres, so that this “safety-valve” cannot indefinitely give protection. If the aboriginal, it is argued, is able to sell his land without the consent of the *malguzar*, this will do much to limit his dependence on the

malguzar and make the *malguzar* who desires to keep his village inhabited more careful. Dindori and Niwas are not typical of the aboriginal areas of the province, because there is so much unoccupied land available throughout the tahsils. There is similarly much land available in the Baihar Tahsil or Balaghat. On the other hand there are already colonies of non-aboriginals at such centres as Karanjia, Gorakhpur, Garhasarai, Bajag, Mawai, Samnapur, Niwas, Narainganj, Shahpur, Bichhia (Niwas), etc., and in these villages much of the land has passed to non-aboriginals. Of the 12 *tola* of Karanjia, for example, only two are now aboriginal, and the ownership of the village has passed from a Gond to a Kalar *malguzar*. Each of these non-aboriginal villages is a focus for the exploitation and detribalization of the Gond and Baiga. Gorakhpur is a nest of Panjabi Mohammadan exploiters, who nowadays do not resort to the oppressive money-lending for which they used to be notorious in most aboriginal areas, but sell cloth and grain on credit at usurious rates in the manner noted in my note on the Chhindwara Jagirs. All of these have land in Gorakhpur, and as their families increase they will look out for good land in adjacent villages, so that, if the local Gond is given full rights of transfer under the Tenancy Amendment Bill, there will not be wanting non-aboriginals to buy his land from him. Therefore the intrusion of alien elements into this tribal area would be accelerated by the Bill. The demand for land may also increase if communications improve. The *lambardar* of Gorakhpur is a Gond and has created several new tenancies without taking sanction under the Land Alienation Act; it has been ruled that the creation of a tenancy amounts to alienation within the meaning of the Act. It would be interesting to know whether permission was asked for or granted. Incidentally when, as at Gorakhpur, the *lambardar* is an aboriginal and owns only a two-annas share of the village, but the other co-sharers are not aboriginals, the position under the Land Alienation Act in respect of the creation of tenancies needs elucidation.

27. It would seem therefore that although the Tenancy Amendment Bill may offer some economic advantages to the occupancy tenant even in an area like this, the aboriginal tenants should be protected against thoughtless transfer of their land by the extension of the Land Alienation Act to tenancy land also. This would involve ideally smaller administrative units, and, in alienation cases, the exclusion of pleaders. An application for alienation should be made in the first place to the local Revenue Officer who after enquiry would be required to forward it to the Deputy Commissioner for sanction before transfer was permitted.

28. There is no great risk here in allowing the Gond tenant to surrender his land to the *malguzar*, because he can almost always get land in the adjacent villages, and there is still so much abandonment of houses and lands for superstitious reasons or on account of domestic calamities that with the *malguzar* the problem is rather to prevent than to permit surrender.

29. It should be reported whether the appointment of Muslim *mukaddams* in Gorakhpur and Karanjia offended against the recent amendment to the Mukaddam Rules under the Land

Revenue Act requiring the appointment so far as possible of aboriginal *mukaddams* in chiefly aboriginal villages. Generally speaking all influential aboriginals avoid the post of *mukaddam* where the *malguzar* is a Hindu or Muslim absentee, because the remuneration is so small and irregularly paid, and the work considerable. They should be appointed by Government on fixed remunerations recovered from the *malguzars*.

30. There are 316 *raiayatwari* villages in Dindori, 167 in Niwas and 95 in Mandla Tahsil. At Settlement aboriginals were 69 per cent of the ryots in Mandla, 79 per cent in Niwas and 68 per cent in Dindori. The *raiayatwari* system is better adapted for aboriginals, as nearly all the *patels* of aboriginal *raiayatwari* villages are aboriginals. Paragraph 47 of Mr. Lillie's Settlement Report shows the remarkable development in population and cultivation in these villages between 1910 and 1930. If the Land Revenue Act were amended so as to give Government ryots the same rights of transfer as the Tenancy (Amendment) Bill seeks to give to occupancy tenants, they too would need to be protected by the land alienation law. It has to be remembered that where the present Land Alienation Act is in force, there is no prohibition of transfer of proprietary rights between one aboriginal and another.

31. The idea of a local Gond paying 10 or 12½ times his tenancy rent to acquire *malik-makbuza* rights is laughable in this area.

32. The conclusion is that the Tenancy (Amendment) Bill should not be fully applied to this Partially Excluded Area; at least the sections granting freer rights of transfer should [as recommended in the case of new section 12 (1) (c) by the Select Committee] not be applied, but I would not apply them in any aboriginal area until the aboriginal tenant is safeguarded by a wider Land Alienation Act. Many of the provisions of the Bill should however be applied to Partially Excluded Areas, such as clauses 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16; probably, in Mandla Tahsil at least, clauses 21 and 22; clauses 24 to 32; above all clause 33 and other amendments consequential on the new Chapter VII-A; clauses 41, 42, 45, 46—48 (trees); some of clauses 50, 53 and 54; and clause 55. The list is not exhaustive.

33. *Landlords and Tenants: Grazing and Begar*.—Paragraph 59 of Mr. Lillie's Settlement Report deals satisfactorily with grazing, which is in most villages recorded as free for all cattle of the village. But is his advice being followed and are his *wajib-ul-arz* entries being enforced? I learnt at Mawai, for example, that the *malguzar* there and in his 13 other adjacent villages levies grazing dues, even on cattle only passing through his villages along the Motinala-Kabirchabutra road, and that he still takes from tenants a day's *begar* for ploughing and reaping. I found his house at Mawai actually undergoing heavy monsoon repairs at the hands of a Baiga tenant and five or six Gond tenants, whom his agent declared to be paid labourers and not *begari*. He said that they were being paid two and half annas a day. They said that they had been forced to go to the work against their will just when they had to get their lands ready for

kharif sowing (May 27th), the money for their wages being "thrown at them"; they had had to work for periods varying from four to seven days. Unfortunately the penal clause of the recently enacted section 88-A of the Tenancy Act cannot be applied when the forced labour is paid. But according to what I was told this is a comparatively mild instance. It is said that at least in Dindori Tahsil most *malguzars* (Mr. Mahendralal Choudhary, M.L.A., is a notable exception) still take, besides their legal dues, five kinds of *begar* in the year; the whole village, that is, has to give a day's work for ploughing, sowing, reaping, threshing and bringing grass for thatching the roofs of the *malguzars'* buildings, five days in all. Many landlords also take a poll-tax of Rs. 2 per head from every landless labourer (*thalwa*) in the village, apparently merely for the privilege of living in the village. Hindu *malguzars* often also demand an additional rupee as *tika* from every household at either Holi or Diwali. Food supplies, firewood and labour for carrying goods are constantly taken without payment by *malguzars* or their agents. Mr. Elwin himself saw two years ago a remarkable instance of levy of this illegal poll-tax. A *malguzar* on the very day when the Sub-divisional Officer was camping in his village announced the collection of the poll-tax and actually collected Rs. 118 from the villagers. He took no notice of the Sub-divisional Officer, nor did the villagers think of complaining to that officer, who would have gone away in complete ignorance of what had happened had not Mr. Elwin told him about it; but he took no action.

34. Such instances as this, my own observations at Mawai and the widespread complaint of continued exactions of *begar* and "poll-tax" by *malguzars* (and, especially, their agents) do not indicate effective touring by Revenue Officers. The illegal levy of poll-tax, for example, could be dealt with by them now *suo motu* under the recently strengthened section 74 of the Tenancy Act; but, as already mentioned, the payment of forced labour defeats the penal clause of section 88-A of that Act. If *begar* and such illegal exactions were made cognisable offences in aboriginal areas, then the police would be far more useful to the aboriginal and there would be a real hope of breaking down such oppression, which is bound to continue so long as such complaints are left to the chance of action being taken by an occasional touring Revenue Officer. But my own view, and it is a view with which some of the local Revenue Officers largely agree, the best solution of aboriginal troubles in *malguzari* villages would be for Government to buy out all non-aboriginal *malguzars* of predominantly aboriginal villages, particularly non-resident *malguzars*. At present this would be cheap; many village shares now change hands for multiples of two and half or three times the land revenue, and the maximum multiple is said to be six times. Most *malguzars* oppress their aboriginal tenants; practically none do anything for them.

EXCISE

35. This question, in the light of paragraph 9 of His Excellency's note and of the outstills seen by me at Karanjia and other places, I discussed with the Deputy Commissioner, the District Excise Officer and his Assistant, and with other Revenue Officers.

I also saw drinking at an Ahir wedding at Patan, at a Baiga dance in the Chak and at the Baiga forest village of Jalda. The District Excise Officer admitted to me that he had, in response to His Excellency's tour-note, written his own note on the liquor problem in the outstill area in accordance, not with his own personal views, but with what, in the light of the questionnaire issued by his superior officer, he imagined His Excellency's view to be, namely, that outstills should be abolished. He completely misunderstood His Excellency. At the most His Excellency queried the wisdom of making outstill liquor in Dindori and elsewhere as cheap as two annas a bottle. I am afraid that the figures given in the statement called for in His Excellency's note cannot be conclusive. They overlook in Dindori the liquor smuggled in from Rewa; and in the Mandla supply area similar figures would overlook the enormous illicit distillation. The District Excise Officer actually seemed to agree more with the contents of the following paragraphs 36 to 41, written after discussion with the Mandla officials and Mr. Elwin at Patan, and before I had met the District Excise Officer, unless of course he is again adapting his views to what he takes to be mine.

36. All of Dindori and about half of Niwas is under the outstill system. The Excise Department issued a questionnaire, following His Excellency's recent tour-note asking amongst other questions whether the outstills could be brought under the supply system, whether Government distillery liquor is accepted for aboriginal festivals and religious ceremonies, whether the price should be raised, and what other means could be found for checking the consumption of liquor which in Dindori Tahsil was said to be many times as great as in any other tahsil of the Province.

37. Mr. Elwin thinks that the usual liquor prepared in the outstills is of poor quality and strength, frequently made under insanitary conditions with dirty water, and that much can be done to improve this by more effective conditions in the contract agreement and more stringent inspection of the stills themselves, not only by Excise but also by Medical Officers. He used to be in favour of aboriginals being given these outstill contracts, but experience has changed his mind; he quoted the cases of two Baiga still contractors and several Gond sub-shop contractors who have soaked steadily in liquor ever since they took charge. I myself saw one such contractor, the son of the Baiga *mukaddam* of Dhurkatta forest village in the Baiga Chak, a much demoralized toper. A possible solution would be Kalar contractors with Gond servants to put the water into the still. He also thought feasible my suggestion of a Government pot-distillery with Gond labourers at Dindori, which would ensure better sanitary conditions and would save Government the cost of despatching liquor from Seoni.

38. In Dindori the price per bottle is now two annas. Mr. Elwin considers that owing to this price being cheap and the liquor being outstill liquor, there is now no illicit distillation in the areas known to him, but a good deal of smuggling from the adjacent Rewa and Kewardha State villages. Throughout Mandla Tahsil, I was told on the 21st by the Tahsildar and the

Assistant District Excise Officer, ever since the outstill system was recently again replaced by the supply system, illicit distillation has again become rampant. Father Van Dorst told me that he believed there to be no Gond village in the supply area where illicit distillation for domestic consumption does not take place, and that in some villages this is true of every household. The Mandla Tahsildar remarked that more than three-fourths of the criminal cases he now had to try were cases of petty illicit distillation by aboriginals for domestic consumption, in some of which he had had with great reluctance to send Gonds to jail for a fourth or fifth conviction, and they had said in Court that they did not mind being sent to jail and would start again as soon as they came out, because liquor was their life-blood. Even the District Excise Officer agrees that not more than one in five or six cases of illicit distillation is detected in Mandla Tahsil. The Tahsildar also remarked that one effect of the new orders in Mandla had been an increase in the consumption of *ganja* (which the District Excise Officer denied), and Mr. Elwin referred to the heavy increase of *ganja* consumption in the Bilaspur *zamindaris* following the increase in the price of liquor to seven annas a bottle. Figures are needed in both cases.

39. The only reform suggested by Mr. Elwin would be the closure of liquor shops on bazar days, when there is always a temptation to the aboriginal to spend the little that he has made in or brought to the bazar on getting drunk in the company of the lowest type of non-aboriginal. He is not in favour of closure of shops on festivals for the following reasons:—

- (a) The aboriginal does not keep the festivals on any fixed days, his Dasehra, for example, being spread over a month at different villages, and his Phag lasting as long as the spirit moves him.
- (b) It would be strongly resented by the aboriginal as yet another invasion of the "little liberty left to him".
- (c) It would only lead to the aboriginal, who would be determined to have liquor for the festivals, gradually hoarding it in advance or illicitly distilling it for the occasion, exactly as in most of the aboriginal districts in the Province, where any Excise Sub-Inspector can at present with little difficulty detect illicit distillation at Holi.

40. Mr. Elwin added that any attempt to make liquor prohibitive in price would defeat its own object, and that though he had suggested that an increase to Re. 0-3-0 a bottle might be tried, he agreed that if this did not lead to more smuggling and illicit distillation, it would however mean more money being spent by the average aboriginal on liquor and a very small drop in consumption, so that it would expose Government to the charge of getting rich out of the aboriginals' vices.

41. Mr. Elwin had written strongly against a suggestion in the questionnaire that local aboriginal propagandists might be appointed, as they would probably misuse their position in the same way as Dhokal Singh and Hari Prasad Pardhan. The best places for propaganda, he thinks, are the schools and the dispensaries, apart from which it should be left to the advice of

touring officers. Little hope is to be placed upon propaganda through tribal headmen and *panchayat* or *patel* and *mukaddam*, as they are generally the heaviest drunkards in the village, and the *panchayat* does nothing without getting a judgment-mellowing drink beforehand. We both strongly were opposed to the suggestion that more money should be spent on informers, who would merely be at the best village traitors and at the worst blackmailers and extortioners into the bargain.

