

CHAPTER II

HISTORY

Man has been living in Sundargarh district from very early times. He has left evidence in the shape of stone tools. As he could not live without water, the sites where the tools have been found must have been near sources of water. It is very understandable why so many of them have been found associated with river gravel. PRE-HISTORY

The tools of Early Stone Age were hand-axes, cleavers, scrapers, etc. They have been found at Bishalbury, Jangra, and Satkuta. Early Stone Age

The tools of Middle Stone Age were flakes. They have been found at Bishalbury, Bhanjarh, Bhaludungri, Bonaigarh, Bisra, Jagannath-posh, Jhirpani, Khadiakudar, Khuntgaon, Tumkelaghat, and Kurhadi. The tools found at Bonaigarh were in laterite quarries. Those found at Bhaludungri 5 km. to the south of Bonaigarh were on the slope of a quartzite hill. Middle Stone Age

During the Neolithic Age polished stone celts were in use. Nine microliths made out of red jasper were found at Bhaludungri. The other sites are Khuntgaon in Bonai subdivision in river Korapani, and at Jangra in the gravel of the Brahmani. A. C. Mittal in his book "An Early History of Orissa" thinks that Neolithic man made use of rock shelters in this district. These are found at Ushakothi, Manikmunda, and on a hill called Akhada Parvata near the ancient site of Belsaragarh. Late Stone Age or Neolithic Age

A significant discovery in the realm of pre-historic archaeology is the paintings found on a rock shelter at Manikmunda. The site is situated inside a reserved forest, about 5 km. to the south-west of Hemgir. To approach this site, one has to proceed along the Hemgir-Kanika road and turn to the right to reach the village named Sukhabandh. Then, one has to take the road branching off to the right from the Siva temple at Sukhabandh, and after proceeding to a short distance one reaches this place of great antiquarian interest. Here, paintings in red ochre or hematite illustrating hunting and other scenes are found in the inner walls of a rock shelter. The rock shelter is about 50 ft. in length. Similar paintings of the pre-historic man have been found at Singhanpur¹ in Madhya Pradesh, Ulaparh in Sambalpur district, Gudahandi in Kalahandi district and Ushakothi in Sundargarh district. This seems Pre-Historic Paintings

¹. Amar Nath Dutta, Pre-historic Relics and the Rock paintings of Singhanpur, Calcutta—1931.

to suggest the close cultural inter-relationship that prevailed in pre-historic period. It may also be pointed out that the region formed a single political unit during the early historic period and was known as the South Kosala.

PROTO-
HISTORY

The pictographic writing found on a hill range called 'Ushakuti' (also called Ushakothi) is an important discovery which throws light on the proto-historic culture of the region. Ushakothi is situated on a hill range within the jurisdiction of Lefripara police station of Sundargarh district. There are two villages named Amatpani and Rajbahal near the site. According to local traditions, Rama is said to have stayed at Ushakothi along with Laksmana and Sita. The hill range consists of 3 hills, the eastern one is called Ushakothi. The hill situated in the middle is styled as the Nandi hill : for in the western hill Ramachandra is said to have worshipped Siva during his stay at the place. The site of Ushakothi is at once picturesque and awe-some. The record found at Ushakothi may be compared with the Vikramkhoh inscription¹ discovered from Sambalpur district. The engraving, which we have tentatively taken to be an inscription, has not yet been deciphered.

ARCHAEO-
LOGY OF THE
HISTORIC
PERIOD.

As noted above, the Sundargarh district is rich in pre-historic archaeology whose importance has barely begun to be known. We present below the archaeological materials, so far known, of the historical period which are a valuable source for the reconstruction of the history and culture of the region.

Inscriptions

Three copper plate inscriptions have so far been discovered from the district. Of these, one belongs to Tunga dynasty, one to Mayura dynasty, and the remaining one to the Paramara-Sekhara dynasty of Gangpur.

Bonai
copper
plate grant
of Vinita
Tunga.

The Bonai copper plate grant of Vinita Tunga was sent by Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy from the Bonai State to Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Shastri who edited the plate in the *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*². The inscription is engraved on a single copper plate measuring 9" by 6½". The royal seal soldered on it bears in relief a couchant figure of deer. The charter was issued by "Sri Vinita Tunga Deva" whose name also appears on the seal. Vinita Tunga is mentioned in the grant as a son of Khadga Tunga and the grandson of Vinita Tunga I who belonged to the Sandilya *gotra* and came from Rohitasi (Rohtasgarh). He was ruling over Yamagartta Mandala and he is endowed with subordinate

¹. Vide. *Sambalpur District Gazetteer*, pp. 551—554.

². Vide JBORS, Vol. VI, Plate II, pp. 236—241

titles like *Maharaja Ranaka*. The donee was a Brahman named Harsanala belonging to the Haritagotra. The village Konjari mentioned in the grant has been identified with Keonjhar.

The Bonai copper plate grant of Udaya Varaha was also published by Haraprasad Shastri¹. In this inscription, he wrongly read the name of *Talai mandala* but the correct reading of it is *Bonai Mandala*². The record reveals that *Bonai Mandala* was ruled by kings belonging to the Mayura family which originally came from Chitrakuta. The charter was issued by Udaya Varaha.

Bonai
copper
plate grant
of Udaya
Varaha

The Barapali copper plate grant of Hambhir Dev has been discovered from the village Barapali situated in the Bargaon police station of Sundargarh district³. The charter was issued by king Hambhir Dev who used imperial titles like Maharajadhiraja, and Maharaja. The record states that Hambhir Dev, donated a village named Barapali to Rajaguru Sri Narayan Bisi on the occasion of Solar eclipse. Barapali mentioned in the plate is obviously identical with the village Barapali, the find spot of the plate. King Hambhir Dev may be taken to be a member of the Paramara-Sekhara royal family of Gangpur. This Raj family ruled over Gangpur till 1948 when the State merged with Orissa.

Barapali
copper
plate of
Hambhir
Dev

A stone inscription was discovered at Akharsila, which is a village about 24 km. from Bonaigarh on the old Bamra-Bonai road. In 1936, under the direction of Rai Bahadur Chunilal Ray, the then Diwan of the Bonai State, a photograph of the inscription was sent to Calcutta. Sri S. N. Misra reports, "The word TA-LA-LI which was at the top of the inscription was read without any difficulty, but the reading of the other lines was difficult because of their worn-out condition and also because the surrounding stones blur the scene"⁴. We believe, the word *Ta-la-li* is a confusion for Bonai. However, further examination of the inscription is necessary to throw light on this matter.

Stone
inscription

In June 1969, the Superintendent of Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, brought four gold coins together with broken pieces of a gold chain having eight rings, and broken bits of one gold ring from the Nizarat officer of Bonai. On examination it was noticed that the collection contains one gold coin of Kushana King Huvishka. The other three pieces, bearing various figures on one side only, are not coins but copy of Huvishka's coins and were meant to be decorative. The gold coin of

Coins

¹. Vide JBORS, pp. 241-45

². JBRS, Vol. XXXI, Pt. III, pp. 159-71

³. N. K. Sahu (ed), *New Aspects of History of Orissa*, Sambalpur University, 1971, pp. 52-54.

⁴. JKHRS, Vol. I, No. 2. p.166.

Huvishka (wt 8.500 gms.) is a unique discovery, and is a valuable addition to our knowledge of the Kushana coinage. The condition of the coin is fairly good. The coin was used as a pendant; is provided with a perforated projection at the top for suspension. The find of a Kushana gold coin in the Sundargarh district is interesting; a number of imitation Kushana coins (all in copper) along with the coins of both Kanishka and Huvishka have been brought to light in Balasore, Puri, Ganjam, Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj districts of Orissa. We have a number of theories attempting to explain the discovery but till now it remains a subject of controversy. Some scholars, suggest that the territory was once conquered by the Kushanas; but it is difficult to support this speculation. The use of gold coin and other three pieces representing copy of Huvishka's coins for the ornament purpose seem to suggest that Kushana coins were not the currency of Orissa, and had come there only for the ornament purpose. Though Orissa, in all probability, was not conquered by the Kushanas, foreign influence over Orissa can not be altogether ignored. This finds corroboration in the Asanpat inscription in which king Satrubhanja has been styled as a Devaputra¹. Some scholars have attempted to explain the presence of the Kushana coins in Orissa by assuming the Murunda occupation of Orissa².

Temples

The district contains a number of temples; these, however, have not been exhaustively surveyed or even counted. Most of these temples being built in comparatively later times, do not possess any artistic or architectural importance. But when classified on religious basis, they throw light on the influence and popularity of different religions in the region.

The Bonai copper plate grant of Udaya Varaha, which describes the king as a *Parama Saugata* (devout Buddhist) reveals that the region came under the influence of Buddhism. It is believed that the Varaha rulers built a Vihara on the bank of the Brahmani river at the modern village of Akharsila. S.N. Misra thinks that the Buddhist images which have been placed in front of a Siva temple at Deogaon, 5 km. to the west of Bonaigarh, may have been the images of that Vihara³.

Temples in honour of Jagannatha at Sundargarh, Bargaon, Raiboga, Talpatia, Kumarkela, Kupsinga, Rupidihi, Karamdihi, Bonai, etc., show that people had great reverence for Jagannatha of Puri. The Samalai temple at Sundargarh indicates the hold of goddess Samalai of Sambalpur on the religious life of the people.