42. The District Excise Officer's note to me, which reproduces the gist of his reply to the questionnaire reference, is full of inconsistencies and unsound reasoning. He argues that the liquor needed by the aboriginals for their social and religious ceremonies must be cheap outstill liquor, and that it was when they could only get expensive distillery liquor that they took to general illicit distillation. Yet he suggests that they spend excessively on outstill liquor and so should be brought under the supply system. He bases this on the following figures for Dindori Tahsil :—

Year	Issue price rate	Consumption in proof gallons	Selling rate in annas per bottle	Estimated expenditure on drink in whole tahsil in rupees	Number of illicit distillation cases detected
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Rs. a.				
1929	.. 1 14	12,346	3	34,723	8
1930	.. 2 13	4,104	4	15,390	40
1931	.. 2 13	1,582	4	5,932	20
1932	.. 1 14	5,230	3	14,700	47
1933	.. 1 14	5,341	3	15,022	39
1934	.. 1 14	5,049	3	14,700	29
1935	.. 1 14	{ 3,534 12,671 }	{ 3 2 }	11,646	12
1936	.. Outstill	16,053	2	30,100	2
1937	.. Do.	20,070	2	37,632	12
1938	.. Do.	28,570	2	53,569	12
1939	.. Do.	41,306	2	77,450	20

He admits that the outstill figures in column 3 are quite unreliable, as there is no check on quantities distilled in outstills. His estimates of expenditure in column 5 overlook the fact that, legally or illegally, a kerosene tin of outstill liquor is sold for Rs. 2 against Rs. 2-8-0, the price for the same quantity at two annas per bottle: at least half the liquor sold is sold at this reduced rate. His illicit distillation case figures do not include smuggling figures, and show a revived tendency to illicit distillation, perhaps because the bad example is spreading from the new supply area where it is again so rife. He cannot account for the surprising leap in consumption from 28,570 proof gallons in 1938 to 41,306 in 1939, especially when it is contrasted with the fall of the district revenue from the outstill area from Rs. 74,514 in 1938 to Rs. 58,120 in 1939. He points out that when in 1936 the whole district except 195 square miles was brought under the outstill system, illicit distillation cases detected fell from 270 in 1935 to 89 in 1937, while his figures for detections in the supply area, since the reversion of 1,366 square miles in 1938 and another 894 square miles in 1939 to the supply system, again rose to 179

and 187 respectively (with another 28 and 35 in the outstill area) Actually, as the Mandla revenue officers and Catholic Missionaries assert, illicit distillation is far more rampant than the District Excise Officer admits even when he says that only one in five or six cases is detected. His estimate of the loss of revenue caused to Government by illicit distillation in 1939 at Rs. 6,500 or 5 per cent of the total Excise revenue is thus very much under the mark. Curiously also according to him in Niwas Tahsil in 1939 the incidence of consumption per head of the population in proof drams was higher in the supply area (12.1) than in the outstill area (6.6). His recommendations are based on unsound premises, and the measures he suggests include such unwise steps, for a large area with scattered villages addicted to drink and thousands of *mahua* trees, as reduction in the number of shops, Village Temperance Committees presided over by the *mukaddam* (generally as remarked before one of the heaviest drinkers in the village), closing of shops on fairs and festivals, and more liberal rewards to informers and "helpers".

43. He would like however to try my suggestion of central pot-distilleries, one or more per tahsil. These could be managed departmentally or auctioned, the Kalars being made to employ aboriginals to pour the water on to the *mahua*: excise and medical inspection could be regular. The contractors would be made to use doublers between the still head and the condenser to prevent copper contamination and other impurities. There would be no sub-shops, and so the actual liquor shops could be sold to aboriginal contractors without the same risk of making them habitual drinkers as when they are always distilling their own liquor. The quantity consumed would be automatically reduced.

FORESTS

44. In 1938-39 certain valuable concessions were given. Free removal of grass for domestic use and of edible roots, flowers and fruits was allowed; in areas where *nistar* was abolished, free extraction of headloads of fuel was permitted. As elsewhere in the Province, privileged and ordinary grazing rates were reduced by 25 per cent. Subsequently free distribution of quinine to forest villagers (see however paragraph 24 above) and sawyers was started, and the commutation rates for Agaria blacksmiths reduced from Rs. 10, Rs. 16 and Rs. 20 to Rs. 5, Rs. 8 and Rs. 10 respectively. Two forest schools were started in the Banjar Range, and budget provision made for another at Motinala, while a fourth is contemplated, at Mangli forest village.

45. In the six or seven forest villages visited the complaints were similar to those mentioned in His Excellency's tour-note, save that little was said against a daily wage of three annas, while I had no opportunity of questioning sawyers or sleeper-carriers. The grievance against being compelled to do the annual repairs during Kartik, the *kharif* and *bewar* harvest season, is very keenly felt; it is dealt with below in the note on the Baiga. The Baiga of the Chak however get daily wages regularly paid for repairing the Kabirchabutra-Motinala forest road: but the Baiga and Gond of Kapripan, Jalda and Baona complained of the inadequacy of the lump allotment of Rs. 20 per mile for

annual repairs to the forest road through their villages. Yet they spoke with pride of the road, saying that since it was made all the world travelled to and from the market through their villages. The supplies *mirkhana* rates I considered so low that I doubled the payments for the chicken, eggs, milk and *ghu* supplied and even then thought them very cheap. Generally however relations between forest officials of all ranks and forest villagers seemed excellent, though a different tale is told of relations between some forest subordinates and ryots of *malguzari* and *raiayatwari* villages.

46. Mr. Elwin did not consider that there was any real grievance about grazing rates, but only about the areas in which villagers are to be permitted to graze. Such forest concessions as have been recently made should be given much greater publicity in the villages, such as the permission to Baigas to carry bows and arrows, and to every one to extract and sell forest fruits. The recent concession referred to in paragraph 44 reducing the preposterously high taxation on the Agaria blacksmiths' furnaces ought to be extended immediately to the *raiayatwari* forests also, as otherwise all the Agaria will desert from them to forest villages. Rs. 10 represented one-third of a single-forge Agaria's annual earnings; even one-sixth seems high. Mr. Elwin also instanced the irritation caused to the people by the requirement by the Forest Department of licences for the extraction of bundles of brush-wood as distinct from other material covered by the commutation charges. For Patan, e.g., the nearest licence-vendor is a man at Karanjia. A villager may have to spend a day walking to Karanjia and another day walking back, only to find the licence-vendor absent; the licence-vendor probably takes from the ryot at least as much as Government gets for the licence. In consequence many villagers prefer to take what they need under the cover of night. Is the income, he asks, which the Forest Department derives from these licences, worth the annoyance and the discontent to the ryot which the procedure involves?

47. Discontent still arises from inconsiderate action in the prosecution and trial of forest offences. In a recent case No. 85 of 1939, not decided until February 5th, 1940, the Tahsildar of Dindori fined Lamtu Baiga of Bhariwai Rs. 10, plus Rs. 2-8-0 compensation, under section 26 (f) of the Forest Act, for the cutting of two *sal* trees. It is said that of the 4 prosecution witnesses, 2 Pardhan and a Gond had not seen the accused cutting the trees, and the whole case depended upon a retracted "confession" made by his wife to the forest guard. The wife alleged in Court that she had been beaten by the forest guard to make this statement and that she had reported the beating to the police, who had sent her to the Assistant Medical Officer to be examined. For two days this Assistant Medical Officer put off her examination and then went on leave for eight days; naturally when he examined her on his return he found no marks. The Baiga refused to pay the compensation because he considered himself to be innocent, but when he went to the Court despite his protestations of innocence he was sentenced to pay Rs. 12-8-0, which represents about a half year's income. About 18 months ago the then Divisional Forest Officer (since

retired) imposed a fine of Rs. 309 on a Gond village for a technical grazing offence, the cattle having gone on the forest boundary and not actually inside the forest. This worked out to individual fines varying from Rs. 50 to Rs. 35 according to the number of cattle possessed by the villagers. The matter was represented on behalf of the villagers, and the fine ultimately reduced by the Divisional Forest Officer's successor to Rs. 50. The original fine had led to preparations for selling practically the entire property of the villagers in order to raise the amount. Even Rs. 50 for this technical offence seems heavy. Incidentally all the cattle were in charge of an Ahir grazier employed by the village, who had gone to sleep. Another case mentioned was that of the fining of six or seven Baigas in 1937 for killing a *sambhar* which they said had entered their fields. The case was reported by a notorious Hindu "leader" who, according to the Baigas, only reported them because they refused to give him the meat. This man incidentally is the president of a village *panchayat*. This fine again was out of proportion to the financial status of the accused. Such a case may no longer be possible in view of the recent amendment of the Game Act permitting self-defence of crops (which also is unknown to the villagers), but there is no guarantee against misrepresentation of the facts or against a similarly heavy fine being imposed for a genuine case of illicit shooting without efficient supervision of the forest subordinates and lower Magistrates.

Another recent case (not a forest case), in which three Baiga were fined Rs. 5, Re. 1 and Rs. 2 respectively, for the alleged theft of some wheat from the standing crop of a Rathor, created a bad impression. The stolen property was of course indistinguishable from any other wheat. The accused however are said to have pleaded guilty. One would have thought that judgment could have been delivered then and there. The Tahsildar asked them to come on the next day. They came but the judgment was not ready. On the following day, however, the judgment was delivered. In addition to the fine they were put to the extra expense of maintaining themselves for two days in Dindori. The case is No. 32 of 1940 of the Court of the Tahsildar, Dindori.

48. Cases like these lend point to a suggestion that each Magistrate should submit a monthly return to the District Magistrate of cases in which he convicts aboriginals. It is true that a calendar statement of each case is sent to the District Magistrate, but in the pressure of work the fact that an accused person is an aboriginal may be overlooked, and an advantage of a monthly return would at least be to show whether any particular Magistrate was in the habit of inflicting excessive fines and was being inconsistent in his treatment of aboriginals.

The Baiga inside and around the Baiga Chak.

49. The total area of the Chak is 22,858 acres. It is partly in the Karanjia Range and partly in the Dindori; it would make for more unitary management if it were all in one Range. I visited the villages of Silnuri (and its *bewar* plots), and Jhilan, which has no *bewar*, and also met and talked with the villagers of Dhurkatta. Jhilan village is now demarcated as outside the Chak. It

was once in the Chak, and had *bewar*; but some years ago the villagers deserted and went off to Dhaba. When after 16 or 17 years they came back to Jhilan, they were not allowed to settle in the Chak, but just outside it on a bluff above the stripling Burhner river, now the north boundary of the Chak, whence they can see their former village site and *bewar* slopes. They have not been allowed to do any *bewar* cultivation, though the map, prepared for Mr. Elwin by the Forest Department and published in his book* on the Baiga, shows in the former Jhilan lands in the Chak plenty of land as suitable for *bewar*; they were allotted valley lands for fields which they complain bear no good crops with poor soil and frequent frost, while the land allotted for *kanda-bari* cultivation, which is ordinarily, as will be shown later, indistinguishable from *bewar* save that the plots are smaller, was, they were told, to last them for 10 years and is of course useless after the first two or three years' cultivation. Chhindadar is a hamlet of Dhurkatta and Tantar of Silpuri. Kandawani is another *tola* of Dhurkatta.

50. The forest land revenue of Silpuri and Dhurkatta is small. The rate taken for each *bewar* is Rs 2, and the plots are 10 chains long by 4 chains broad or else 8 by 5. Nearly all the Baigas have also so-called permanent fields, which they cultivate under protest; the soil of these is very poor and the crops grown, generally speaking, are *bhadeli kutki*, *kodon*, unirrigated rice, *ram-tilli*, *urad* and *tilli*. There is general complaint of the poorness of the crops, and the unsuitability of the fields for gram, a pulse of which they are fond. The rate taken is Re. 1 per plough. This year the total land revenue of the two villages was as follows:—

Village.	Bewar.	Field.	Total.
	Rs. a.	Rs.	Rs. a.
Silpuri ..	13 8	48	61 8†
Dhurkatta ..	44 0	18	62 0

There are 21 Baiga houses in Silpuri (4 in Tantar *tola*). Silpuri has also 8 Dhoba (7 in Tantar), 2 Panka, 2 Ahir (1 in Tantar), 1 Agaria and 3 Gond houses (all in Tantar). Dhurkatta has 22 Baiga houses (2 in Chhindadar), 3 Dhoba houses (2 in Kandawani) and 4 Ahir houses (2 in Kandawani). Chhindadar is now being deserted for lack of water, its two households moving to Dhurkatta.

51. *Bewar*.—The main complaint of all the Chak Baiga is about *bewar*. They complain bitterly that when their sons marry and start a family, or their son-in-law wants to settle in the village, no *bewar* is allowed them. At present four Baiga in Dhurkatta and six in Silpuri have no *bewar*. They also want other Baiga to be allowed to come into the Chak from surrounding villages. The map prepared by the Divisional Forest Officer for Mr. Elwin and published in his book shows that there are 5,500 acres available for *bewar* in the immediate future and

**The Baiga* by Verrier Elwin, with a foreword by J. H. Hutton, C.I.E., D.Sc (London, John Murray, 1939, 30s. net).

† Also Rs. 5 forge commutation fee from the Agaria.