¹. OHRJ, Vol. XIII, No. 2 p. 4

². *Ancient India* No. 5, pp. 100—101;

N. K. Sahu, Utkal University History of Orissa, Vol. I, pp. 418—28.

³. JKHRs, Vol. I, No. 2, p. 166

Saivism was also a popular religion in this region, and there are number of Saiva shrines of which mention may be made of Dhableswara at Subdega, Dhableswara at Tildega, Dhableswara at Deogaon, Siva temple at Sukhabandh, Mahadeva temple at Sundargarh, Jhadeswara temple at Jouda and Kopeswara, and Baneswara temples at Bonai. The Chandrasekhar temple at Panposh attracts a number of devotees from distant places particularly on the Sivaratri day.

Gopaljew is worshipped at Bonai, while shrines in honour of Banshidhari exist at Deogaon, Kandakala, Bhaludungri, Kalaiposh, Jhirdapali, etc. Shri Ramji is worshipped at Indrapur and at Sundargarh. The Radha-Krishna cult had its influence upon the people and a Raja of Bonai, who appears to have been a follower of this cult, erected a temple for the worship of Radha and Krishna.

Stray images are found at different places in the district. Among the stray sculptures mention may be made of images of Ganesa and Durga found at the fortress of Junagarh. Several detached sculptures including an image of Bhairava, are to be found in front of a Siva temple at Sukhabandh near Hemgir. These architectural fragments evidently belonged to an earlier temple which stood at the place.

Stray
Images

The district contains the remains of a few forts which offer examples of the military architecture. The forts are Belsaragarh near Tangarpali, Jamsaragarh near Bisra, Junagarh near Hemgir, and Masabiragarh in Lefripara police station. In the Bonai subdivision, an elevated place near village Khadiakudar, which was probably the remains of a mud fort, is called Bhanjgarh, for according to local tradition, the Bhanja kings of Keonjhar used it as a camping place in their wars with the rulers of Bonai. Archaeological excavation and exploration of the forts may reveal to some extent their history. Of all the forts mentioned above, the old fort at Junagarh, is the largest of the ruined ones. Junagarh is about five kilometres to the south-west of Hemgir. Situated on the top of a hill and surrounded by hills which served as ramparts, it is a naturally formed hill fortress. A perennial stream flows on all the four sides of the central hill which houses the main fortress. Thus the stream serves the purpose of a natural moat. The top of the central hill is approached by a flight of steps. On the top, there is a huge piece of stone from which one can have a good view of surrounding rampart-like mountains. The armed guards placed on the ramparts could communicate through signs with the king if he stood at this spot. It is believed, the fort belonged to the local Kesari kings who ruled in the area several centuries ago.

Ruined
Forts

Traditionally, the territory of what is now called Sundargarh district formed a part of Dakshina Kosala. Kosala was an important Mahajanapada of Northern India and it continued as a single unit¹ atleast upto the rise of the Mauryas. But at a later period, a new kingdom called Kosala grew in the Vindhya region. Evidently, it was designated as *Dakshina Kosala* in order to distinguish it from *Uttara Kosala*. It is difficult, however, to say when and how the term Dakshina Kosala came into currency. Pargiter² believes that Rama's long stay in the region gave rise to this term, while Dr. D. C. Sircar³ asserts that South Kosala was colonised by the Ikshvaku princes of Ayodhya. By the time of poet Kalidasa, South Kosala had been already known as a distinct political unit, for in the Raghuvamsa⁴ he seems to suggest that Kusavati, the capital of Kusa, was located on the Vindhyan ranges. The territorial limits of South Kosala varied depending upon the ability and power of its ruler. In the widest sense, South Kosala comprised the modern districts of Raipur and Bilaspur in Madhya Pradesh and the district of Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Balangir, and Kalahandi in Orissa.⁵

An inscription discovered from Asanpat in Keonjhar⁶ district (c. 3rd—4th century A. D.) reveals that a king named Satrubhanja ruled over the kingdom of Vindhyaavati, which probably denoted a vast kingdom extending up to the Vindhya. It is thus apparent that Sundargarh region was also under the control of King Satrubhanja. The Vindhyaavati, ruled by Satrubhanja, may be said to be the same as South Kosala. It is known from the Allahabad pillar inscription⁷ that South Kosala was ruled by Mahendra in the middle of the 4th century A. D. Mahendra is mentioned as one of the 12 kings defeated by Samudragupta. This proves the extension of the Gupta influence over South Kosala which may have included, besides the districts of Raipur, Bilaspur, and Sambalpur, a portion of Sundargarh district.⁸ The Balaghat

¹. Vishuddhananda Pathak, *History of Kosala*, Delhi, 1963, pp. 45—46

². F. E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* London, 1922, p. 278.

³. R. C. Majumdar and A. S. Altekar (ed). *The Vakataka Gupta Age*, Banaras, 1954, p. 78.

⁴. Raghuvamsa, XVI, 32, XV. 97.

⁵. S. C. Behera, *Historical Geography of South Kosala*, *New Aspects of History of Orissa*, edited by Dr. N K. Sahu, Sambalpur University, 1971, p. 24.

⁶. OHRJ, Vol. XIII No. 2, pp.1—8

⁷. C. I, I, FI, Vol. III, p.7.

⁸. This appears plausible in view of the fact that Kosala and Mahakantara mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription have been located by scholars respectively in the Balangir-Sonepur region, and the forests of Koraput and Kalahandi districts. (See Balangir District Gazetteer, p.43)

plates¹ and the Ajanta inscription² seem to suggest that South Kosala was controlled by the Vakatakas. However, it is not possible to be definite as to what relation Sundargarh region had with the Vakatakas.

From the early medieval period different portions of the present Sundargarh district were under the control of different ruling families. Brief historical sketches of these ruling families, based on available evidence, are given below.

Towards the close of the fifth century A. D., a chieftain named Sarabha founded a kingdom in the eastern part of South Kosala with Sarabhapura as the headquarters. Sarabha, the founder of the dynasty, is identical with Sarabharaja, maternal grandfather of Goparaja of the Eran Inscription³ (Gupta year 191—511 A. D.) of the time of Bhanugupta. It is known from the Pipardula and Kurud grants⁴ that he was the father of Maharaja Narendra. Scholars like Dr. V. V. Mirashi⁵ and L. P. Pandey⁶ identify the city of Sarabhapura, apparently named after Sarabha, with Sarapgarh in the former Gangpur State, now included in the Sundargarh district of Orissa. However, it may be mentioned, that there is difference of opinion among the scholars as regards the correct identification of Sarabhapura. The identification with Sarapgarh of Sundargarh district, seems to be quite satisfactory in the present state of our knowledge. It is evident that in course of time Sarabhapura, came to be known as Sarabhagarh when the suffix 'pura' was replaced by 'garh' both conveying more or less the same meaning. The name 'Sarapgarh' is quite likely a variant of 'Sarabhagarh'.

Sarabha was succeeded by his son Narendra. The next successor was a king named Prasanna. He is also known to us from a number of gold and silver coins on which his name is mentioned as Prasannamatra. After Prasannamatra the throne of Sarabhapura probably passed to his son Jayaraja (also called Maha-Jayaraja but his real name appears to be Jaya). The Mallar plates⁷ reveal that Jayaraja had two sons, viz., Pravarā and Vyaghra. Prasannamatra had another son named Manamatra who also became the ruler. It is known from the Kauvatal plates that his real name was Durgaraja (mentioned

¹. EI, Vol. IX, p.269.

². EI, Vol. XXVI, pp. 137 ff.

³. CII, Vol. III, pp. 91 ff.

⁴. IHQ, Vol. XIX, pp. 139 ff; EI Vol, XXXI, pp.263 ff.

⁵. EI, Vol. XXVI, p. 229, foot note 2.

⁶. Proceedings of the 5th Oriental Conference, p. 461 ff.

⁷. EI, Vol. XXXIV, pp.45—50.

as Maha-Durgaraja in the record). The next important ruler of Sarabhapura was Sudevaraja (styled as Maha-Sudevaraja in the inscriptions), who was the son of Durgaraja-Manamatra. He was a very powerful ruler. The extent of his dominion is indicated by his copper plate grants, viz., Khariar, Arang, Kauvatala, Sarangarh, Raipur, etc. While the earlier kings of the family are known to have ruled from Sarabhapura, Mahasudevaraja issued his charters both from Sarabhapura and Sripura. It appears that Mahasudevaraja founded the city of Sripura (identified with modern Sirpur in the Raipur district of Madhya Pradesh) and developed it as his secondary capital. The last Sarbhapuriya king, so far known, was Pravara I (also called Maha-Pravara I). He was the son of Manamatra, and therefore, he may be regarded as a brother of Mahasudevaraja. In his reign, Sripura was the capital of the Sarbhapuriyas. The Thakurdiya plates dated in the third regnal year of Maha-Pravara I was issued from Sripura. We have no information about the reign or achievement of any of his successors. The Panduvamsis invaded South Kosala during the reign of Nannadeva and completed the conquest during Tivaradeva some time in the 7th century A. D.

D. C. Sircar and G. Bhattacharya give the following genealogy of the Sarabhapuriya kings¹ on the basis of available evidence:

1. Sarabha		
2. Narendra		
3. Prasanna or Prasannamatra		
4. Jaya		6. Durga alias Manamatra
5. Pravara I		7. Sudeva
Vyaghra		8. Pravara II

The Tungas
of
Yamagartta
Mandala.