4,740 acres which will be ready after 20 years. None of the areas seems ever likely to make good *sal* forest, a point of view with which the Divisional Forest Officer agrees.

52. The second complaint is that they are required to do *bewar* for three years on one plot, that there is practically no wood available for burning in the third year and that the yield is extremely poor. Having seen the Silpuri *bewar* in their third year I agree with them. Moreover the forest would recuperate much more quickly if *bewar* were restricted to two years. This accords with the experience of Bastar and elsewhere. It is clear that the area of *bewar* in the Chak could safely be increased. If it were doubled to 400 acres a year, and used for only two years at a time, then 4,000 acres would be required in 20 years, which would still leave 1,500 acres even now available for *bewar* and the whole of the 4,740 acres which will have recovered sufficiently to permit of fresh *bewar* by 1955 or so.

53. His Excellency remarked in his tour note that *bewar* is permitted in the Chak only of bamboo and not of other timber, but was misinformed. There is practically no bamboo in the Chak and every kind of timber is permitted to be felled for *bewar*. No trees are left as boundary marks or for seed purposes, but only occasionally for shade for the Baiga and her children. There is no hereditary or personal right in any particular *bewar*. The present *bewar* plots of Silpuri were last used just before the famine of 1900; some of the people who then cut them are alive, but have not attempted to claim any right over their 1,900 plots.

54. There appear to be few or no religious ceremonies in connection with *bewar*, even those described by Elwin at pages 109-10 of "The Baiga", like so much other tribal ritual, being probably neglected or irregularly observed, by the gondized Baiga of the Chak. There is no objection to a woman at any time, except during her menstruation, sleeping in the *bewar* clearings when the crop is ripening. The principal crop grown in them is *kartika kutki*, known locally as *bari kutki*; *sanva* and *mandia* are also grown. The *mandia* is used only for bread and not for making yeast for any intoxicant. A noticeable feature in each *bewar* is the multitude of rat fall-traps. The Baiga fence the *bewar*. The seed of the crops is scattered over the ashes, and the ground is not scarified with a hoe nor even are the ashes raked over the ground, the only spreading being done by the rain. But the Baiga laughed at the idea of the old story that they put all their seed in rough dams at the top of the slopes for the rain to wash it down and spread it over the *bewar*. They do, however, also roughly scrape a hole here and there with an unpointed stick and drop in seeds, generally near tree trunks, of *tur* (*arhar*), *uar*, beans and various pulses, castor (in small quantities, enough to provide household oil), cucumbers, other gourds and *brinjal*. But their *bewar* is much less advanced than that of the Maria of Bastar.

55. Their field cultivation is of the poorest, and there is still a superstitious feeling that many deaths of parents or other unhappy events have been caused by taking to plough cultivation. Mr. Elwin's statement of their views may represent the

“theological” sanction; but many of them have too long “lacerated* the breasts of Dharti Mata” to worry too much. Actually on two occasions I was asked to help them get additional plough land to grow gram, for which the hard *barra* land of the Silpuri fields is useless, and I saw the Jhilan Baiga ploughing. The soil of their present fields looks exhausted; it probably needs heavy manuring or *dahya* treatment. I should like the Deputy Commissioner to test their statements about the bad yield of the fields by a number of crop experiments in Bhadon and Kartik next in Dhurkatta, Silpuri and Jhilan. They also complain that they cannot afford to buy plough bullocks.

56. It is necessary for the Forest Department to distinguish clearly between *bewar* and *dahya*. By *bewar* the Baiga means the growth of crops in the ashes of trees felled on hill slopes. By *dahya* he means bringing of boughs and undergrowth from the forest to be spread on the permanent fields and burnt as manure. The local Baiga does not practise *dahya* but speaks of the local Gond, to whom he always refers as the *kisan* or field cultivators, as doing so. That he uses this term of the Gond shows clearly that *kisan* work or ploughing is something new to him.

57. Another misleading thing as one proceeds along the Kabirchabuttra-Motinala road is the number of patches outside the Chak with young *sal* growth springing up, which look like recently abandoned *bewar* clearings, but actually represent only patches of jungle on which the yearly frosts prevent any permanent coppice growth. Frost too has shorn many tall trees of all boughs of any size.

58. Actually *bewar* is not restricted by the Forest Department to the Chak. I watched and photographed the burning of nearly 22 acres on a steep slope by Jalda forest villages between the Jalda-Baona forest road and the *malguzari* village above of Piparia (where also I am told there is *bewar*, to which news I turned a deaf ear), and there is also *bewar* permitted in Baona forest village (which I saw burning in the distance) and in Sarai forest village. This was the second year of burning, which showed how great the difference is between this and the third year in the quantity of dry timber available, and in the life of the stumps; but clearly if the slope is to recuperate this should be the last year. The trunks of trees felled in the first year were kindled by lighting, with fire brought from their houses, dried leaves, grass and sticks piled against the felled trunks. Ordinarily they make fire by tinder and flint, or by the fire-drill, or by

*Mr Elwin, to whom I showed this paragraph, writes: “It might be borne in mind that the Baiga of the Chak have been subject to official influence and propaganda for nearly 50 years. For this reason I drew little of the material for my book from them, as I did not consider them typical. Indeed it would be a very surprising thing if, after 50 years “weaning from the plough”, you did not get in the Chak a considerably reduced attachment to *bewar*, or at least some collapse of the religious and mythological ideas that gave it sanction. I am rather anxious about this point, for the Baiga case depends a great deal on the fact that they, almost alone in the Central Provinces, base their attachment to shifting cultivation on religious and mythological grounds. In Pandaria and Kawardha, in the wilder parts of Baihar, in parts of Bilaspur and Rewa, you will find the strongest religious and mythological beliefs about the danger of lacerating the breasts of Mother Earth and the evils of plough cultivation.”

the fire-saw. The Forest Department deceives itself by calling the *bewar* plots here *kanda-bari*. The only difference is that each man gets one acre only of *kanda-bari* against two of *bewar*. In theory a *kanda-bari* is to last for 10 years. In Jalda and Baona it has not been made to last for more than three, and ample hill-slope of mixed forest is available. At Jhilan on the other hand the 10-year rule has been insisted on, and nothing has been grown after the first three in the *kanda-bari*, though, as already observed, ample *bewar* forest is available for the villages in that portion of the Chak which adjoins their old village site. The villagers have everywhere some field cultivation as well as *bewar* or *kanda-bari*. I think it fairly obvious that for Baiga additional *bewar* could be given in forest villages outside the Chak as well as inside it, perhaps on the scale of one acre per man, with all or some of the conditions suggested at page 520 of Mr. Elwin's "The Baiga". To the opinions on *bewar* quoted in that book I would add the following from a very recent scientific survey of soil erosion throughout the world, "The Rape of the Earth" by G. V. Jacks and R. O. Whyte (Faber and Faber, Ltd., London, 1939) :—

(a) "Shifting cultivation, although it kept men as unimportant servants of wild Nature, maintained soil fertility indefinitely, since the forest drove the cultivator out and resumed its beneficent control as soon as any sign of soil exhaustion appeared. Continuous cultivation meant continuous depletion of the soil and always more deforestation to secure new land for the rapidly growing community and to replace worn-out soils." (page 23).

(b) (Of tropical soils) "Native custom was to clear and cultivate small forest patches for one or two years only and then move on while there was still sufficient fertility left to enable the forest to regenerate itself. When the period of 'Shifting cultivation' is prolonged, owing to the pressure of increasing populations for example, fertility soon falls to a level below which natural regeneration will not occur. At the same time, the soil structure breaks down, and the soil is exposed to the exceptionally erosive force of the tropical rains." (page 103).

(c) "Shifting cultivation . . . enables men to eke out an existence in the tropics and at the same time preserves the stability of the soil. But it is not a system which any one would adopt if he intended the product of his land to compete in the markets of the world." (page 105).

Other references are found at pages 128, 159, 161, 164, 176, 177, 232, 247, 249 and 254 of the book. It may be suggested that regulated *bewar*, never for more than two consecutive years on one plot, in this limited Baiga country, may be a sounder form of agriculture than an attempt to compel the Baiga to raise crops on the wretched inadequate *barra* "fields" allotted to them in the Chak. Elsewhere in the district the *barra* soils are made to bear crops only by long fallows. Of this Mr. Lillie wrote in paragraph 5 of the Settlement Report :—

"A very large area." (*i.e.*, of Mandla District), "39 per cent is either new or old fallow. This extensive fallowing is in the main the result of the aboriginal system of cultivation

of *barra*. Since this soil will not bear a continuous crop, the practice is to crop the land for three continuous years, the usual rotation being *jagni* in the first year, which is supposed to increase the outturn of the *hodon* and *kutki* crops which follow in the second and third year respectively. After three years the soil is exhausted, and is left fallow for five to seven years. This method has been aptly described as rotating cultivation, about one-third of the poor land being cultivated in succession for three years at a time, and then left to recover. The use of manure is unknown over almost the whole of the district."

The field areas in the forest villages are not large enough to allow of resting fallows. The only alternative appears to be the burning of forest-growth and raising of crops in the ashes. At least the Baiga is not being taught how otherwise to raise crops, either by the Forest, or, much less, by the Agriculture Department.

59. *Bari* plots round the houses are universal, as all over Gondwana. The desire to have as much *bari* land as close as possible to the house is the reason for the breakdown of the old type of village with long-houses on both sides of a wide village street or around a village-square. Each house has behind it a *bari* of about one acre; the Baiga would like larger *bari*. As the *bari* get heavily manured from the village cattle, pigs and poultry, here, as suggested in my Chhindwara *Jagir* note, is a better chance of improving agriculture than by going on trying to make Baiga plough up these *barra* uplands. Maize, tobacco, beans, gourds and *sarson* are grown, but no fruit trees. They are prepared to try papaya and other fruit trees if provided with seed or trees, but anticipate that frost and cold will destroy them. For the same reason they think that tomatoes will not be a success in *baris*.

60. *Baiga* villages are often very dirty, and the Forest Department could use its influence here to good effect, especially as the usual aboriginal village of Gondwana or Bastar is far cleaner than the average Maharashtra village, and even in the Baiga country some villages, such as the finely situated Jhilan, on a bluff overlooking the Burhner vale and the forests of the Chak, are very clean. At least when a forest village is started or shifted to a new site, the Department could insist on orderly arrangement in the traditional style. The *bari* difficulty can be overcome by keeping together the long-houses of close relatives, as indeed the Baiga naturally tends to do. Nor is the Baiga always content, as Elwin says, "with hovels, with broken walls and uneven floors"; at Jalda this is true of many but not all the villages; at Jhilan it is true of none, and several of the houses are plastered inside and out, and whitewashed. These villages have however been subject to Gond influences; Elwin was writing of the Baiga areas uncontaminated by outside contacts. Pigs and poultry live practically inside the houses, the sties being actually in the side-verandah often. At Jhilan I saw a piglet that was being dedicated as a *laru* (see Elwin pages 400—407) being castrated with knives, and *not*, as Baiga traditionally do, by crushing its testicles between rice-pounders, another example of "gondizing" tendencies.

61. *Health*.—No touring dispensary comes near the Chak or adjacent Baiga villages. Fever is rampant, and enlarged spleens among children are very common. The Baiga, all young and old, have disgustingly neglected and decayed teeth. Elwin comments (page 264) that this may be one reason why they never kiss! Elsewhere (page 18) he says that nowadays they clean their teeth with *sarai*, *jamun* or *harra* twigs; the results are not apparent. I saw many suffering from itch, and a few with dark patches which looked like healed sores of primary yaws; at Kharidih near Chauradadar I saw an Ahir from Bilaspur District almost definitely suffering from yaws, and Mr. Elwin and Mr. Hiwale told me that they had seen three or four cases of what seemed to be yaws near the Pandaria border, and that the Ranger of Lamni Range in Bilaspur had told him that they had come across half a dozen cases in their villages. It is important that this should be verified at once because if yaws once establishes itself in this district it will spread as rapidly as it did in Bastar and Hyderabad.

62. *Village industries*.—None of the Baiga in the Chak have carts; they say that there are no carpenters to repair them and that there is little which they can cart, as there is never any felling in the adjacent forests. I saw at Jhilan however a chair made by a Baiga on the model of a folding camp chair with a home-made rope-seat. Baiga questioned on their way home from Garhasarai market had sold there rope made from *mahul* and *ambari* fibre, but not baskets; their women had some of them bought baskets made by Dhulia (the local Gond sub-tribe of basketmakers). They said that there was little bamboo locally available for basketmaking, once a great Baiga occupation: on this Elwin observes (page 80):

“The Baiga have almost lost their income from bamboo work. This is partly due to an agitation by the Basor, who claimed that the Baiga were infringing their caste or ‘Trades Union’ rights, so that many Baiga now only make baskets and mats for their own use.”

I saw many well-made baskets, sleeping-mats and fish-traps however in Baiga houses. They also make good tobacco pouches and small bags from hemp, of which most Baiga grow a little in their fields. Another “industry”, elsewhere associated with the Baigin (*Cf.* Russel and Hiralal, III, 125 and 127 and in other articles) is tattooing. In Balaghat District the Baigin usually tattoos the Gondin and others; here she is tattooed by the Badnin*, a caste not mentioned by Russell and Hiralal. The tattooing shows up remarkably on the more coppery-skinned women; but many of them and their menfolk are very dark, the deep pigmentation often however being patchy. The profusion and colour of the bead necklaces worn by the men—the same beads, once imported from Czecho-Slovakia, as are sold so extensively to the Maria in Bastar—and something in the features, the coiffure and build of the Baiga, were very reminiscent of the Maria, though the latter is physically much finer.