The *yamagartta mandala* flourished in the second half of the 9th century A. D. under the rule of the Tungas. So far five copper plate grants² of the Tunga rulers have been brought to light. The copper plate grant discovered from Bonai³ gives the following genealogy of the Tunga kings:

Vinita Tunga I
|
Khadga Tunga
|
Vinita Tunga II

¹. EI. Vol. XXXIV, p. 47,

². Vide a descriptive catalogue of the Tunga copper plates given in OHRJ, Vol. XI, No. 4, facing p. 252.

³. JBORS, Vol. VI. pp. 238—40.

It is mentioned that Vinita Tunga I, the grandfather of Vinita Tunga II came from a place called Rohitasa (Rohitagiri) which has been identified with modern Rohitasgarh in the Shahbad district of Bihar. The charter reveals that Vinita Tunga was an influential feudatory chief. In the record, he is described as Maharaja Ranaka, lord of the eighteen Gondramas, and as one who obtained the 'five great sounds'. Vinita Tunga II is also known from his Kharga-prasad copper plate¹ (897 A. D.) where he is styled as Maharaja Vinita Tunga.

A collateral branch of the Tunga family is known from the Talcher plates² of Gayada Tunga. The exact relationship between the rulers of two branches is not definitely known, and as such, the genealogy and chronology of the Tungas are not yet satisfactorily settled. Vendunga mentioned in one copper plate of Gayada Tunga³ has been identified with Balanga in Bonai. The names of territorial units and other places⁴ mentioned in the copper plates of the Tunga rulers indicate that Yamagarta Mandala was an extensive territory comprising northern part of Dhenkanal district, the ex-State of Pallahara, and some portions of Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts.

Epigraphic evidence points to the existence of a royal family (Varahas) ruling in the Bonai Mandala about the 10th century A. D. The Bonai Mandala, known to us from the Bonai copper plate grant⁵ of Udaya Varaha, comprised, according to Dr. N. K. Sahu "the Eastern portion of modern Sundargarh district and a part of Deogarh subdivision of Sambalpur district".⁶ He also identifies Rokela Vishaya mentioned in the grant with modern Rourkela⁷. The Bonai copper plate grant reveals the existence of a group of three kings who belonged to the Mayura family, viz., Udaya Varaha, his son Tejo Varaha, and the latter's son Udaya Varaha who issued the above mentioned grant. The record describes Udaya Varaha as a *Parama Saugata* (devout worshipper of Buddha) and as Maharaja Ranaka who ruled over the Bonai Mandala. It is known from the grant that the family hailed from Chitrakuta, which may be identified with Chitor or Chitorgarh in Rajasthan. There is some truth in this tradition; for we know of the Mauryas or Moris as ruling over Chitor in the early medieval

The
Varahas of
Bonai
Mandala.

¹. OHRJ, Vol. XI, No. 4, pp. 242—254.

². EI, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 91 ff.

³. JASB (N. S.), Vol. v 1909, pp. 347-50.

⁴. Binayak Misra, *Dynasties of Mediaeval Orissa*, pp. 40-41.

⁵. JBORS, Vol. VI, pp. 241-45.

⁶. N. K. Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. I, p.124.

⁷. *Ibid.*

period¹. The Arabs, starting from their base at Sindh overran Chitor between 723 A. D. and 738 A. D. It was probably after this misfortune or at a somewhat later date, a scion of the Mauryas came to Orissa and established authority over the Bonai Mandala. The peacock emblem of the Varahas further lends support to the theory that the Varahas were an off-shoot of the Mauryas. The Maurya family of Bonai Mandala probably had some family connection with the Tungas². They had close connections with the Adibhanja royal family of Khijinga Mandala, and Pandita Binayak Misra suggests that Mayurabhanj³ owed its origin to the names of Mayura and Bhanja families⁴. The peacock emblem was also adopted by the later kings of Bonai in their seals⁵, and the name Bonai, mentioned in the copper plate of Udaya Varaha, also continues till today.

The Soma-
vamsis

A glorious and eventful phase started in the history of Dakshina Kosala with the coming into prominence of the Somavamsis. Several records give an account of the family beginning with Udayana who flourished in the first half of the 6th century A.D. Indrabala, the son and successor of Udayana, held the post of *Sarvadhikaradhikrita* and *Dutaka* under Sarabhapuriya King Mahasudevaraja. The respectful manner in which Indrabala's successor Nannadeva is spoken of in the record of the Sarabhapuriyas indicate that he was a high official under the Sarabhapuriyas. After the death of Pravararaja II the Somavamsis who were the feudatories of the Sarabhapuriyas converted their gubernatorial status into a royal one. Mahasivagupta Tivaradeva, the son of Nannadeva, wrested the whole of South Kosala from the hands of the Sarabhapuriyas, and called himself *Kosaladhipati*. Tivaradeva was an ambitious ruler and eventually he became an enemy of Dharmaraja, the Sailodbhava King of Kongodamandala (Ganjam-Puri region of coastal Orissa). He made alliance with Madhava, a brother of Dharmaraja, but in the war that followed he was defeated by Dharmaraja. Thus his ambition to establish mastery over Utkal was foiled. Tivaradeva was succeeded by

¹. R. C. Majumdar (ed), *The Classical Age*, (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan), pp. 161-62.

². The eulogical text of the Bonai grant of the Mayura family is a replica of the Tunga grants.

³. It is interesting to note that the name of the Dharani Varaha is mentioned in association with the name of Ranabhanja on an Avalokitesvara image found from Khiching, which was formerly the capital of the Bhanjas of Khijinga Mandala vide Annual report of Archaeological Survey of India 1922-23, p. 128.

⁴. Binayak Misra, *Dynasties of Mediaeval Orissa*, p. 62

⁵. See, above, p. 48.

Chandragupta, but the Adhabhara plates¹ seem to suggest that Nanna II succeeded his father Tivaradeva. The next known rulers of the family were Harshagupta, and Balarjuna who ruled from their capital at Sirpur.

About the middle of the 9th century A. D. the Somavamsis were ousted from the Sirpur region by the rising power of the Kalachuris, and under Janamejaya I Mahabhavagupta, who was probably the son and successor of Balarjuna, they established a new kingdom in the Balangir-Sonepur region. This is borne out by the discovery of copper plate grants of the family from the district of Balangir. Janamejaya I was a powerful ruler, and with him began the age of great Somavamsis in Orissa. He assumed imperial titles like *Maharajadhiraja* and called himself *Kosalendra* and *Trikalingadhipati*. Towards the close of his career, his kingdom was no longer confined to the Balangir-Sonepur region, but extended as far as the Baudh region. Ranabhanja, of the Bhanja family who exercised control over the Baudh regions, was probably defeated by Janamejaya. This supposition is quite consistent with the testimony of the Brahmesvara temple inscription² which reveals that Janamejaya had killed with his *Kunta* the king of Odra. Janamejaya I Mahabhavagupta also established matrimonial relationship with Bhaumakara ruling family, his daughter Prithvimahadevi being given in marriage to Bhaumakara ruler Subhakardeva IV.

Mahasivagupta Yayati I who became ruler after Janamejaya was a worthy successor of his illustrious father. The hostilities with the Kalachuris were continued during his reign. He seems to have attempted to establish mastery over Utkal in secret league with his sister Prithvimahadevi. Sometime after his 15th regnal year, he shifted his capital, probably due to expansion of his territory to the east, to Yayatinagar which Dr. N. K. Sahu identifies with modern village Jakati on the Mahanadi, 11.2 km. to the west of Baudh.³

The son and successor of Yayati I was Bhimaratha Mahabhavagupta. His reign was peaceful, and he seems to have devoted his attention for the consolidation of the Somavamsi dominions. It is known from a copper plate inscription⁴ found from village Kudopali in Sambalpur district, that Ranaka Punja, son of Boda, was ruling over Bamanda Patti as a

¹. The Classical Age, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan p. 221, f. n. 2. and EI XXXI, p. 219.

². EI. Vol. XXIII, pp. 248—55.

³. N. K. Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. I, p. 137.

⁴. S. N. Rajaguru (ed), *Inscriptions of Orissa*, Vol. IV, pp. 237—41.

feudatory of King Mahabhavagupta who may be identified with Bhimaratha¹. Bamanda Patti² is identified with modern Bamanda. In all probability he also administered a part of the Sundargarh district under the Somavamsis.

The next ruler on the Somavamsi throne was Dharmaratha Mahasivagupta. His Khandapara plates³, which refers to the Antarudra Vishaya in the Puri district definitely proves that Somavamsis had already become the masters of the coastal region of Orissa by defeating the Bhaumakaras. Dharmaratha died childless, and he was succeeded by his step brother Indraratha⁴. Indraratha who was probably the same ruler as Naghusha or Nahusha, was defeated and killed by Rajendra Chola sometime in 1022-23 A. D.⁵. His death was followed by a period of anarchy but fortunately for the kingdom, Chandihara, son of Abihmanyu was chosen as the ruler, and he ascended the throne as Yayati II Mahasivagupta. Yayati II was one of the great rulers of the Somavamsi dynasty and his striking achievement was the construction of the famous Lingaraja temple at Bhubaneswar.

Yayati II was succeeded by his son Udyotakesari Mahabhavagupta. By his time, the Somavamsis had been able to establish a vast empire, and for convenience of administration, Udyotakesari divided his dominions into two political divisions, viz., Kosala and Utkal. While he himself directly administered the Utkal region, the Kosala division was assigned to Abihmanyu, and on his death, it was controlled by Kumara. Somesvara, who is known to us from his Kelga plates.⁶ After Udyotakesari, his son Janamejaya II⁷ became the ruler. No record issued by this monarch has been discovered as yet, but the Nuapatna copper plates⁸ prove that during his 5th regnal year, Yuvaraja Dharmaratha was the ruler of Paschima Kalinga. In all likelihood, after him, Kosala passed into the hands of the Telugu Chodas in about 1070 A. D. In the Utkal region, the rule of the Somavamsis, however, continued. Janamejaya II was succeeded by Puranjaya, and Karnadeva. The latter ruled till the Gangas under Chodaganga Deva dealt a blow to the Somavamsis and stepped into their place in the coastal region early in the 12th century A. D.

¹. Shri S. N. Rajaguru, however, takes Mahabhavagupta to be Udyotakesari.

². *Ibid.*

³. S. N. Rajaguru (ed), *Inscriptions of Orissa*, Vol. IV, pp. 280—280 F, Supplementary No. 33-A.

⁴. JAS, Vol. VIII, No. 4, pp. 271—76.

⁵. EI, Vol. IX, pp. 223 ff.

⁶. EI, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 322—26.

⁷. Ratnagiri Charter, EI, XXXIII, p. 263 ff.

⁸. The Copper plates discovered by Dr. K. S. Behera are being edited for publication.

Though the exact political condition of the region after the Somavamsis is far from clear, a brief reference to history of South Kosala, of which it formed a part, may be useful for our purpose. As noted above about 1070 A. D. Yasoraja I, the Telugu Choda lieutenant of Chhindaka Naga King Somesvara established supremacy over Kosala. The available copper plate grants of this Telugu Choda family show that Suvarnapur, modern Sonepur, was their political headquarters. Yasoraja I, Somesvara I, Yasoraja II, Somesvara II, Yasoraja III, and Somesvara III of the Telugu Choda line are known to have ruled the South Kosala. But by the time the Telugu Chodas occupied Kosala, the Kalachuris organised their power in Dahala with headquarters at Tummana. In course of time, rivalry started between these powers and it ultimately led to the defeat of the Telugu Chodas. The Kalachuri king Jajalladeva imprisoned Bhujavala of Suvarnapura and defeated Somesvaradeva in 1119 A. D. Bhujavala has been identified with Telugu Choda king Somesvaradeva III, and after his defeat, Kalachuris could occupy the South Kosala region.¹

The Telugu Chodas and the Kalachuris

Ananta Varman Chodaganga Deva of the Ganga dynasty conquered Utkal sometime in 1112 A. D. and in course of time, extended his kingdom from the Ganga to the Godavari. A great warrior as he was, he naturally desired to conquer western Orissa and invaded the Kosala territory which was then under the Kalachuris. It is known from the Kharod stone inscription² that Kalachuri king Ratnadeva II, the grandson of Jajalladeva, defeated Chodaganga Dev. Kamarnavadeva, the son of Chodaganga, also followed the footsteps of his father in waging war against the Kalachuris but he was defeated. The Ganga-Kalachuri conflict which had been continuing for a long time, reached a critical stage in the reign of Ganga monarch Anangabhima III. The Chatesvara inscription³ reveals that Vishnu, the able general of Anangabhima III, won a decisive victory over the Kalachuri king of Tummana in battles fought in the banks of the Bhima, in the outskirts of the Vindhya, and the sea shore. As a result of this, extensive tracts of land in western Orissa passed into the hands of the Gangas. A study of certain *maufi* grants reveals that Raja Anangabhima Deva had actually visited the Sambalpur region⁴. The Khamvesvari temple inscription⁵ proves that Sonepur region was definitely under the control of the Imperial Gangas during the time of Bhanudeva (1264

The Gangas

¹. K. C. Panigrahi, *Chronology of the Bhaumakaras and the Somavamsis of Orissa*, pp. 41—44.

². EI, Vol. XXI, pp. 161 ff.

³. EI, Vol. XXIX, pp. 127 ff.

⁴. N. K. Sahu (ed), *New Aspects of History of Orissa*, p. 60

⁵. EI, Vol. XXXII, pp. 326—328.

1279 A. D.), and placed under the charge of a Governor. These circumstantial evidences suggest that Bonai and Gangpur region was under the Ganga hegemony. It seems that after the conquest of the territory the Gangas allowed some feudatory chiefs to directly administer the territory and themselves remained content with the tributes paid by them. It was probably during the time of the Gangas that Bonai and Gangpur were consolidated as separate political units, and regarded as feudal states. Local traditions of Gangpur mention the existence of a Kesari line with sixteen kings who ruled over Gangpur. It is said, they had their headquarters variously at Belsaragarh, Junagarh, Masabiragarh, etc. The names of the Kesari kings, which vary in different statement about them, appear to be mostly imaginary, but the tradition about the rule of local Kesari dynasty is too strong to be ignored. The tradition persists till today and the earlier references to this tradition appear in the writings of Colonel Dalton, and Hunter. Regarding this Kesari dynasty, C. W. E. Connolly in his Settlement Report of 1911, observes as follows:—

“The earliest chiefs of Gangpur that there is any information of belonged to the Kishori Bans, and were descendants of the famous Kishori Bans of Puri, who after their defeat by the Mahrattas fled in all directions, one line settling here¹”.

Making allowances for his apparent mistakes, from all that could be gathered from the tradition, it would appear that some of the scions of the Somavamsis (famous as Kesari kings in the traditions), on their defeat by the Gangas, migrated to Gangpur region and established their authority. These Kesari rulers were apparently allowed to carve a self-contained principality in the Gangpur region and continued as vassals of the Imperial Gangas. The last of these Kesari rulers, whose name is given as Raja Deo Kesari in one tradition, was an oppressive ruler, and eventually he was murdered together with his family members by a powerful Bhuiyan leader named Madan Pradhan. The consequent political confusion that prevailed, provided the opportunity for the progenitor of the Paramara-Sekhara family to seize the land. ²

The Chauhan dynasty, which played a very important role in the political and cultural history of western Orissa, started its rule about the middle of the 14th century A. D. with Patna, modern Patnagarh in Balangir district as the headquarters. The available evidence makes

¹. Quoted in Indrabilas Mukherji, *Final Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Gangpur State, 1929—1936*, p. 2.

². Vide *Infra* p. 53

us believe that Ramai Deva was the founder of the Chauhan dynasty in Patna. The extent of Patna kingdom under Ramai Deva is, however, not definitely known. Vatsaraja Deva (C. 1386-1410 A. D.) the third ruler of the dynasty, was a capable warrior, and he extended his kingdom by waging a number of successful wars against his neighbours. It is known from *Koshalananda Kavya*, a semi-historical work on the Chauhan rule by Pandit Gangadhar Misra, that the contemporary chiefs of Bonai, Bamanda, Bastar, Baud, Gangpur, Khimindi, and Nandapuri were defeated by him and became his vassals¹. From this account it seems that the area covered by present Sundargarh district comprising Bonai and Gangpur came under the Chauhan supremacy. However, Major H. B. Impey, who was the Deputy Commissioner of Sambalpur and who also happened to be the first British writer to give a brief historical sketch of Chauhan rule, credits one Prithvisimha Deva with these conquests. He takes him to be the fourth ruler of Patna, and referring to his military achievements, he states: "The fourth Maharajah, Pirthee-Singh Deo subjugated and made tributary to Patna, the three dependencies of Sirgooja, named Bunaee, Gangpoor, and Bamra, and annexed to Patna itself by dispossession from the Rajah of Bamra the Zamindaree of Rehracole and so much of the lands (now) of Sumbulpore on the left bank of the Mahanuddy, as were contained between Rehracole and Bamra to the east, Bamra and Gangpoor to the north, and the west by the river Eebe to its sudden bend west ward and from thence by a line running south, to the spot at the extremity of the present city of Sumbulpore where now the jail bridge stands"². 'Pirthee Singh Deo' of Major Impey's account can be no other ruler than Vatsaraja Deva of the *Koshalananda Kavya*. In this connection, it may also be mentioned that Cobden-Ramsay observes that Gangpur, Bonai, and other neighbouring States submitted to Baijal Deva, without a fight³. He makes Baijal Deva "the third chief from Ramai Deva", but in reality Vatsaraja Deva was the third Chauhan ruler of Patna. Therefore, his account about the activities of Baijal Deva actually applies to Vatsaraja Deva who is credited with these conquests by the *Koshalananda*. But as this *Kavya*, is in the nature of a royal panegyric, being composed by the court poet of Chauhan ruler Baliar Singh, the question of its authenticity cannot be satisfactorily determined in the absence of corroborative evidence. However, it seems certain that Vatsarajadeva was a powerful ruler of Chauhan family. After Vatsaraja Deva, rulers like Vaijal Deva I, Bhojaraja Deva,

¹. *Koshalananda*, (Orissa State Museum Ms. No. S. M. S. 12) Canto XXII—16—21

². Vide Major Impey's account reprinted in *Balangir District Gazetteer*, pp. 64-65.

³. L. E. B. Cobden-Ramsay, *Gazetteer of the Orissa Feudatory States*, (1950 edn.) p. 285.