*But see page 407, Central Provinces and Berar Census Report, 1931, for Badi Gond tattooers in Jashpur State.

63. *Grazing, etc.*—Each forest villager is allowed eight cattle free regardless of the area held by him. They complain very much that three years ago this uniformity was imposed, and say that before then a man who had two ploughs of land was given a double allowance. This restriction, which I verified from the Divisional Forest Officer, is very unfair, and not only quite contrary to general grazing rules but also a poor inducement to the Baiga to increase their plough cultivation. Besides the eight cattle free they get eight cattle at the ordinary rate. A buffalo counts as equivalent to two cattle. They consider the rate high. The local *ghi* is not considered by the forest officials to be dirty, nor indeed was some of it that was purchased by my servants at Chara.

64. *Fishing.*—Judging from the profusion of fish-traps and fish-dams and the constant fishing-parties seen everywhere there can be little restriction. But the fishing parties nearly always start to hide when one approaches. They know how to “poison” pools. This is not allowed, but is really no more harmful to the stock than the hot weather practice of diverting the stream, and then emptying out the pools by baling with baskets on cords swung by young men so that the girls may remove everything living, prawns, crabs and tiddlers, from the emptied pools. A day’s work produces about half a basketful: but there are other attractions.

65. *Hunting.*—I did not meet a single Baiga carrying his bow and arrows. Questioning showed a general ignorance in and around the Chak not only of the recent concession permitting Baiga again to go armed with bows and arrows, but also of the effect of the amended section 10 of the Game Act, enacted by Act XXIX of 1939. Some Baiga still believed that it was an offence to kill pig. I think however that the ignorance of the Act cuts both ways; some are so ignorant that they have never taken any notice of its provisions.

66. *Forest wages and labour.*—When asked, the Baiga considered that three annas a day is a fair wage even now, although they remember the time when wages were four annas. They buy little in the market except small pieces of cloth, salt, gram, beads and rings, and a few cheap spices. There is no complaint about irregularity of payment of wages by the Forest Department. They say that for the annual repairs to the Motinala-Kabirchabutra road, the only forest labour taken from the Baiga of the Chak, they are paid weekly. But the villagers of Jalda complained much about the piece-work payment for their forest road. All the Baiga complained bitterly about having to repair forest roads in Kartik just when their field and *bewar* crops are being harvested. They would like to do the repairs in January, but recognizing that this is late for the use of the road by touring officers, suggest that at least grass-cutting should be done in Kurr and, if possible, also the *murrum* spreading and repair of bridges. They discount the objection that late rain in Kuar might spoil the work, but say that they would put right any damage that such rain might do. At all events the inconvenience caused by the present time of

actual repairs must be met; delay in reaping, threshing and winnowing crops occasions great loss from wild animals and rats.

67. *Debt*.—The Baiga do not go to moneylenders such as Ramratan Singh and others at Bajag for seed, but only to borrow money for weddings, etc. Seed they arrange amongst themselves. The Bajag moneylenders almost invariably charge 50 per cent interest and expect repayment out of the *ramtilli* crop of the following season. The Baiga does not seem to consider this at all unfair. Often the moneylenders send their servants to the village to buy the crop of their debtors, who consequently are mulcted of half the value of the crop, though they declare that they compare notes freely with villagers in the neighbourhood as to the prevalent prices of agricultural produce.

68. *Cost of Baiga Weddings*.—The amount of cash required for marriages varies from Rs. 5 to Rs. 15 for payment as bride's price, but there is considerable outlay on liquor bought for the preliminary ceremonies for the entertainment of those who attend the wedding from their own and surrounding villages. They are very contented with the price of liquor at present and with the quality. The Dhurkatta contractor is the son of Panku Baiga, *mukaddam* of Dhurkatta. If larger quantities are required they have to be taken from the shop at Bajag where the contractor is Ramlal Kalar. Panku Baiga has named his son Agaria Baiga. There is said to be no illicit distillation except possibly in the adjacent villages of Pandaria Zamindari.

69. *Dancing* is freely indulged in and there is no sign of reticence or false shame about *karwa* or any other dancing.

70. *Tribal Divisions*.—There is a good deal of confusion between the distinctively Baiga divisions which Mr. Elwin calls *garh* and those which he calls *goti*. The *goti* have almost all the same names as Gond *pari*, and one of the Baigas said definitely that they only use them when talking to "Kisan Log", a name which they apply to the surrounding Gond. This corresponds more or less with Elwin's description on pages 173-174 and 186-187 of his book, but more might come out with more detailed investigation of a number of pedigrees. I found actual cases where men and women of the same *goti* had intermarried, but in all these the *garh* or true Baiga exogamous divisions differed. I found that no one could answer if asked his "*garh*", but the local term appears to be *bhiri*, referred to by Russell and Hiralal, II, page 83, as the stone erected on a grave—"the *bhiri* of the deceased"—and worshipped by the relatives in time of trouble, and by Elwin (page 297) as a circle of stones above the grave covered with thorns and bushes to keep away hyenas. Mr. Elwin observes that the *garh* are territorial (page 173), but does not develop the theme. Actually the territoriality seems to depend on the *dewar* who does the *bidri* and other agricultural rites, all the villages in his circuit being the *bhum* of his *garh*. He is thus in a position similar to the Maria *waddai* or clan-priest. Thus Silpuri and Dhurkatta in the Chak are the *bhum* of the Tataria *garh* which is the *garh* of the Dhurkatta *dewar*; there is another *dewar* in Silpuri, but he is more of

a mere *gunia* and his magic potent only for the "troubles of women and children"; he has no circuit in which he officiates in village agricultural rites. The headman of Dhurkatta, a Bhumia Baiga, has allowed his daughter to marry a Binjhwar Baiga at Jalda: both were Dhurwa by *goti*.

71. *Deformities*.—A hare-lipped, nearly toothless and repellently ugly Baiga at Jalda was named Bhobla. He had had no difficulty in getting married and all regarded his deformity as a natural thing occurring every now and then at birth. The village also had a dwarf who too was married and a father.

72. *Baiga Conclusion*.—It should not be difficult to restore and preserve contentment among the Baiga. Their *bewar* requirements can be met* easily without harm to any valuable forest. They will not, I think, even give up the plough, at least where there are any fields with soil of a higher class than *barra*. If they have a larger area of *barra* they will be able to have rotating cultivation, as described in paragraph 58. Larger *bari* areas around their houses would be a useful concession. It is unfortunate that they have to borrow from Bajag Shylocks, and that these men or their agents should be free to dun them in forest villages. A small Forest Loan Fund for forest villagers for marriage, birth and death ceremonies would avert this evil. Schools there are none, nor is there any demand for them, though a teaching carpenter at Karadih or Chara might be useful: the result of posting a carpenter at Sunpuri for the Bhumijan Sewa Mandal's middle school might however first be watched. There is clear scope for carting, as the train of pack ponies or bullocks is a common sight everywhere. The *mukaddam* of forest villages are not very adequately paid. They get four annas in the rupee for the first Rs. 50 of land revenue, three annas in the rupee for the next Rs. 50, and two annas six pies in the rupee beyond that and no free land: as few villages pay more than Rs. 75 forest land revenue the total remuneration is thus only about Rs. 18 a year. The Baiga would profit if *harra* contractors worked in the Chak, but no contractor has done so for two years. They are left alone by the politician; no local Baiga voted in the Assembly or Local Board elections. No Agricultural Jamadar visits forest villages. The Veterinary Assistant has been round, but the Baiga feared him and drove off their cattle. The Sub-Assistant Health Officer never comes, but is badly needed: the vaccinators do their work, but unchecked, and in the more sophisticated villages are said to take bribes to let children off vaccination; the Baiga however has no objection to vaccination. Education can be left to expand gradually from the network of new aboriginal schools now being tried; at present no aboriginal teacher is available, even untrained, and no one else would stay in Baiga-land. The most essential thing is an active and sympathetic Divisional Forest Officer and Forest Sub-divisional Officer, and constant watch to prevent petty tyrannies by forest subordinates. Given also a forest dispensary such as suggested

*Another reason why this should be done is because of the large-scale *bewar* permitted in the adjoining Bilaspur zamindars. I saw extensive *bewar* burning in progress in Pendra territory on the steep slopes to the left of the road descending from Kabirchabutra.

by His Excellency, and the influence of the Forest Officers in improving cultivation and hygiene, progress will come. Meanwhile there should be no hesitation to retain the present closure of the local forest roads to motor traffic, and more control over outsiders visiting these Baiga forest areas.

73. The Baiga have their own natural shrewdness and intelligence, and soon respond to sympathy. I found Mr. Elwin's book invaluable: there should be copies available for each Deputy Commissioner's, Sub-divisional Officer's and Tahsildar's library in Mandla, Balaghat, Jabulpore and Bilaspur. Its general accuracy is great. I tried showing the illustrations to the Baiga everywhere, with remarkable success, as men recognized their friends and relatives or photographs and even line-drawings of their occupations, and their traps, baskets, etc. At Jalda a son of the late Jogi Dewar made a deep reverence to the two photographs of his father and wept, in pride as much as out of natural feeling.

PUBLIC HEALTH, MEDICAL RELIEF AND WATER-SUPPLY

74. In 1939 Mandla District had a death-rate per thousand of 32.21 and a total of 14,360 deaths, including 6,800 of children less than five years old. The death-rate amongst infants under one year of age was 193.05 per 1,000 births. There were 10,139 deaths from malaria. An outbreak of cholera started at Mandla where the infection came in with a marriage party from Jabulpore and caused over 200 deaths in Mandla Town and in villages downstream along the Narbada. Mandla has no Civil Surgeon, no segregation hospital and no one with authority to seize and burn infected clothing. In this case the clothes of the marriage party were washed in the Narbada. Water-borne diseases, typhoid, dysentery, diarrhoea and sprue, are common along the Narbada all the year. There is no anti-malaria work, and has been no survey. 70 lbs. quinine was distributed free in the "malarious tracts" in 1939, apart from the (generally inadequate) supplies in dispensaries. The Main Hospital gets 14 lbs. quinine annually. Narainganj had only 1 lb. (Its total allotment for European medicines was Rs. 150 only! Even the Main Hospital with about 300 out-door and 20 in-door patients a day was allotted Rs. 1,200 only for these medicines -an average of about two pies per patient per annum; Karanjia for five months was given only 12 ozs. quinine and so little medicine that many patients had to be turned away, but for 1940-41 has 2 lbs. quinine and Rs. 350 for European medicines; Bajag has from the dispensary fund Rs. 300 worth of medicines, including 1 lb. quinine and 2 lbs. cinchona, and the Assistant Medical Officer considers this enough!) We have seen what happens to this quinine when distributed free without supervision through a Baiga *mukaddam* (paragraph 24 above). The total 1939-40 expenditure on the 12 dispensaries of the district was Rs. 32,617: this included a new cheap plan dispensary opened in October 1939 in Karanjia. The District Council wants six more. More are vitally necessary, e.g., at Chhabi or some

point on the 64 miles length of road between Mandla and Dindori, at Samnapur and at Mawai: these should be independent of the two forest dispensaries proposed by His Excellency. Mr. Elwin however asks what is the use of increasing the number of dispensaries when the Government and District Council cannot even afford adequate supplies of medicine for the existing dispensaries; the Karanjia attendance fell from 100 to 15 or 20 a day on this account alone.

75. The Public Health Department has posted one touring dispensary under a Sub-Assistant Health Officer to each tahsil. Mandla Tahsil has one town and 726 villages, Niwas 634 villages and Dindori 660 villages. These figures, though taken from the last Census Report, are incomplete, as they do not include the large number of forest villages, 76 in Dindori alone. At all events each Sub-Assistant Health Officer has over 700 villages to visit. He is expected to tour 21 days a month, for which he gets a fixed travelling allowance of only Rs. 20, which has to cover also any railway or motor-bus expenses. His peons similarly get Rs. 4 fixed travelling allowance. The travelling dispensaries are apt to be called off to any part of a district where an epidemic threatens, and three such calls or even two in a month, if to places far distant, may exhaust the full month's travelling allowance. For a cart to carry medicines, instruments and records each Sub-Assistant Health Officer is allowed Rs. 10 a month, but if the cart halts on any day, the halting charges are not allowed. In Mandla continuous carting is essential. Apart from the miserly way in which travelling expenses are paid, the Sub-Assistant Health Officer gets Rs. 10 for other contingencies monthly, and a month's supply, at a time, of common remedies; but, e.g., the supply of cough pills for a month is 100, and each patient should be given at least three a day for three days! The supply of other remedies is equally sparing though he gets $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. quinine and is always given more when this is exhausted. The peon carries a fitted haversack. Between October 16th, 1938, and December 31st, 1939, the Sub-Assistant Health Officer, Mandla, e.g., spent 152 days on tour, visited only 71 villages, disinfected 137 wells, gave 104 health talks, did 63 cholera and 476 plague injections, inspected four schools and treated 2,582 patients. This is a mere drop in the ocean. In this district a Sub-Assistant Health Officer owing to ill-health can seldom do his full 252 days' touring a year; the present Sub-Assistant Health Officer, Dindori, for almost all of his eight months in Dindori has been laid up with recurring malaria, and no one has been sent to relieve him. Something has been done to make the Assistant Medical Officers in charge of fixed dispensaries tour; the Dindori Assistant Medical Officer visits Samnapur police *thana*, 18 miles away, once a month; the Assistant Medical Officer, Bajag, has to tour in 30 villages within seven miles of Bajag, and since he started this his daily average of out-patients has risen from 18 to 27. On the other hand the new Karanjia Assistant Medical Officer has been given no compounder, has a large daily attendance at Karanjia and so has not been able to tour in the villages around. Vaccination is about to be made compulsory in this district. Mr. Elwin says that the aboriginal has no real objection to vaccination, except where there is a District Council school! A Sub-Assistant Health Officer told

me that they try to evade vaccination and even when their children are vaccinated try to wash off the lymph with spit or cowdung. I have already mentioned that vaccinators are said to be bad bribe-takers, which compulsion will facilitate unless supervision is more frequent.