Prataparudra Deva I, Vikramaditya Deva I, Vaijñā Deva II, and Bajra Hiradhara Deva ruled over the Patna kingdom which, in course of time, incorporated the neighbouring territories including Sambalpur. Narasimha Deva was the last great Chauhan ruler of Patna. About the middle of the 16th century, probably to meet the problem of Kalachuri aggressions, Narasimha Deva allowed his brother Balaram Deva to carve out the semi-independent kingdom of Sambalpur. Balarama Deva was an ambitious ruler and under him, the new kingdom grew rapidly. From his time onwards, Sambalpur became a strong power and the glory of Patna began to decline. A great warrior as he was, he launched vigorous military campaigns against the adjoining States. He defeated the Haihaya ruler, and compelled him to cede Sarangarh, Raigarh, Sakti, etc. He then directed his armies against the Ganga kingdom of Bamanda, and there, he reinstated Ramachandra Deva as a feudatory of Sambalpur. After this, his territory touched that of Surguja as Gangpur was then a vassal State of the former. In course of time, conflict started between Sambalpur and Surguja, and Balaram Deva sent an expedition against the latter through Gangpur. Tradition relates that the soldiers of Sambalpur camped at a place called 'Suadh' which has, at a later time, developed into the present town of Sundargarh. The ruler of Gangpur acknowledged the supremacy of Balaram Deva without any war and gave him his daughter Kamal Kumari who became the chief queen. The ruler of Gangpur also enjoyed a special privilege as a vassal; unlike others he could go to Sambalpur Durbar accompanied with open umbrellas. After passing through Gangpur, Balaram Deva attacked Surguja, and reduced it to a vassal State. He also married a princess of Surguja royal family and brought to Sambalpur the Anantasayi image of Visnu, probably as a trophy of his victory. The image is now worshipped at Sambalpur in a separate temple. After Balaram Deva, his son Hrudayanarayan Deva, through the Gangpur princess Kamal Kumari, became the ruler of Sambalpur. He was succeeded by Balabhadra Deva and the most significant event of his reign was the war against Baudh. After him, Madhukara Deva became the ruler. He had six queens of whom the Gangpur princess was the chief queen. Madhukara Deva had five sons viz., Baliar Singh, Madan Gopal, Banshi Gopal, Aniruddha Singh, and Ananta Singh. Of these, the eldest prince Baliar Singh succeeded his father. He proved to be an ambitious ruler. It was during his reign that his court poet Pandit Gangadhar Misra wrote the "*Koshalananda Kavya*" in Sanskrit. The *Koshalananda* reveals that Baliar Singh was a great warrior. He had two favourite horses—Parjang and Phatejang¹ who accompanied the king in all important expeditions.

¹. *Koshalananda Kavyam* (published by Sonepur Maharaja in 1929), Canto XXIII, 60.

The most remarkable military incident of his reign, as known from the *Koshalananda*, was the invasion of Bonai. In the war, Indra Deva, the lord of Bonai was defeated, and was obliged to acknowledge the overlordship of Maharaja Baliar Singh. Baliar Singh also crushed the pride of a Bhanja ruler and overran his territory 'Yamatangi'¹. Siba Prasad Das indentifies Yamatangi with Bonai and states that it was Indradeva Bhanja of Bonai who became a vassal of Sambalpur². But this suggestion does not seem to be correct. The *Koshalananda* mentions Indradeva as the ruler of Bonai. The title of Indra Deva is peculiar to the Kadamba rulers of Bonai, and none of them is known to have assumed the surname 'Bhanja'. From this it would appear that Bhanja of Yamatangi and Indra Deva of Bonai were two different rulers who sustained defeat in the hands of Baliar Singh. Yamatangi probably stands for the Yamagarita Mandala which comprised portions of Keonjhar and Dhenkanal districts. The ruler of Yamatangi probably belonged to the Keonjhar Bhanja line. There can be no doubt about the conquest of Bonai by Baliar Singh. The *Koshalananda* being a contemporary record, its account should be taken as authentic. Baliar Singh was undoubtedly the most powerful ruler of Chauhan dynasty of Sambalpur. Gopinath Sarangi in his '*Chikitsa Manjari*' describes him as possessing the valour of a lion, and at whose name the enemies got terrified like deer. Under Baliar Singh, Sambalpur became very powerful commanding supremacy over a cluster of 18garhs(States). These 'Garhs' according to Major H. B. Impey, are as follows³.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. Patna | 10. Bonai |
| 2. Sambalpur | 11. Raigarh |
| 3. Sonepur | 12. Bargarh |
| 4. Bamanda | 13. Sakti |
| 5. Rairakhola | 14. Chandrapore |
| 6. Gangpur | 15. Sarangarh |
| 7. Baudh | 16. Bindra-Nuagarh |
| 8. Athmallick | 17. Khariar |
| 9. Phuljhar | 18. Borasambar |

¹. *Koshalananda*, Canto XX 48—51.

ମନୋହରୋଠି ସମନେକନିକତୋଽବକାନ୍ତୁରାଗା ବକବର୍ଦ୍ଧମର୍ଦ୍ଦନଃ
 ହିତରସ୍ତୀରିପୁରବିରାଧରା ବନାଭନାଥୋ ବ୍ୟତତାଗତୋଽସ୍ୟ ଯତ୍ । ୪୮ ।
 ସମୁଦ୍ଗତା କୀର୍ତ୍ତିଲତା ସମାଶ୍ରିତା ବିବେକ ବୃଷଂ ଯମତାଙ୍ଗି ମର୍ଦ୍ଦନେ
 ପରାପରୋନାଥବିଧ୍ୟୌ ବତାନିତା ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲିତା ଭଞ୍ଜ ଗର୍ବ ଗଞ୍ଜନେ । ୪୯ ।
 ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତେ ହି ରକ ଧୂପ ଧୂପିତା ବନାଭକ ରାକ୍ଷିଭିଦା ପକାନ୍ତି ତା
 ପ୍ରତାପ ଚଣ୍ଡାଂ ଶୁଭ୍ରପୁଣ୍ୟ ବାରିଣାଂ ସଦା ସୁସଙ୍ଗା ସଖୁଦା ବିରାଜତେ । ୫୦ ।
 ରଣେଷୁ ନିଃସାଣା ଗଣସ୍ୟ ନିଶ୍ଚନେ ସସମ୍ପମା ଦୈରିବିଧୁର୍ବିନେ ବନେ
 ଭଞ୍ଜ ସ୍ମୃତଂ ବେଗିତୁ ବୀତ ବିଜମଃ ସ ଭଦ୍ରଦେବୋ ଜନବୁଦ୍ଧଦୋଗମଃ । ୫୧ ।

². Siba Prasad Das, *Sambalpur Itihas, Oriya*, (History of Sambalpur) 1962, pp 349—352.

³. Vide, *Balangir District Gazetteer*, p. 68.

From this it would appear that Baliar Singh established hegemony over almost the whole of western Orissa including some of the Chhatisgarh States mentioned above. From that time onwards, the Chauhan rulers of Sambalpur styled themselves as the lord of 18 Garhs, indicating the confederation of 18 States under the hegemony of Sambalpur. The chiefs of 17 semi-independent States, continued to use the title of 'Raja' and could exercise supreme authority in internal affairs in their respective States. But they paid annual tribute to the Maharaja of Sambalpur. This political arrangement lasted till the advent of the British to this region. The Sundargarh tract, comprising Bonai and Gangpur, also continued under the Chauhan supremacy till the year 1818 A. D.

RELATIONS
WITH THE
MARATHAS
AND THE
BRITISH,

In 1751, Aliwardi Khan ceded the territory to the south of the Suvarnarekha river to the Marathas but the Sambalpur region remained outside their territorial limits. It was in 1794 that Jayanta Singh, the ruler of Sambalpur, being harassed by the Marathas, made peace with them by agreeing to pay an annual tribute of Rs. 32,000 cutcha coins. The rulers of Bonai and Gangpur were subordinate to the Raja of Sambalpur and acknowledged him as their overlord. They paid tribute to the Raja of Sambalpur who accounted with the Marathas. This arrangement continued till 1800, when the fort of Sambalpur was finally occupied by the Marathas. After occupation of the territory, the Maratha Government was seldom able to collect tributes regularly; "they took by force and tortures whatever they could obtain from all which fell into their public accounts". In these circumstances, the Raja of Bonai became virtually 'independent' of the Maratha authorities.¹

In the meanwhile, the British invaded Orissa and the fort of Barabati at Cuttack, which was the headquarters of the Marathas, fell on October 14, 1803. As a result of this, Cuttack became a separate Subah under the British. Soon after, British took a diplomatic step to conquer the territories which were outside the Cuttack Province by persuading the Rajas to solicit British protection by entering into an alliance with the Company on payment of 'five gold mohurs annually as wish of courtesy'. Major Broughton conquered Sambalpur in January 1804, and the Maratha Governor Tantia Pharnavis withdrew to Nagpur. In the meanwhile, the Treaty of Deogaon has been signed with the Marathas on December 17, 1803, by which Raghujii Bhonsla ceded to the East India Company "in perpetual sovereignty, the province of Cuttuck, including the port and district

¹. H. N. Sinha (ed), *Selections from the Nagpur Residency Records* Vol. I, Nagpur, 1950.

of Balasore". The tenth Article of the Treaty further provided that "certain Treaties have been made by the British Government with feudatories of Senah Saheb Soubah. These Treaties are to be confirmed". This provision was meant to cover the engagements concluded by the British with the tributary chiefs of Orissa. Raghuji Bhonsla became reluctant to surrender Sambalpur and its dependencies which had submitted to the British authority. The British Government informed the Marathas that the Company's protection had been assured to the Rajas and that these territories can only be restored to the Marathas if the chieftains and the Zamindars themselves consented to return to the Bhonsla Government. In a petition, received by the British on 29th March 1804, the Rani of Sambalpur, and the principal Zamindars refused to return to the Maratha authority, and informed the British that they "voluntarily surrendered to the English Government", and were willing to pay to the British Government without excuse or irregularity any sum the Government would fix upon them¹. The unwillingness of the chieftains strengthened the hands of Wellesley who directed the Resident at Nagpur to inform Raghuji Bhonsla that the Rajas of Sambalpur, Patna, etc. had been taken under the British protection which the Bhonsla had to recognise and ratify as a part of the 10th Article of the Treaty of Deogaon failing which war would be renewed. It was with much reluctance that Raghuji accepted it, and the transfer

¹. H. N. Sinha (ed), Selections from the Nagpur Residency Records. Vol. I Nagpur. 1950, pp. 57—58.

Letter from the Rani and principal Zamindars of Sambalpur to Lt. Colonel Broughton in reply to his letter dated the 26th March, 1804 (English Translation). The important portion of the letter, which was signed among others by Raja Indra Deo of Bonai, and Raja Indra Suir Deo of Gangpur, is quoted below.

How there can be a voluntarily return under the dominion of "Government from which our families, honour and property have received so much injury and how can we be secure under such an authority. We sincerely and from our souls wish to remain under the British protection and our only dependence is on your favour; but with respect to the revenue you have been pleased to allude to, we beg to represent that we formerly used to pay our respective and legal tribute to our own Raja (the Raja of Sambalpur) who accounted with the Marathas; but, since they took the country into their own hands (three years ago), there has been nothing settled or defined: they took by force and tortues whatever they could obtain from all which fall into their public accounts, you, however, our master be pleased to take into "consideration the produce and ability of the country and whatever sum you may fix upon, we are submissively willing to pay without excuse or irregularity. We and our families are ready to manifest our loyalty and obedience to the Company on all occasions and will acknowledge no other sovereign. You are our protector and we hope from you an arrangement which will place us under the permanent protection of the British Government."

was legally confirmed by the 10th Article of the Treaty of Deogaon. Thus Bonai and Gangpur were also ceded to the British Government by the Treaty of Deogaon.

After Wellesley left India, the British followed a policy of peace and non-intervention, and decided to transfer Sambalpur, and the adjoining territories to Bhonsla. Captain Roughsedge was deputed to Sambalpur to open negotiations with the Rani of Sambalpur and other Zamindars. After prolonged discussions, the chiefs, except Raja of Raigarh, were persuaded to return to the Maratha authority. Accordingly, Bonai and Gangpur were also restored to Raghuji Bhonsla by a special agreement in 1806. The two States continued under the Marathas till 1818, when they reverted to the British Government under the provisional agreement concluded with Madhoji Bhonsla (Appa Sahib). Formerly, Sambalpur Garhjats including Bonai and Gangpur were dependent on the king of Sambalpur; when they were ceded to the British Government in 1818, "advantage was taken of the circumstances under which Sambalpur and Patna were found to annul the dependency of the other Zamindars on these two chiefs; and in 1821, separate Sanads were granted to each Zamindar, and separate engagements taken". Thus Gangpur and Bonai ceased to be 'estates' of Sambalpur. They were formally and finally ceded to the British under the treaty of 1826. With regard to tribute, the British Government fixed it on a lower scale than that which was levied under the Marathas and fresh settlements were made in 1827.

After the Kol insurrection of 1831—33¹ a new province called 'South Western Frontier Agency' under an officer designated Agent to the Governor-General, was constituted under Regulation XIII of 1833. Bonai and Gangpur were under the jurisdiction of this Agency. In 1864, the designation of the Agency was altered from South West Frontier Agency to Chutia Nagpur (Chota Nagpur), and the Agent to the Governor-General became Commissioner. It was administered as a non-regulation province under the control of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.

In 1860, Sambalpur group of States, with the exception of Bonai and Gangpur, were transferred to the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack, and subsequently on April 30, 1862, Sambalpur was made over to the newly constituted Central Provinces. Bonai and Gangpur, however, continued to remain with Chota Nagpur. In 1863, for the administration of justice, the Government of Bengal issued rules

¹. K. K. Dutta, *Anti-British Plots and Movements Before 1857, Meerut*, 1970, pp. 41-42.

for the guidance of chiefs of Tributary Mahals of Chota Nagpur. The chiefs were empowered to pass sentences of imprisonment up to 2 years, and they could also impose fines not exceeding Rs. 50. However, subject to confirmation by the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur, they were vested with judicial powers of sentences of imprisonment up to five years and fines not exceeding Rs. 200. They had no power of whipping and all orders passed by them were liable to revision by the Commissioner.

In 1891, the Secretary of State in Council decided that Chota Nagpur States do not form part of British India, and accordingly new Sanads were granted to Bonai and Gangpur in 1899 which regulated their relations with the British Government. The Sanad granted to Raja Raghunath Sekhar Deo of Gangpur is given in Appendix III in order to show his powers and position vis-à-vis the British.

On October 16, 1905, the two States were transferred from the control of the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur and placed under the charge of the Commissioner of Orissa. On partition of Bengal in 1905 the Sanads of Bonai and Gangpur were superseded by Sanads of December 23, 1905 fixing their tribute for a period of 14 years and appointing the Commissioner of Orissa as the officer to be consulted by the chiefs in place of the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur. In 1906, the post of a Political Agent was created for the Orissa States under the Commissioner of Orissa. In 1912, the Bihar and Orissa Province was constituted, and the control over the Feudatory States of Orissa was transferred to the new Government at Patna. Revised Sanads were granted to chiefs of Bonai and Gangpur in 1915 in which the clause requiring payment of nazrana on succession was omitted. The Sanads were again revised in 1919 to bring them more into conformity with those granted to the heirs of other Orissa States. The Orissa States continued to be under the Commissioner of Orissa Division till 1922, when the Political Agent was designated as Political Agent and Commissioner, Orissa Feudatory States, and was placed directly under the Governor of Bihar and Orissa. In 1924, the tribute fixed for these two States was enhanced. With effect from April 1, 1933, prior to the introduction of provincial autonomy, the States were placed in direct political relation with the Government of India through the Political Agent, Orissa States and the Resident for the Eastern States Agency. In 1937, revised Sanads were granted to the Rajas of Orissa. Since 1942 Bonai was under the direct management of the Political Agent, Orissa States, Sambalpur. The States became independent with the lapse of British Paramountcy on August 15, 1947.

In course of time, in the Sundargarh region, there developed two self contained political units, viz., Gangpur and Bonai, each having a distinct series of rulers. The accounts of these Raj-families are presented below.

Bonai The earlier history of the ruling family of the ex-State of Bonai is not quite clear. Our knowledge of it is mainly derived from oral traditions. Regarding the origin of the family, E. A. Gait narrates the following episode :

“The ruling family claims a mysterious and foreign origin. They say that they came from Sakuldip or Ceylon, and that the founder of the family was abandoned by his mother under a Kadam tree. Being thus on the point of falling into the hands of an enemy, the infant was rescued by a peacock, which swallowed him, and kept him in its maw until the danger was passed. In gratitude for this service the peacock was adopted as the family crest. In reference to this early connection with the Kadam tree they describe themselves as Kadam Bansi Rajputs”.¹ The legendary account of the circumstances of the origin, as given in the tradition, is valueless for historical purposes. Commenting on this tradition about the origin from Sakul Dwipa or Ceylon, Hunter observed in 1877, “Looking, however, to their position as rulers over powerful Bhuiya vassals, who hold the bulk of the land, command the militia of the state, and have even the right of conferring the tilak or token of investiture on the chief, there can be no doubt that the Raja of Bonai was originally nothing more than the tribal head of the Bhuiya clan. If Colonel Dalton’s theory be correct, that the Bhuiyas formed a portion of the army with which Rama invaded Ceylon, and were, in fact, the veritable apes of the Ramayana, it would seem as if the family of the chief had taken advantage of an ancient legend, to conceal their obviously aboriginal ancestry under the fiction of Cinghalese descent”² The theory of the alleged Ceylonese origin of the Bonai Raj-family appears to be absurd, and later Durbar sources connect the ruling house with the Kadamba branch of Rathor Rajputs. They are kshtriya by caste and belong to the Lunar dynasty. The emblem of the state is peacock. One peculiarity of the Raja-family is that the ruler on succession to the *gadi* always takes his grand father’s surname.

¹. Letter No. 2959, P. dated Calcutta, July 31, 1907 from E. A. Gait, Chief Secretary to Government of Bengal, Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department. The tradition is also mentioned by Cobden-Ramsay, in his *Gazetteer of Feudatory States of Orissa*.

². W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XVII, London, 1877, p.17

The Raj-family had chequered history and it moulded the destiny of Bonai till the merger of the State in 1948. In course of time, a branch of the Kadambas of Bonai also ruled over Rairakhol. There are no authentic records for reconstruction of the history. Local Oriya works like *Kadamba Gatha* of Pandit Madan Mohan Misra and *Vamsavali* of Pandit Gopinath Misra Kavibhusana throw some light on the traditional history of the Raj-family. According to the traditional account, Raja Pratap Bhanu Deo founded the State some time in the thirteenth century A. D. At that time, the State is said to have been divided into five principalities ruled by aboriginal Zamindars who were more or less independent of one another. The progenitor of the Kadamba Raj-family drove out four of these aboriginal Zamindars with the help of one Zamindar¹ and subjugated the land.