76. I inspected both Bajag and Karanjia dispensaries. At the former, malaria, scabies and other skin diseases were most common. It was noteworthy that when the dispensary was built and endowed as a memorial of King Edward VII not one of the local moneylenders contributed Rs. 100 or more; one or two gave Re. 1 or Rs. 2 as yearly subscriptions. Bajag is one of the filthiest villages that I have seen. There is a village *panchayat*, with a moneylender *sarpanch*, but its members are at loggerheads, and it imposes only nominal taxes, those too inequitably assessed, and gets one-fourth of the District Council receipts from the bazar tax. The filthiest place in this filthy village is the bazar place: a tax in such a bazar is quite unjustifiable, and all around it is complained that from even a Gond who brings in goods worth four annas or less for sale the contractor levies three or six pies as bazar tax. This complaint is rife about other District Council markets. Resident Assistant Medical Officers ought to be Assistant Health Officers for their stations; legislation on the lines of the Madras Public Health Act is overdue.

77. The cheap plan dispensary at Karanjia was built through a grant of Rs. 5,292 out of the Rs. 1 lakh allotment made by the Government of India for rural uplift. It was opened on October 7th last, and by the end of 1939 had treated 2,368 patients. The chief ailments were malaria (283), scabies (223), respiratory diseases (120), intestinal diseases (117), venereal diseases (37) and rheumatic fever (35). But the Assistant Medical Officer says that the chief disease after malaria is venereal disease, with which he thinks from 70 to 80 per cent of the villagers of this tract are infected, chiefly gonorrhoea. He has not been provided with any anti-gonorrhoeal treatments. Mr. Elwin said that when the Bhumijan Sewa Mandal had its dispensary at Karanjia most of the patients used to come for venereal disease inoculation. The Assistant Medical Officer does not know whether any malarial survey was made in this neighbourhood or what type of mosquito causes the trouble. The dispensary had only 12 ozs. of quinine for the period from October 7th, 1939, to March 31st, 1940, which meant that malaria treatment had to be stinted. He had indented for 2 lbs. of quinine for 1940-41, which had not yet been received, though the District Council has sanctioned Rs. 350 for European medicines and Rs. 40 for bazar medicines. The building itself cost Rs. 1,000 and the Assistant Medical Officer's quarters Rs. 2,400. A major difficulty is that it has no well; nor has the *thana* which is close by. There was a well with excellent water just outside the *thana* compound. The top and sides collapsed, but despite several reports no money has been allotted for repairs. The well is four or five feet outside the compound, which is perhaps the reason why Government has not allotted funds for its repairs. It would be worth while to acquire a yard or two of land needed to bring the well into the compound. For both the police and the dispensary water has to be fetched from a well about 330 yards away, which had

only a foot of water, and is used by the whole *basti*; the dispensary is not provided with a filter. This Assistant Medical Officer is doing good work, but must be given more money for medicines and a compounder. Above all something must be done at dispensaries here and in Chhattisgarh to check venereal disease, and by the Public Health and Education Departments to give instruction in sex-hygiene and prophylaxis.

78. *For child mortality* practically nothing is done, though the district mortality among children under one year of age, as observed above, is 193 per thousand. The Child Welfare Centre at Mandla was closed last year, partly because of the non-co-operation of the Municipal Committee, and partly, as stated in the Annual Public Health Report of the district, "because people did not take advantage of it and the health worker was merely wasting public time and money"; but I gather that there has been no real attempt to persuade the people to appreciate the advantages of such a Centre. There is no village nursing scheme, and no scheme for training village midwives, who, as might be expected in so backward a tract, are even worse than the usual country *dai*.

79. *Leprosy*.—Mr. Elwin has had considerable experience with his leper asylum at Sarvachhapar and considers that there is comparatively little leprosy in the district, and that with a little bit of persuasion and even compulsion on the part of the official staff all the lepers could be brought in and the disease practically eliminated from the district. He would not be afraid of compulsion. Mr. Elwin states that if Government through the Public Health Department and district officers would provide the patients, the Mandal, without asking for any extra grant other than the present arrangement of Rs. 3 per patient per month would raise the accommodation to 70. There need be no fear that this will lead to Christian conversion, as the Mandal itself is not a missionary body and all the patients keep their caste rules and practise them in the Mandal.

80. I visited the asylum with Mr. and Mrs. Elwin. Most of the present patients are incurables, but whatever can be done by human love has been done to let them die with a minimum of suffering, and living in clean huts arranged as like as possible to the Baiga or Gond village to which they are accustomed. I met the incredible household of Baisakiya and Mithu, victims of each other's *mohini* or love-magic, described at paragraph 345 of "The Baiga". If anything could induce a belief in *mohini* it is a union like this of a young man with an ugly, elderly widowed sister-in-law! There have been children of the union; they are watched for leprosy. Mithu himself has escaped infection, but Baisakiya is an advanced leper.

81. *Water-supply* is said to be a major problem in the district. The annual allotment for *raiayatwari* wells in Dindori Tahsil is about Rs. 800, which goes nowhere when there are 316 *raiayatwari* villages. There are only 113 Government wells in these *raiayatwari* villages; very many of these need repairs and the whole of the annual allotment could easily be spent on the necessary repairs. As elsewhere in this district and in most of Gondwana, nearly every village has three or four *tola* (hamlets), and a *tola*

may be three miles from the main *abadi*. A few wells have been built in recent years out of the allotment placed at the disposal of the Deputy Commissioner from the Government of India grant for rural improvement. It is complained that nearly everywhere the wells dry up in summer because there is so much hard rock; on the other hand almost everywhere there are perennial streams, so that it would seem as though it was a question largely of proper siting of wells. The well question is particularly difficult in the hilly villages of Niwas Tahsil, with their hard rock just beneath the soil.

82. The District Council has put up to Government a scheme for 60 new wells. But these are based on no detailed survey, and no one is skilled in siting wells. It is not known what the total needs are, in *malguzari*, *raiyatwari* or forest villages. The Deputy Commissioner tells me that in 1937-38 a Central Government grant of Rs. 2,150 was spent on wells (Rs. 1,030 in aboriginal and Rs. 1,120 in non-aboriginal villages); that Rs. 5,000 was received in 1938-39, of which Rs. 1,943 was spent in aboriginal and Rs. 1,104 in non-aboriginal villages in 1938-39 and Rs. 1,953 is being spent in 1939-40; and that another Central Government grant of Rs. 3,465 is being spent on wells in 1940-41. Details of the amounts to be spent from the two latter sums in aboriginal villages are not given. These wells are scattered about all over the district, to the detriment of economy in construction and supervision. There is no list of places where wells are really needed, though such a list could easily be compiled from the files of Sub-Assistant Health Officers' diaries: and there is no order of urgency. These criticisms probably apply to all districts. The Provincial Government as the landlord of the 578 *raiyatwari* villages of the district has a heavy responsibility. It is however not clear how far wells are needed and how far needs could be met by simple forest tanks or anicuts on the innumerable perennial streams. Everything is so unsystematic; and the construction of so many scattered wells—for the maintenance of which there is no allotment—so wasteful of labour and money that one accustomed to the magnificent work of the Hyderabad State Well-Sinking Department might despair of progress. What I would urge is that, as funds do not permit, as in Hyderabad, the systematic repair of old wells, conversion of step-wells into draw-wells and sinking of new wells in a whole district at a time, in order of liability to drought, at least the little money available should be made to go further by taking up simultaneously groups of adjacent villages, so that it may be worth a decent contractor's while to undertake the work.

83. The best wells seen were the Forest Department's wells at Kharadih, just finished, and at Chara. Another has just been made at Sathia, and plans are ready for 5 more. At least every forest village should have a reasonably safe water-supply.

84. *Public Health work generally.*—What has been said about needless diffusion of well-sinking work really applies to Public Health work in the district as a whole. I fear that most, *c.g.*, of the money spent on travelling dispensaries is money wasted because the Sub-Assistant Health Officer cannot possibly do good work if he has to cover 700 villages. The Department is biting off more than it can chew. If as a preliminary

to the opening of a new permanent dispensary, or the type of semi-touring, semi-permanent dispensary based on a permanent headquarters that I have before advocated, all the travelling dispensaries could for six months beforehand be concentrated in the area to be served by the future dispensary and teach the villagers in advance the value of modern medical science, work of permanent value could be done. Badly needed also are nutrition surveys, to test the food values of existing crops before advocating new crops in aboriginal areas, and, above all, malarial surveys at least around every dispensary or police station-house (where there would be someone to see that the recommendations based on the survey were carried out). At present at Mawai and other places the sole prescription for reducing mosquitoes is the clearing of jungle, yet—

“Out of the malaria carrying *Anopheles*, *A. maculatus*, *A. minimus* and *A. Sundaicus* or *ludlowi* prefer breeding places exposed to sunlight, so that if these species are found in any jungle, the indiscriminate clearance of jungle, as has happened in Assam, would help their more profuse proliferation, though it will be deterrent to the breeding of the shade-loving *A. umbrosus*.”

The quotation is from the Government of India Health Bulletin No. 22, “Man-made Malaria in India” by Lieut.-Colonel J. A. Sinton, I.M.S., and Professor Raja Ram, a valuable bulletin which ought to be part of the gospel of Health Officers and Public Works Department and Forest Engineers, especially in a malarious tract like Mandla. For example, I saw had borrow-pits along side roads, which in malarious country should be a penal offence.

AGRICULTURE, VETERINARY WORK AND STOCK-RAISING

85. From the Deputy Commissioner’s endorsement on the annual reports for 1939-40 of the Agriculture Department it appears that the year’s achievements were:—

- (a) distribution of 811 maunds improved *rabi* seed;
- (b) distribution of much paddy no. 13 seed at *barhi* interest;
- (c) reorganization of the District Village Uplift Committee;
- (d) treatment of *pan* diseases in the *barcia* of Hirdenagar and Khairi;
- (e) running seven demonstration plots, the Dindori farm and the “Company Bagh” at Mandla at a profit;
- (f) supervision of the fields attached to the 4 Vidya Mandirs.

From conversation with the Agricultural Assistant at Mandla and a Jamadar at Dindori I could find very little sign of anything done by the Department to help the aboriginal. Items (a) to (f) above are almost confined to non-aboriginal tracts. The Dindori farm was supposed to help aboriginals; it is located in the one non-aboriginal tract of Dindori, amongst the Rathor villages. The Dindori tahsil officers told me that they considered that nothing was being done by the Department in Dindori Tahsil to help the aboriginals. The farm, they said, did them no good; the Farm Superintendent did not tour; there were only a touring

Jamadar at Dindori, and another at Garhasarai on the 19th mile of the Amarkantak road, who was also in charge of the seed-store there. Garhasarai also is one of the chief non-aboriginal villages in Dindori Tahsil.

86. The farm is supposed, *inter alia*, to experiment on improving *kodon* and *kutki* and other favourite aboriginal crops, and to be a cattle-breeding centre. I visited it. The soil seemed as a whole to be above the average of the tahsil soils. Unfortunately the Agricultural Assistant who is the Farm Superintendent, was away on leave, and the Garhasarai Jamadar had been taken away to look after Vidya Mandir lands near Nainpur. The Dindori Jamadar was temporarily in charge of the farm, the seed-store, and the touring work of the whole tahsil. As a result there was no one who could really defend the work of the farm or speak for the Department. He seemed to have very little idea of his duties, and very little to say about any results of his so-called demonstration work. He and the Jamadar at Garhasarai have between them nearly 750 villages in which to tour and they are hardly to blame if they cannot achieve much in so wide an area. He stated that efforts had been made near Bajag to grow groundnut and soya beans with the promise of some success in *bais*, but nothing is being done to arrange for marketing the produce. The crops raised in the farm are the chief local crops, rice and wheat, and a little *kodon* and *kutki* are raised on a patch of *barra* soil, but this is not manured or otherwise treated. The little I was able to see and judge of the farm lent credence to the view expressed by the tahsil officers that it served no useful purpose, but the Agriculture Department may have more to say on the subject.

87. The cattle-breeding branch of the farm was seen. It was extremely dirty, like the farm at Garhi in Baihar Tahsil criticized by His Excellency. There was an unpromising set of Malvi cows, but some good calves, and a fair herd of buffaloes. The farm bull is kept for the farm cows only. Another bull, donated by Sir G. P. Burton, K.C.I.F., I.C.S., is available for local cows, but no one present could show me the record of this bull's service. It is admitted that the bull frequently wanders far and wide and sometimes has to be brought back from villages six or seven miles away. As a cattle-breeding unit I should be surprised if this farm is of any use to the district.

88. The Garhasarai seed-store has been locked up for two months and was empty; I gather that the only seed supplied from it is improved paddy suitable for *asmani tari* unirrigated rice. The seed is supplied at *barhi* interest. One would have thought it a peculiar time for the seed-store to be empty and locked up, without any Agricultural Jamadar in charge, just before the break of the monsoon. At Patan, only a few miles beyond Garhasarai no Gond nor even Mr. Elwin was aware of the existence of the seed-store.