Our knowledge about the history of the Raj-family before the advent of the British suffers from much uncertainty due to paucity of reliable materials. It is believed that Makaradhwaaja Govinda Deo, who was the 28th in descent from the founder of the Kadamba family, shifted his capital to the present town of Bonaigarh². It is known from the '*Vamsavali*' of Pandit Gopinath Misra Kabibhusana that there was a boundary dispute between Bamanda and Bonai which resulted in a war in the reign of Raja Kali Chandra Indra Deb³ of Bonai (C. 1626 to 1660 A. D.). The *Kadamba Gatha* relates that Dulha Deva, king of Bamanda, after destroying the subdued country entered into Kantasara, a village in the Bonai State. In this war, the king of Bonai got military assistance from his uncle Raja Gopinath Harichandan of Talcher. However, there is no authentic record to corroborate this tradition; but being neighbouring States, there seems to have been occasional hostility between the two⁴.

In 1804, Rajah Indra Deo was the ruler of Bonai⁵. Bonai came under the control of the East India Company in 1818 under the provisional agreement concluded with Madhuji Bhonsala (Appa Sahib). During the Kol insurrection of Singhbhum (1820—1821), the peace of Bonai was affected. The main centres of depredation of Lurka Kols were Bamanghati, Keonjhar and north-east quarter of Bonai⁶. The

¹. Report on the Administration of the Bonai State 1945-46, p. 2.

². Vide JKHS, Vol. I, No. 2, 1946, p. 168.

³. *Vamsavali*, canto X, Quoted in JKHS, Vol. II, No. 1, p. 36, foot note.

⁴. JKHS, Vol. II, No. 1, P. 136, see also *Sambalpur District Gazetteer*, p. 82.

⁵. H. N. Sinha (ed), *Selections from the Nagpur Residency Records*, Vol. I, p. 58.

⁶. JBRS, Vol. XLIII, Parts I & 2, p. 74.

rebellion was, however, suppressed by the British Government. The chiefs of Bonai, Mayurbhanj, and Keonjhar were asked to extend facilities for the movement of British troops through their territories¹.

Bonai was finally ceded to the British under the treaty of 1826, when Raghujī Bhonsla III, attained majority. It was administered by the Governor General's Agent for the S. W. Frontier Agency. Major J. R. Ouseley, Agent to the Governor-General, who toured Bonai in 1840 has left a contemporaneous account which forms the earliest authentic record on the political, and economic condition of the State². The territory then ruled by Raja Indra Deo, was in a backward and chaotic condition being plundered by marauding bands of *Thakurs* from the neighbouring States. Major Ouseley has mentioned that the annual Government *Jama* of Bonai was Rs. 200, whereas the amount probably collected by him was Rs. 6000. He estimated that *Jama* would be increased to Rs. 1,00,000 in full cultivation³. However, no improvement could be marked with regard to cultivation. Touring in 1863-64, Colonel T. Dalton found Bonai "for the most part a mass of uninhabited hills, only of the whole $1\frac{1}{12}$ th being under cultivation⁴". He noticed 83 deserted village sites in the State. Raja Chandra Deo, who succeeded Indra Deo was an imbecile ruler, and during his insanity the State was administered by his eldest son Dayanidhi Deo. The State paid an annual tribute of Rs. 200 to the British Government. Besides this, it had to furnish a contingent of armed men for military service if required by the Government. During the Keonjhar disturbances of 1867-68, "the rural levy from Bonai amounted to a dozen match lockman, and between forty and fifty archers⁵". "Dayanidhi Deo rendered good service during this rising, and on August 1, 1868, twenty five insurgent Bhuiya leaders surrendered to him. This broke the backbone of the movement and paved the way for the capture of Ratna Naik and Nanda Naik on the 15th August, 1868. For his valuable services, the title of '*Bahadur*' was conferred upon him by the Governor-General⁶. The *Sawnt*, the Bhuiyan Zamindar of Bonai, the *Danpat* and *Mahapatra* (the two Gond Jagirdars of Bonai) were also presented with swords and shields.

1. P. Mukherjee, *Orissa in the 19th Century*, Utkal University, p. 222.

2. The tour diary of J. R. Ouseley has been given as Appendix I.

3. OHRJ, Vol. V, No. 3, p. 175.

4. Report of Colonel Dalton is given in Appendix II.

5. W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XVII p. 179.

6. Vide, Foreign Department No. 810F, dt. May 5, 1871.

Bonaigarh was the capital of the State. Hunter gives the following description of the place ; "Bonaigarh, the residence of the chief, occupies a picturesque bend of the Brahmani river in latitude 28° 49' and, longitude 85° 0', the site being 505 feet above sea level. The garh or fort itself, has the river on three sides, and is further defended by high mud wall and moat. Within this enclosure are about 150 houses, including those of the chief, his court house and jail"¹.

Regarding the ruling family he remarks, "The family live in good style, and are not in debt. They say themselves that the net income of the state does not amount to more than Rs. 5000 (£ 500) per annum. Their expenses, however, must largely exceed this, as they dress well, keep two elephants and several horses, and, inspite of their marked aboriginal features, have married into good Rajput families"².

After managing the affairs of the State as *Tikait*, Dayanidhi Deo succeeded to the *gadi*, under the title of Raja Bahadur Indra Deo on September 12, 1876. The State began to progress during his reign. Under the orders of J. E. K. Hewitt, the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur, the first land revenue settlement was conducted in certain areas in 1879. The settlement, made with the indigenous *padika*, was confined to cultivable wet lands only. The lands lying within the zamindari areas were not covered by the settlement. Hewitt fixed the rates of rent in consultation with kings, leadingmen and the raiyats. This brought to an end the hostility between the chief and the Swant, the recognised head of the Bhuiyans who was the only Zamindar in the State. The quarrel between the Chief and the Swant which had begun in 1871 had caused much distress to the people. When there was a satisfactory settlement, the raiyats were left unmolested to carry on their pursuits. The Chief granted various concessions to people to prevent them from emigrating to neighbouring States. He even encouraged Mundas, Oraons, and other people from Ranchi and Singhbhum to come into his State and occupy jungle areas on easy terms. In 1883, hostility started between the Chief and his Gond Jagirdars over the question of rents and cesses. This culminated in a veritable rising in 1888. Raja Udit Narayan Singh Deo of Saraikala rendered good service to the British during this Bonai rising of 1888³. At last a compromise was effected in 1889 between the conflicting parties by W. H. Grimley, Commissioner of Chota Nagpur Division. Raja Nilambar Chandra

¹. W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XVII, p. 174.

². *Ibid* p. 175.

³. Vide, P. C. Roy Choudhury (ed), *Singhbhum District Gazetteer*, p. 104.

Deo, who succeeded his father Raja Bahadur Dayanidhi Indra Deo, was not an able ruler, and during his reign the affairs of the State lapsed into a very chaotic condition. The Raja caused much complications by leasing out certain forests to timber merchants without reference to the Commissioner. As this was in contravention of the Government order, agreements made by the Raja were revised by the Commissioner in December, 1901. Raja Nilambar Chandra Deo died on February 19, 1902 and his eldest son Dharani Dhar Deo was recognised as the chief under the title of Raja Indra Deo. He was born on the 13th December, 1882 at Bonaigarh and was educated at Deogarh in Bamra. As he was a minor at the time of the death of his father, the state was brought under the Government management and G. M. Shanahan became the Manager of the State on a salary of Rs. 300 per month. E. A. Gait, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal makes the following observation about the chief in 1907 :

“The present chief is an intelligent lad, but hardly trained and educated. He has been brought to Ranchi for education and placed under the guardianship of a special-tutor-guardian appointed with the sanction of Government. A most serious charge in connection with the murder of one Brinda keot was preferred against him during the year, and from an enquiry held under Government orders by Mr. officiating Commissioner W. Muada it appeared that the two very gross outrages were committed on the persons of two of the subjects viz. Brinda and Madhab keot; that there was no doubt that these outrages were committed with the knowledge of the minor chief, though perhaps the perpetrators went further than he would have desired to go, and that the minor chief was aware of the efforts which had been made to hush up the case which ended in the death of Brinda keot. However, as it was considered that the minor chief was led into these evil courses by bad adviser, it was considered that it would suffice to require the minor chief to remain at Ranchi under the charge of a suitable tutor for such period as may serve to satisfy His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor that he is fit to exercise the responsible functions of a Ruling Chief”¹.

✓ Raja Dharanidhar Indra Deo, who was the 57th ruler of the Bonai-Kadamba line, married the daughter of Basudev Sudhal Deb KCIE, the late Raja of Bamra. For organising the revenue administration,

¹. Letter No. 2959 P. dated Calcutta July 31, 1907 from E. A. Gait, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, and the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department.

the survey and settlement work in the State was started in 1910 and completed in 1913 by W. G. Kelley. In 1930, Indra Bilas Mukherjee started a Revisional Settlement, but it was stopped on financial reasons before the completion of the work.

In 1935, a Nayabadi settlement was made by N. C. Pattnaik. This brought an additional revenue of Rs. 16,000 to the State. Another settlement was made in 1940-41 for 167 villages exempting raiyats from the *Bethi* service in lieu of an enhanced rate of rent.