89. Mr. Elwin has never seen the Agricultural Assistant or the Agricultural Jamadar touring in the area between Patan and Amarkantak in recent years; if the Jamadar is correct in saying that growth of groundnut and soya beans have been successfully

demonstrated in Bajag, there again the agricultural officials have chosen a non-aboriginal centre for their experiments. What are primarily needed are improved seed and distribution of fruit trees, especially papaya and plantains. The Bhumijan Sewa Mandal has had much success in distributing these in adjacent villages, but limes and oranges have been a failure. Tomatoes also do very well and are very popular amongst the Gonds. Tomato cultivation, according to Mr. Elwin, has been a great success amongst the Oraons in Chhota-Nagpur; it has been gaining popularity in Bastar. Seed-stores under the Revenue Department for distribution of improved seed of paddy and, particularly, wheat, after the Thana model mentioned in Mr. Symington's Report, would be a blessing, provided that the seed could be obtained promptly and with a minimum of formalities. Probably in some cases the seed-stores could be entrusted to the *mukaddam* and village elders, as is often done in the wilder parts of India on behalf of a Teli or other non-aboriginal *sahukar*. (I have met this in the Kutru Zamindari of Bastar, and the Adilabad District of Hyderabad.) Attention should also be devoted to *bari* cultivation. The Gond usually grow their cash crops on their *baris*, and were found at settlement always paying above the deduced rent for *baris*, for which *malguzars* habitually fix much higher rents than any reasonable soil factor would justify. Moreover agriculture in this district is very backward, and the real job of the Agriculture Department is to have a staff of specially trained and selected Jamadars, knowing Gondi where that is spoken and elsewhere the local dialect of Eastern Hindi, to teach the Gond, the Kol and the Baiga the A B C of agriculture. To quote Mr. Lillie again (paragraph 5 of his Report):—

“The standard is low, and the tenantry are indolent*. A good tilth is frequently not obtained, and the habit of embanking land is scarcely known in the remoter parts of the district, where even rice is grown on unembanked land The use of manure is unknown over almost the whole of the district.”

There is very little sowing, other than broadcast, and hardly any irrigation from wells or streams. Manure here should be available, as in a forest district then is ample timber for fuel.

90. *Veterinary*.—The district has veterinary dispensaries at Mandla, Dindori, Shahpura and Narainganj and a new “camp” dispensary at Mawai. At Narainganj the Veterinary Assistant Surgeon has no compounder; Mawai has a compounder and no Veterinary Assistant Surgeon; there are no *pakka* buildings or quarters at Narainganj or Mawai. The Mawai compounder tours in adjoining villages but has had malaria ever since he went to open the dispensary. The Veterinary Assistant Surgeon, Mandla, claims that he and his touring assistant toured in aboriginal areas 170 days in 1938-39 and 163 in 1939-40, visiting 322 and 341 villages, respectively, and doing large numbers of inoculations and castrations. Additional dispensaries are badly needed, e.g., in Mandla tahsil, at Mohgaon, Bichhia and Pindrai, and in

*“Indolence” is an old criticism of the aboriginal. Constant malaria, venereal and other diseases, primitive crops and poor soil do not make for good physique or excess of energy, not to mention undue sexual indulgence.

Dindori Tahsil at Karanjia. Large herds of cattle either pass through the district from Central India to Chhattisgarh, or come into the forest to graze from Jabulpore and Chhattisgarh. The touring Veterinary Assistant Surgeon is not allowed to use rest-house free, even in the rains, gets no tent, and no conveyance charges for his travelling dispensary—all essential.

91. *Stock-improvement*.—It is to be hoped that the transfer of this work to the Veterinary Department or, better, the proposed Stock Improvement Officer, will lead to some real advance instead of the abortive efforts even of the recent past. Mr. Elwin's experiences of local efforts at cattle improvement bear out my remarks on the bulls in the Dindori farm. The Agriculture Department supplied them with a Montgomery bull of fine and entire build. At Sarvachhapar this bull proved almost a celibate. Moreover it was much too big for most of the small local cows, and the villagers were afraid to bring their cows to it. It proved useless, and Mr. Elwin after trying to sell it presented it again to the Agriculture Department which ever since has been trying in vain to get some use from it in Bilaspur and elsewhere. The whole point is that here, as everywhere else, no attempt was made to improve the stock by selection from existing local breeds. Since April 1939, 8 cattle-breeding units have been started, at Dhanora, Tilaiyani, Jujhari, Dhenko, Boria, Reotha (2) and Bujbujia forest village (the last in charge of a Gond). But all are served by imported donated Malvi bulls. Yet the district has two noted breeds, the Ramgarhi, a cross between Rewa and local cattle, and the Raigarh-Bichhia, a cross between Gaolao and local cattle. I gathered that Malvi cattle do not thrive in Mandla, whereas the Ramgarhi are like small Malvi, are fast, sturdy, enduring, good on stony ground, and can stand the Mandla rains and climate. The two breeds are very similar. The former are bred beyond Ramnagar and towards Dindori. There are also a number of private professional cattle-breeders in Mandla and Dindori Tahsils. The former tahsil has seven private breeding centres with nearly 1,000 cross-bred Gaolao cattle, run by Banjara, Gond and Baiga. The Veterinary Assistant Surgeon suggests a special stock improvement Veterinary Assistant Surgeon, and encouragement to controlled private breeding centres by grazing concessions. The district has suffered much from epizootic disease imported by the large herds of migrant cattle and buffaloes passing through the district to Chhattisgarh from Rewa and Central India. A quarantine station is being opened for these at Shahpur in October 1940.

CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

92. According to the Circle Auditor there are 133 rural credit primary societies working, of which some 33 verge on insolvency, while 46 are under liquidation, the latter all old societies spoiled by over-lavish giving of loans. The District Bank itself is at present being managed by the Provincial Bank, and there is some hope of its recovering a sound financial position. Under the co-operative Auditor there are working 6 Inspectors, paid salaries varying from Rs. 20 to 30, as its funds permit, by the Northern Co-operative Institute, which gets a

grant of Rs. 6,000 a year from Government and a fee of 12 annas yearly per member of rural societies. One of these Inspectors is specially employed to organize new societies, and, though he knows no Gondi, is very fluent in the local dialects of Hindi and a good propagandist. Dindori Tahsil has only 12 societies, two in Dindori Khas and 10 within eight miles of it, *i.e.*, all in the Rathor villages and none in the Gond and Baiga country. In the Shahpura-Niwas tract, which is chiefly aboriginal, the organizing Inspector has organized 50 societies with 600 members registered in 1937-38, mostly aboriginal, and 18 with 194 members (175 aboriginal) registered in 1938-39. Another 25 societies with 300 members, including about 250 aboriginals, await registration. It is claimed that these new societies are doing useful work and are organized on a sound basis, while care is taken to keep on educating the members in co-operative principles; 200 aboriginals out of a total of 276 attended a training class at Shahpura in May 1939. The Sub-divisional Officer, Mr. J. P. Malaviya,* who has always been interested in rural credit problems, has given much help and believes the new societies to be promising, despite the extent to which the "Ten main points of co-operation" and the co-operative procedure, as pointed out in paragraph 29 of Mr. Symington's Report, are, he agrees, beyond aboriginal comprehension. However good a propagandist the organizing Inspector may be, this suggests that a halt should be called to organization of more societies till the present position is firmly consolidated. After all, propaganda is an art needing training, and neither our Circle Auditors nor our Inspectors have any such training. Nor does the Department train in rural sociology or psychology, much less aboriginal; the Circle Auditor, *e.g.*, had no idea of the usual expenditure on Gond marriages, funerals and other ceremonies. The Department appears prejudiced against expenditure of this kind, although a Gond does not spend excessively on a wedding, as compared with most Hindus, and is bound by all his tribal laws to spend that little, which he must borrow, unless he has it saved (he often has); and in that case if the society will lend him only Rs. 10 he must go to a money-lender. There is nothing wrong in a Gond spending Rs. 50 or Rs. 60 on his first wedding, the great occasion of his life and a time when some colour and joy comes into the humdrum life of his neighbourhood. Apart from primary rural societies and a useless Land Mortgage Bank with only Rs. 2,000 paid-up capital, there are, according to the Circle Auditor, no other types of co-operative institutions in the district, no betterment, village improvement, thrift, or purchase-and-sale societies, or seed-unions. I am however told by the Senior Deputy Registrar that the main basis of expansion in the Shahpura-Niwas area was to be multi-purposes societies, and he has promised me a note on this.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

93. The Mandla District Council claims during 1938-39 and 1939-40 to have spent, out of total expenditure of Rs. 1,21,133 and Rs. 1,35,502 respectively, Rs. 43,073 and Rs. 57,131 on aboriginals. Aboriginals however are almost 60 per cent of the

*Please see Appendix.

population. The Government primary education grant in each of the two years was Rs. 38,194; the expenditure on aboriginal education was Rs. 5,963 and Rs. 10,187, respectively, an improvement in 1939-40, but still less than the population figures would justify. Moreover the figures shown as aboriginal expenditure include items which definitely are at least half non-aboriginal, e.g., on roads and dispensaries. Education is dealt with below; here at least there is a marked improvement in recent years, due in part no doubt to growing Gond political consciousness.

94. In a statement furnished by the Hon'ble the Prime Minister in answer to Assembly Question no. 471 on August 17th, 1939, occur the words—

“The nomination of aboriginal representatives on District Councils has been approved by the Local Self-Government Department, but *unless the representatives are sufficiently educated their mere presence will not result in increasing interest being taken by the District Council in the welfare of the aborigines.* The question of establishing Independent Local Boards for aboriginal areas, consisting entirely of nominated members is under consideration.”

The words printed in italics are important. In answers to other questions Government announced its general policy of abolishing nomination and instanced in the particular case of Mandla the success of the Gond in the April 1939 Local Board elections. In Mandla Local Board Gond candidates captured 4 out of 12 seats, in Niwas 6 out of 11 and in Dindori 7 out of 11; a Gond again became Chairman of the Dindori Board where also in the previous election there was a Gond majority. But only 4 out of *18 members of the District Council are Gond. Gond and Baiga form the majority of the voters in every circle except Bamhni and Anjania. Some 40 per cent of the electorate voted, led largely by the Gond Maha Sabha, on a slogan calling for the revival of the *Gondi Raj*, as all their evils were due to the Hindu. So far as there was any vocalised demand, it was education. In this district neither the Congress nor any other political party has much hold on the aboriginals, though Congress propaganda has been active around Bichhia in Mandla Tahsil. I discussed the effect of Gond electoral successes with some of the Gond, the office-bearers of the District Council, a local M.L.A., and the district officials. Some six of the Local Board members are intelligent but inexperienced, and the rest are “dummy” members. The four Gond members of the Council are intelligent. Since Dindori Local Board was captured by Gond majorities it is said to have deteriorated owing to the ignorance and incapacity of the members; I heard a miserable story of the efforts of the former Vice-Chairman to assert his authority in an enquiry against a Brahman schoolmaster, while the first Gond Chairman, Dhokal Singh, went to jail, as we have seen, for cheating by abusing his authority to inflict “fines”, etc., on non-reforming aboriginals, described as “*Gondi raj taxes*”. The danger is apathy of members when they find that the powers of Local Boards are limited and no foundation for a “*Gondi raj*”. The failure of

*12 are elected by Local Boards, 3 nominated by Government and 3 co-opted.

Gond members to achieve anything might easily be turned against them at a later election. Their ignorance is pathetic, and they tend to be easily dominated by the experienced non-aboriginal member. I gathered that they would, until they have learned the ropes, favour official Chairmen. Moreover, few of these sophisticated Gond are in any sense representative of the wilder and more primitive aboriginals; though those who belong to the Gond Maha Sabha outwardly parade their "*Gondi dharm*" in pointed opposition to the Hindu *dharm*, they are hinduised Gond. A degree of nomination at least for several years to come is therefore essential if the new Gond members are to become useful representatives.

95. It should be pointed out that this so-called provincial Gond Maha Sabha, save in so far as at one time it was able to enlist the backing of the *Jagirdar* of Harrai and a few other Gond or Raj-Gond landed proprietors, is really representative only of a small, mainly Mandla District, group of urbanised Gond lead by a Gond B. N. R. official. A number of Gond from Mandla villages attend its sessions, but they naturally agree to whatever is proposed by the more educated members. It had, at least to begin with, a pernicious influence in prescribing Gond song and dance, the only present expression of Gond culture. The resolutions of this Maha Sabha are therefore in no sense representative of the views and needs of the great majority of the village Gond. It is however interesting to note the main demands of the Session of the Gond Maha Sabha held at Ramgarh during my tour. They appreciated the effect of the Land Alienation Act and wanted similar protection for aboriginal tenants. They strongly objected to the term "Bhumijan", as they were Gond, and most of them had lost their *bhum*; they prefer some such term as Prachin Bashinde or Adi Basi or Mul Niwasi. They demanded more education, with *Gondi* as medium, more schools, including middle schools and girls' schools, aid for poor Gond students, more wells, more dispensaries, a fairer share for aboriginals of Government grants to local bodies, more roads in the interior to help them market their crops, and more village industries and Gond cloth shops. They thanked His Excellency for his recent tour and for appointing an Aboriginal Tribes Enquiry Officer.

96. I had no opportunity of looking at Village Panchayats, except the bad *panchayat* at Bajag mentioned in paragraph 76. This had one aboriginal member—a Kol, there being a Kol *mohalla* in the village. The present system of Village Panchayats has not caught on in the aboriginal tracts. Attention is also invited to the remarks on bazars in that paragraph. I have, however, since my return received a note from the Deputy Commissioner on Village Panchayats in the district. In all there are 15 constituted to administer 25 villages. These have out of a total membership of 173 only 10 aboriginal members. One *panchayat*, that of Ramgarh, in its total membership of 11 includes 6 of these Gond members and is the only *panchayat* with an aboriginal majority. In the bigger villages with large non-aboriginal populations, such as Narainganj, Shahpura, Dindori, Bajag, Anjania, Pindrai, Nainpur,

Bamhni and Hirdenagar, the aboriginals are practically not represented; but except the last two all are in the middle of aboriginal tracts. The Sub-divisional Officer, Mandla, writes:—

“These village *panchayats* have been controlled by non-aboriginals, and the aboriginals have therefore derived no advantage from their establishment in their villages. On the contrary influential and literate persons have utilized the *panchayat* as a weapon to keep the aboriginals under their thumb. The *panchayats* at Ramgarh, Kisalpuri and Bajag are very unsatisfactory; the members have quarrelled among themselves and there are instances in which injustice has been done. In the Gond area the *panchayats* are of no use. They produce a bad effect on the aboriginal caste *panchayats*. Several important disputes among the Gonds used to be settled in their caste *panchayats* without creating any disharmony among them. In my opinion therefore the present system of village *panchayats* should not be applied in this Partially Excluded district.”

97. A general complaint throughout the district is cheating by false weights and measures. The police have no standard weights and measures, and offences under sections 264 to 267, Indian Penal Code, are not cognisable. No effective use, if any use at all, has been made by the District Council of its powers under section 81 (2) (h) of the Local Self-Government Act; effective use in the Province as a whole has yet to be made of the Central Provinces Weights and Measures of Capacity Act, 1928. All offences of this kind, whether against an Act or bye-laws, should at least in an aboriginal area be statutorily cognisable, another matter to be covered by a possible Aboriginals Protection Act.

98. As to roads, the District Council views are that—

- (a) All-weather communication between Mandla and the two tahsil headquarters, now cut off in the rains, is essential.
- (b) More village communications and fair-weather roads are needed; the existing forest roads, long and numerous as they are, offer no solution, as they are designed to serve the forests and avoid the villages.
- (c) The Seoni-Mandla road should be made all-weather by the metalling of the 12½ miles of Class II road between Nainpur and Keolari (mostly in Seoni Sub-division) and by the making of the Maharajpur-Tharka short cut to avoid the double crossing of the unbridged Banjar river.
- (d) The raising in class of the Bamhni-Baihar road.
- (e) The raising in class of the Mandla-Bilaspur road.
- (f) Improved communication between Dindori Tahsil and Lamni and other Bilaspur markets, which, and not Pendra Road, are the natural markets for the Dindori-Karanja tract.

In some opinions the Karanjia-Kabirchabutra road serves primarily Amarkantak pilgrim traffic, and not local aboriginal needs

EDUCATION

99. Everything said in the previous paragraphs points in the end to one main desideratum, education. It is lack of education that leaves the aboriginal so much at the mercy of his exploiters and prevents him from using his numerical superiority to control local bodies and properly influence Government through the provincial legislature. It is true that at the Assembly elections a Raj-Gond *Talukdar* from Jubbulpore District was returned for Dindori-Niwas, and a wealthy Kalar *Malguzar*, who, though his family now owns scores of once aboriginal-owned villages, was able to win the Gond vote, for the Mandla General Constituency, while the Gond *Jagirdar* of Harrai in Chhindwara was elected for the Mandla-Seoni seat reserved for aboriginals. But in a note on the Chhindwara *Jagirs* I have alluded to the feeling of the Harrai *Jagirdar* about the futility of trying to get help for aboriginals from the Legislature; the member for Dindori-Niwas had never been in his constituency before the election, knows no Gondi, and is a typical Hindu *malguzar* of the open parts of Jubbulpore District. The statement laid on the Assembly Table by the Hon'ble the Prime Minister on August 17th, 1939, in answer to question no. 471 indicates the start of a forward policy in aboriginal education, with the payment of a grant of Rs. 15,360 to the Mandla District Council and to certain private agencies in the district at Rs. 240 per annum per school for 64 primary schools, and of grants at Rs. 3 per head per mensem for 25 aboriginal boarders, in addition to 50 previously sanctioned. All aboriginal students have been exempted from fees, five monthly stipends of Rs. 6 have been made available for aboriginals at Hindi middle schools, and the Mandla Municipal Committee has provided a hostel for aboriginal boys. The District Council is supplying books and writing material free of cost. Enrolment of aboriginals has arisen from 1,474 boys and 59 girls in 1936-37 to 3,901 boys and 172 girls in 1939-40. The District Inspector complains of wastage because only 25.7 per cent of the aboriginal boys and 17 per cent of the aboriginal girls enrolled in the first class in 1936-37 stayed to pass out from class IV in 1939-40, as compared with 32 per cent and 19 per cent for children of all castes. But what the aboriginal really needs is some knowledge of reading, writing and elementary mathematics, of the ways of the *sahukar*, the *patwari*, and the shopkeeper, and of some means of supplementing his living. To quote an unpublished essay by Mr. Elwin :

“As far as education is concerned, if it is to be introduced at all, it should be on the lines of what is known as ‘The Wardha Scheme’, modified to suit aboriginal needs and customs. The Wardha Scheme is an attempt to break away from the old excessively literary education and to relate the school vitally to the life and crafts of the people. Unfortunately, the promulgators of the Wardha Scheme have hitherto shown an almost exclusive interest in spinning and weaving, which are not suitable for the majority of the tribesmen. Government should take control of primary education in the Partially Excluded Areas and should not leave it in the hands of the District Councils. Schools should always

be built away from official quarters, on the banks of streams or on the tops of hills. The buildings should be in simple aboriginal style. Examinations should be abolished. The children should be saved from all strain and anxiety. Corporal punishment should be rigorously avoided. The most careful choice should be made of teachers and inspectors and the success of a school should be judged not on the number of children who complete the course (which, in any case, should not last longer than 2 years) but by the way in which it has succeeded in preventing the introduction of reactionary social customs such as untouchability, child-marriage, *pardah*, and the banning of widow re-marriage, and in increasing the self-respect and self-reliance of the aboriginal."

I also agree strongly with the following further words on this subject which occur in a letter which Mr. Elwin has recently written to me:—

"As far as aboriginals are concerned, a period of one or two years spent in a school is seldom wasted. Indeed it might be suggested that the real wastage is when an aboriginal spends four years at school, for the last year or two of his course are of little practical use to him. Again and again during the past ten years I have witnessed the considerable benefits gained by the aboriginals as a result of their acquiring the three R's and a little self-confidence. The other day I met a young Agaria in a very remote village. He had been for six months at our hostel. He did not propose to continue his education, for he thought he had had enough. He pointed out that in the blacksmith's trade geography and history would be of little use to him. He can now read and write and do simple sums and has got confidence and character developed as a result of his residence in the hostel. I cannot believe that he—and there are hundreds like him—represents a failure on the part of the educational system. It is impossible to expect either regularity of attendance or, in the majority of cases, a four-years', still more a seven-years', period of attendance at school from the aboriginals. Two years will normally give them what they want to equip them for the battle of life in which they will be engaged among the hills and forests."

100. According to the Education Department at present there are in the district 171 boys' and 12 girls' recognized schools, and 4 and 1 unrecognized respectively. Of the boys' schools 131 are controlled by the District Council, 5 by the Municipal Committee, 5 by Government and 4 by the C. M. S. Mission, 14 by the Roman Catholic Apostolic Mission, 10 by the Bhumijan Sewa Mandal, 4 are Vidya Mandirs and 2 are private *maqtabs*; of the 13 girls' schools 8 are Government, 2 C. M. S., 1 Mandla municipal and 1 a private *maqtabs*. Actually the number is greater because the Apostolic Mission now claims to have as many as 40 schools under the general control of its missionaries, grouped around Mandla, Karela, Dohania and Dulhapur. The District Inspector considers that this division of control of aboriginal education is bad

and favours it being brought under the direct control of Government. Like Mr. Elwin he is emphatically opposed to compulsion which he thinks will only lead to wholesale evasion and discontent and possibly a complete revulsion amongst the aboriginals from their present tendency to demand education.

101. The major difficulties in the face of education are—

- (a) the difficulty of getting trained teachers, aboriginal or others, willing to live out in these predominantly aboriginal and malarious tracts,
- (b) the lack of funds for buildings, and
- (c) the chronically irregular attendance of the aboriginal boy.

As to (a) more will be said below, but it may be mentioned that the Apostolic Mission is trying to meet this difficulty by importing Oraon and Munda Catholic teachers from their Missions in Chhota-Nagpur; this, however, has meant considerable delay, as these teachers have first to learn the local language. As to (b) Government was willing to pay and actually sanctioned a Rs. 100 building grant per school for 40 schools, but as in the first nine months for 1939-40 the District Council spent not a pie of this, the Government withdrew the grant, which has not yet been replaced at the disposal of either the Deputy Commissioner, the District Council, or the District Inspector of Schools. These grants of Rs. 100 are ample for simple buildings of the type of those put up by Mr. Elwin for his middle school at Sunpuri, and in two villages in Dindori Tahsil the local Gonds have themselves put up buildings for new aboriginal schools. In Betul I gather that similarly the District Council has failed to spend or make proper use of grants for similar buildings for aboriginal schools and many of the buildings actually erected were so badly made that it will be cheaper entirely to re-build than to repair them, while the local Gond and Korku decline to give unpaid labour for schools which they often would rather not have and for which they firmly believe that the District Council has received grants from the Government. As to (c), it is useless to expect regularity of attendance from the aboriginal, and the position should be frankly recognized. He will not attend at seed-time or *kharif* or *rabi* harvest, or when forest products have to be collected, and once the drums of his or a neighbouring village have announced a wedding, every boy will go off to it. Aboriginal schools should therefore be closed during the wedding season; and also when *māhua*, *gulli*, *tendu* leaves and *chironji* are being picked.

102. When Mr. Elwin came to the district there were only three schools in the portion of the Dindori Tahsil east of a line north and south of Bajag, *viz.*, Gorakhpur, Karanjia and Badela; there was a school at Bajag itself. The Bhumijan Sewa Mandal has opened ten new schools with the aid of Government grants around Patan and Sarvachhapar, and south into the forest area. Originally they ran 10 unaided schools around Karanjia, but had to close them as they had not sufficient means. Like the District Council, the Mandal has had to employ untrained local teachers because trained Hindu and Muslim teachers are very

unwilling to come into the jungly areas, except to non-aboriginal schools such as Karanjia, Gorakhpur, Bajag and Garhasarai. In this locality the only aboriginal school before the Mandal was at Badela, and it is doubtful whether there were more elsewhere in the tahsil. At Sunpuri village the Mandal has started a hostel of 100 boys which has developed into a Middle School. The good results of this prompt the view that it might be a good thing to have a similar hostel in each aboriginal tract, for which the best boys from aboriginal primary schools of the locality can be selected and given free boarding and education. Sunpuri was started as a primary school and Government gives a grant of Rs. 3 a head for 75 boys. The Director of Public Instruction last year asked the Mandal to start middle school classes at Sunpuri, saying that if the school were first started and enrolment were satisfactory, a grant would be considered. Fifty boys have been enrolled and the District Inspector of Schools strongly recommended a grant, but the Department has written to say that the Provincial finances do not at present permit a grant. What is actually needed is Rs. 70 per month, *i.e.*, the pay of two masters.

103. For the training of teachers Mr. Elwin agrees with the suggestion that I made some years ago that there should be a special training school for teachers in aboriginal areas. This should itself be located in an aboriginal village, not in a town. Meanwhile the Mandal has not had any of its teachers trained because of the uncertainty prevalent in the Education Department as to the ultimate type of training and curriculum to be adopted.

104. As to the curriculum, Mr. Elwin has from time to time made suggestions to the Department on the request of the Director of Public Instruction. He thinks that the D'Silva curriculum (which the Catholic Mission also has adopted) is probably sound, but might be supplemented with a few additions, *e.g.*, a selection of aboriginal songs, stories and riddles, so as to give at least some connection with local culture. Mr. W. G. Archer, I.C.S.' selection of suitable Oraon folk songs and riddles has recently been issued by the Government of Bihar for use in schools in Oraon-speaking tracts. Any particular local form of physical culture should include some of the games played in the villages, including Saila and Danda dancing and the accompanying songs; these dances are excellent physical exercises, and not even the sternest puritan could criticize them on moral grounds. The Wardha syllabus would do well if it could be adapted to aboriginal life. The aboriginal is most suspicious of any hereditary craft of any other caste or tribe. Carpentry, which would be the best of the crafts for teaching in a forest area, is the one to which no forest tribe raises any objection. Unfortunately in the Wardha syllabus for the last two years carpentry is replaced by blacksmith's work. Almost every aboriginal has a profound objection to association with this craft, which would involve his whole family being outcasted. The Gond and Baiga do not object to their children practising carding and spinning, but would strongly object to their weaving, and spinning therefore is open to the objection that it will be of no use to them. Mr. Elwin's view is that the children after leaving school will never carry on with their spinning. There is no possible local

sale for the yarn, and no cotton is grown within 100 miles. The spinning therefore will not be followed by weaving and will be of no use in the school as a preparation for adult life.

105. *Hygiene*.—Teaching in hygiene is essential, and especially use could be made here and in Chhattisgarh of the schools for elementary teaching in sex-hygiene with particular reference to venereal disease. The only chance of getting any helpful temperance propaganda across in these areas lies in the schools.

106. The most important thing of all is to recognize that aboriginal education is a very difficult and specialized branch of education and that the most difficult part of it, after the selection of the curriculum, is the choosing of the right type of masters. So long as education is run by predominantly non-aboriginal local bodies the tendency will remain to treat tribal areas as *kala pani* and the worst teachers will come to them. While so specialized a branch of education must be directed and controlled by a central body, *i.e.*, by the Government, Mr. Elwin does not think that a higher rate of pay is necessary, as he points out that the Central Provinces scale is already much higher than those of Bihar and the United Provinces.

107. Mr. Elwin visited Chhota-Nagpur with Mr. Archer in March 1940 and recommends that I should spend three weeks or so in Chhota-Nagpur for studying the administrative and educational arrangements made for the aboriginals in an area which bears many resemblances to Mandla and other aboriginal tracts of this Province.

108. On the subject of aboriginal languages in schools Mr. Elwin has little experience because the Dindori Gond and Baiga for the most part use a dialect of Eastern Hindi akin to Chhattisgarhi. But even the Hindi used in the Dindori schools excites a good deal of ridicule amongst parents when their boys speak it, and if the boys get hold of Mr. Elwin's manuscripts in which he has recorded songs, etc., in the local dialect they take great delight in suddenly seeing in writing the words which they really use in daily life. Could not Eastern Hindi or Chhattisgarhi be used in the tribal areas where it is the *lingua franca*? Gondi is the spoken language of much of Mandla and Niwas, and the Gond, here as in Betul, is asking for its recognition in the schools.

THE ABORIGINAL POPULATION OF MANDLA

109. The 1931 population of Mandla District was 445,776, of which 265,426 or 59.5 per cent was classed as aboriginal. Aboriginals numbered 97,392 out of 190,109 or 51.2 per cent in Mandla Tahsil, 89,921 out of 139,798 or 64.3 per cent in Dindori, and 78,113 out of 115,859 or 67.4 per cent in Niwas. Gond (219,673—Mandla 82,779, Dindori 68,626 Niwas 68,268) are by far the largest element: the district total includes 106 Nagarchi and 431 Ojha. Baiga come next (19,938—Mandla 7,193, Dindori 7,186 Niwas 5,559). Pardhan, the bards and, to some extent,

the priests of the Gond, and more commonly known as Pathari in much of Mandla District, numbered 12,393 (Mandla 5,877, Dindori 4,007, Niwas 2,509). Next come Kol, 10,904 (Mandla 730, Dindori 8,465 and Niwas 1,729), mostly labourers, but including many cultivators, and referring to themselves, in Dindori Tahsil at least, as *Gaontia*, a designation, according to Russell and Hiralal, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces*, III, 517, reserved in this district to the head of the Kol tribal *panchayat*. The only other tribes separately enumerated as aboriginal in 1931 were Bhaina (1,013—Mandla 812, Dindori 201) and Bharia-Bhumia (1,481—Mandla 1, Dindori 1,432 and Niwas 48). In Mandla District the Bhaina may have been confused with the Bhaina *jat* or endogamous division of the Baiga (see Elwin, *The Baiga*, page 7), but even if they are true Bhaina, that tribe is, as pointed out by Elwin (*loc. cit.*) and Russell and Hiralal (*loc. cit.*, ii, page 225) an offshoot of irregular unions between Baiga and Kavar. I suggest it as possible that those recorded as Bharia-Bhumia may really have been Bharotia Baiga; "Bhumia" is usually a designation given to those recognised locally as the original inhabitants, and to the Gond of the Chhindwara *Jagirs* the Bharia are the "Bhumialor", just as the Korku are to the Gond of Betul. In the Chhindwara *Jagirs* the Bharia are as devoted to *bewar* as the Baiga in Mandla and Bilaspur, and indeed contain many descendants of Bharia who migrated into the *jagirs* from Narsinghpur when many years ago the Deputy Commissioner of Narsinghpur stopped their *bewar*. Roughly speaking thus there is a "Dravidian" element of 232,066 Gond and Pardhan and a "Kolarian" element of 32,956 Baiga, Bhaina, Bharia and Kol in the declared aboriginal population of the district.

110. The actual aboriginal element is greater. The census figures left out the Agaria or aboriginal blacksmith tribe, common in the Maikal hills; though the tribe numbered only 9,500 in the Province, including the States, when last separately enumerated in 1911 (since when it has been confused with the Agharia cultivating caste), its functional importance in Gond and Baiga village economy is far greater than its numerical importance. The Dhoba caste is specially described in the *District Gazetteer* (paragraphs 83—84) and by Russell and Hiralal (*loc. cit.*, ii, pages 515—518) as an aboriginal cultivating tribe quite distinct in this district from the Dhobi washerman caste. There are some Dhoba villages, of which the chief are Singori, Bano and Tikaria, in the upper Burhner valley. Dhoba possibly constituted the bulk of the 1,898 recorded as Dhobi in 1931. The Dhulia or Dholi, basket-makers and drummers, about 2,500 strong in Mandla, are a functional Gond caste but were all enumerated as Basor in 1931.

111. *The Panka tribe* should probably be included among the aboriginals in this district. It numbered here 19,039 in 1931, 13,056 Hindu and 5,383 Tribal Religion; separate figures are not given for each tahsil. The *Gazetteer* describes them as quasi-aboriginal, and Russell and Hiralal (iv, pages 324 and 326) as "Dravidian" and "primitive". The latter's articles on Ganda (iii, 14) and Panka (iv, 324) discuss the connection between the

Panka and the definitely impure Ganda caste, and speak of the Panka as once a sub-caste of Ganda which adopted Kabirpanthism, thereby raising themselves in status and becoming a separate caste. This is hardly correct so far as Mandla is concerned, where the description would apply more to the Mehra caste and where no Ganda were recorded in the 1931 census. The Education Department includes both Mehra and Panka in its list of untouchable castes in Mandla District. The list in the Appendix dealing with the Depressed Classes at page 387 of the 1931 Provincial Census Report shows Mehra as untouchable all through the Province, but does not include Panka among the castes untouchable in Mandla District. Panka are not untouchables in the district. Mr. Elwin points out that Mehra also are not:—

“They have become Kabirpanthi, and indignantly deny any connection with other Mehra or with the Mahar. By strenuous caste reform and self-improvement they have become a fairly respected community, and it is a great pity that Government should classify as untouchable a body of people who are not so regarded locally.”

Of the Panka he goes on to say that the Saktaha Panka unlike the Ganda are not regarded as untouchable, and that while the Mehra should be classified as a low Hindu caste, the Panka should be included amongst the aboriginals.

“They are indistinguishable from the surrounding aboriginals in dress, habits of life, customs and beliefs. Some of them have the Gond septs. They employ Gond and Baiga musicians. They take a leading part in all the aboriginal village ceremonies. They join in the Gond and Baiga dances. A few months ago some Panka performed a human sacrifice in a village only a few miles away from Patan. At a Panka wedding certain septs tear open the throat of a goat and drink its blood, just like the Gond of similar septs. I would urge therefore that the Panka of Mandla should be included in the aboriginal schedule. Although some of them are criminal in tendency, many are extremely intelligent and charming people, and some of the best boys in my schools belong to this tribe.”

The Gazetteer (paragraph 66) includes Panka, Ahir, Mehra, Teli and Dhimar among the “quasi-aboriginal or low-caste Hindus who alone settle with any freedom amongst Gonds”. I agree that Panka in Mandla might be definitely scheduled as aboriginal. But the fact is that all these lower occupational castes—herdsmen, weavers, potters, blacksmiths, basket-makers, and so on—living in aboriginal country are vital factors in aboriginal sociology, and live the aboriginal life. Many an Ahir is the wildest man to be found in the Maikal hills of this district or in the tangled mountains and valleys of the Chhindwara *jagirs*. They will have to be allowed to benefit as much as the Gond and the Baiga from any measures undertaken in tribal areas. But it must always be insisted upon that the Aboriginal, be he called Bhumijan, Adibasi, Prachin-bashinda or what not, is not untouchable and not a Harijan. I find for example that in the tour diaries of Sub-assistant Health Officers in Chhindwara District they are invariably included in the village Harijan statistics.

112. *Languages.*—The district figures are interesting. The only tribal language is Gondi, spoken as mother-tongue in 1931 by 2,315 in every 10,000, against 2,439 in 1921 and 2,357 in 1911. But the total number of Gondi-speakers rose from about 95,000 in 1911 to 103,180 in 1931. The 1931 tahsil figures were :—

Tahsil	Total population	Gond and Pardhan		Total No. of Hindi-speakers
		Total No.	No. speaking Gondi	
Mandla ..	190,109	88,656	79,351	109,475
Dindori ..	139,798	72,633	161	139,454
Niwas ..	115,859	70,777	23,668	92,133
Total ..	<u>445,776</u>	<u>232,066</u>	<u>103,180</u>	<u>341,062</u>

Gondi holds its own in Mandla Tahsil and the adjacent parts of Niwas, but is almost extinct in Dindori and the Dindori side of Niwas, just as it is among all but 3,374 of the 95,997 Gond and Pardhan of the bordering Jubbulpore District. It is hard to suggest historical reasons for the loss of their language by the Gond of Jubbulpore, Niwas, Dindori (and, by all but a handful, in Bilaspur and Raipur Districts and by 78 per cent of the Gond of Drug District), as contrasted with its retention in Mandla Tahsil and thence westward over the plateaux of Seoni, Chhindwara and Betul and southward through Balaghat and Bhandara to Chanda. But the loss of the language certainly simplifies educational problems.

113. Of the 341,062 speakers of Hindi (including 1,212 of Rajasthani), 336,451 were returned as speaking Eastern Hindi, and not one as speaking Chhattisgarhi. Actually a few thousands in the south-east speak Chhattisgarhi, but the Gazetteer draws attention to the close resemblance between the Mandlaha or Gondwani dialect of Eastern Hindi spoken in the District and the neighbouring dialects of Eastern Hindi, Bagheli and Chhattisgarhi.

W. V. GRIGSON,

Aboriginal Tribes Enquiry Officer,

Central Provinces and Berar.

CHHINDWARA :

The 12th June 1940.

APPENDIX

Note on Co-operative Societies by Mr. J. P. Malaviya, Extra-Assistant Commissioner

There are 157 rural Co-operative Credit Societies in the district. The total number of members is 1,816 of whom 1,380 are aboriginals. The loans advanced during 1938-39 totalled Rs. 2,20,932. The balance for recovery is Rs. 92,868. The interest on loans has recently been reduced from 11 to $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The highest loan given to a society was Rs. 491. Other societies have been advanced small sums, and loans to individual members have seldom exceeded Rs. 10, advanced for purchase of bullocks and seed or for improvement of land. No loan has been advanced to finance weddings. No other work has been done by the Co-operative Bank for the improvement of the aboriginal. I have examined some societies. There are not less than 10 members in any society, and every member has to buy a share in the society on payment of 5 per cent of the loan borrowed by him; this share money is recovered in five instalments. Of the interest half goes to purchase District Bank shares and half remains with the society. After 10 years any dividend on the shares purchased by the society is paid to it. None of the members have any understanding of the byelaws framed by the Bank. The main objects of the members are to obtain seasonal capital mostly to buy bullocks in October and June and salt in June. Though buying salt is not one of the recognised purposes for which loans may be granted by Banks, yet in view of local conditions and rains communications, the Bank is wise to advance small sums for this purpose. Interest at one anna in the rupee is charged, up to May, when the money is recovered from them. This is done because the *Sahukar* charges very high rates of interest on these petty sums, and if a man purchases salt on credit from a shop-keeper he gets only seven seers for a rupee though the market rate is 11 seers. He will also have to pay Re. 1-4-0 or 25 per cent interest at the time of repayment, i.e., in January. If he has to pay the amount in grain he will have to pay one and half times the market rate.

2. To manage the Society five *panchas* are selected every year, of whom one is elected *Sirpanch* and one Secretary. They have to maintain a *rokad*, a *khata*, pass-books, *chhittha adaikars*, a *haisiat* register, a register of members, a share register, subsidiary registers Nos. 1 and 2 and a minute-book, but actually these have all to be written up by the Society Inspector. All the Gond society members are illiterate; the whole business is therefore in the hands of the Inspector. The *panchas* keep the registers in safe custody, but no members understand what is written in them. They have absolutely no idea about the principles of co-operation, nor do they remember how much they have paid. Their main anxiety is to find out how much is due from them. They have implicit confidence in the Society Inspector, who organized their society, but look with suspicion on any other servant of the Bank, and show their registers to him only reluctantly. The Co-operative Bank is very popular at present with the aboriginals.

3. When first formed a society is able to get the loan after some two months, but it takes only 15 days for members to get the loans required subsequently by them. No advances are given for marriages. The main causes, as they say, for the ruin of the Gond community are "Shadi, Sharab, and Sahukar", marriage, drink and moneylender. The Co-operative Credit Society saves the aboriginal from the clutches of the *Sahukar*. Most local aboriginals take liquor with moderation, and to enjoy life. It is only on ceremonial occasions that they have to waste money on providing liquor for their fellow tribesmen; marriage is therefore the only important occasion on which a Gond has to spend sums varying from Rs. 50 to Rs. 80, for which he has to approach a moneylender. If the marriage is paid for by serving as a *lamsena* for three years at the house of his future father-in-law, then he has to spend little more than Rs. 10. It is desirable that societies should also advance sums for marriage expenditure that is socially, unavoidable, provided that the member will be able to repay the loan.

4. There is much scope for the co-operative credit movement in this district, and it appears to be the only means to finance the aboriginal's cultivation, and to save them from the clutches of usurers and *Kabulis*.

It would also be good if aboriginal Co-operative Societies for marketing produce and for supplying their needs of salt, cloth, food, etc., were established.

MANDLA :
The 20th June 1940.

J. P. MALAVIYA,
Extra-Assistant Commissioner.

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