Raja Dharanidhar Indra Deo was an enlightened ruler¹. Under the patronage of the ruler Dharanidhar a recreation club was established at Bonaigarh in 1933. Reading the signs of time, he introduced certain reforms in the administration. With a view to save the *halias* from the tyranny of unscrupulous *sahukaras*, the Halia Regulation of 1943 was passed imposing various restrictions in respect of advances, wages, the period of service, etc. With the object of solving the problem of agricultural indebtedness, the practice of *kadhia*² loan was stopped. An arbitrary tax called 'Tika Pancha' realised from the Gountia', and the 'purohita tax' (imposed on the priests for their profession) were abolished. In August 1943, there was unprecedented flood in the Brahmani which affected nearly 66 villages. The Durbar distributed help and gave Taccavi loans to the affected people. With a view to associate the people in administration of the State, Panchayats were organised under the Bonai State Panchayat Orders of 1943. To placate the hill Bhuiyans³, Bhuiyan Durbar was held in 1944 at Bonaigarh on the Dasehra day, in which Bhuiyan *Sardars* were presented with red *pagrees* and rewards.

In spite of the efforts of the Durbar for improving the condition of the people, no substantial change could, however, be marked in the material conditions of the people. For touring in the interior of the State, Bamadeb Misra, Dewan of Bonai observed in 1944 "I have been startled to find the people suffering from malnutrition and poverty in spite of abundant natural resources of the state"⁴.

¹. Bharat Chandra Naik, gives in his autobiography a contemporaneous account of conditions prevailing between 1924—1927, when he was the Dewan of the State. See, 'Mo Purba Smruti Katha', Bharat Chandra Naik, Sambalpur 1966, pp. 139—171.

². Under this system, Mahajans used to supply paddy or rice at the time of cultivation, and realised at the harvest time with exorbitant rate of interest.

³. Verrier Elwin, who visited the Bhuiyan areas in the state has given a report about their conditions. See *Report of a tour in the Bonai, Keonjhar and Pallahara States*, by V. Elwin, 1942.

Report on the Administration of the Bonai State, 1943-44, p. 63.

Raja Dharanidhar Indra Deo had no children. He adopted Kadamba Kesari Deo, the eldest son of his late younger brother Hira Bajradhar Deo, as his son on May 13, 1935. Dharanidhar Indra Deo was the last ruler of Bonai. A new chapter began in the history of the State when it merged with Orissa on January 1, 1948.

Gangpur

The early history of the Gangpur Raj-family is shrouded in obscurity. The ruling chiefs of Gangpur claim descent from the Paramara clan of Rajputs of Dharanagar or Ujjain through Raja Vikramaditya. It is said that during the Mahamedan period, two brothers came from Dharanagar. The elder brother settled in Panchet-Kasipur in the district of Manbhum where he established a kingdom; Gangadhar Sekhar Deo the younger brother came to Gangpur. Tradition preserves an interesting anecdote regarding his coming to Gangpur. Referring to this, Rani Janaki Rathnaya Ammerjee, who was the Regent of Gangpur State from 1936—44, states as follows :

“ . . . there was a quarrel between Gangadhar and his elder brother at Sikharbhum, in Manbhum district. Gangadhar being helpless left his home and went towards Suruguja. On the way he saw a Brahmin who prophesied that Gangadhar would be Raja. Gangadhar told the Brahmin that if he would be a Raja, he would allow the Brahmin and his descendants to sit on his *Gadi* for 2 hours every year. The Brahmin accompanied Gangadhar. They arrived at Masabira near Laikera village, Police Station Lephripara. The Bhuiyan family (ancestor of the Zamindar of Sargipalli) made him king. In the meantime the brother of Gangadhar sent his emissaries in search of Gangadhar. But the Bhuiyan Zamindar of Sargipalli concealed Gangadhar on a platform, made in the midst of a tank, and the emissaries failed to find out Gangadhar and went back to Sikharbhum. The State is called Gangpur after the name of Gangadhar Deo.”¹ A second version of the story exists, according to which there was anarchy in the region following the collapse of Kesari vamsa. The leading men felt the necessity of a king, and they stole a child of the Sikhar family from Sikharbhum or Panchet and elected him as their chief². It is difficult to extract historical information from such oral traditions. It seems that several centuries ago, a soldier of fortune or a prince who was or claimed to be Rajput Kshatriya of Paramar clan found the country

¹ Vide, Indrabilas Mukharjee, *Final Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Gangpur State, 1929—1936*, p. 3.

² W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal* Vol. XVII, London, 1877 p. 195, L. E. B. Cobden-Ramsay, *opcit*—p. 177.

an easy prey and became its master ¹. The aboriginal Bhuiyans, who inhabited these area, were either subjugated or accepted the new ruler. Traditions about the early history of several of the Orissa States suggest that this is how they came into existence.

Gangadhar Sekhar Deo, who was the first ruler according to traditions, came to this region at a critical time. When the last ruler of the local Kesari dynasty was murdered by Madan Pradhan of Kirmadand, the territory plunged into a state of anarchy. In the absence of a king, life and property became insecure. Gangpur then appears to have been divided into a number of principalities which were held by Bhuiyan families. When marauders and rebels oppressed the people, it is said, Madan Mohan Singh, Zamindar of Hemgir, Bharathi Majhi, Zamindar of Sargipali and Prahlad Gartia, Zamindar of Sarapgarh secured help from the Rajas of Raigarh and Palikot and suppressed the rebellion ². Later on, they invited or stole one son from the Sikhhar family of Sikhharbhum and acknowledged him as their chief. It is said that the Majhi of Sargipali, who was an influential Bhuiyan leader, put vermilion on the forehead of Gangadhar Sekhar Deo and helped him to subjugate the other Bhuiyans. Gangadhar Sekhar was installed as Raja at Masabiragarh. Afterwards, he established a new capital of Gangurgarh. The extent of his territory is not definitely known.

There appears to be some inconsistency in different statements about the names of the early members of the Gangpur Raj family. The Gangpur Durbar sources give the names of seventeen kings before Raja Raghunath Sekhar Deo with Raja Gangadhar Sekhar Deo as the

¹. However, it is to be admitted, that except for tradition there is no authentic record to substantiate the theory. Colonel Dalton believed (see Appendix II) that the Ruling family descended from the original Bhuiyan chiefs. The Bhuiyans are the sons of the soil (*Bhuin*—earth), and they are the earliest settlers of the region.. Referring to the story of stealing a child from the Sikhara family of Sikhharbhum, W. W. Hunter remarks, "This legend, however, is merely one form of the Brahmanical doctrine that all rulers should be Kshattriyas; and the wide prevalence of similar stories, together with the dark complexion and non Aryan features of the Raja, make it far more probable that he is, like most of his fief-holders a Bhuiya". Vide *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XVII, p. 195.

². Vide Letter No. 88, dated the October 28, 1938, from Zamindar of Hemgir to the Settlement Officer, Gangpur State, quoted as Appendix XX in *Final Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Gangpur State, 1929—36*.

progeny¹; while from archival records we get a somewhat different genealogy of the ancestors of Raja Raghunath Sekhar Deo. The genealogical table of the Gangpur Raj family preserved in the Orissa State Archives was compiled in 1860, therefore, its evidence, should be taken as more authentic. But in this chronological table also we find certain apparent mistakes.

Though there is some confusion about the names of the kings of Sekhar family for some generations, the authenticity of King Hambhira Deo, known from his Barapali copper plate, cannot be doubted. It is also certain that Indra Sekhar Deo was the ruler of Gangpur when Sambalpur came under the East India Company, for his name appears as one of the Principal Zamindars in a letter dated March 26, 1804 addressed to Lt. Colonel Broughton. According to the tradition preserved by the Durbar of Gangpur, Indra Sekhar Deo had his capital at Gangpurgarh but he subsequently removed his capital to Raibogagarh when Pratap Majhi, the Zamindar of Sargipali defied his authority and made preparations to attack Gangpurgarh. After Indra Sekhar Deo, his son Parasuram Sekhar Deo became the ruler. He received the first Sanad from the British Government in 1827 A. D. He had his capital at Nabarangpur, near modern Rajgangpur. He was a powerful monarch, and it is said that he attacked Sargipali to take revenge on Pratap Majhi who had been a bitter enemy of his father. Pratap Majhi escaped but later on when he was found addressing a meeting at Kupsinga, he was dramatically stabbed to death with a spear by Raja Parasuram Sekhar Deo from horse back. After Parasuram Sekhar Deo, Raja Jagadev Sekhar Deo came to the throne, and he removed the capital to Jagatgarh. In all probability, he is no other than Indrajit Sekhar Deo mentioned by Major J. R. Ouseley as the Raja of Gangpur in 1840. In his tour diary of 1840, Major Ouseley recorded that the annual Government *Jama* of Gangpur was Rs. 500 whereas the amount collected by the Raja was about Rs. 10,000. Ouseley believed that the collection could be increased to Rs. 1,00,00. if all lands would be brought under cultivation². The next successor

¹. The kings are (1) Raja Gangadhar Sekhar Deo, (2) Raja Jagannath Sekhar Deo, (3) Raja Jalandhar Sekhar Deo, (4) Raja Chandramani Sekhar Deo, (5) Raja Kandarpa Sekhar Deo, (6) Raja Hatamani Sekhar Deo, (7) Raja Jajahami Sekhar Deo, (8) Raja Tribhuban Sekhar Deo, *alias* Raja Kahnu Sekhar Deo, (9) Raja Pratap Sekhar Deo, (10) Raja Hamir Sekhar Deo, (11) Raja Baijnath Sekhar Deo, (12) Raja Indra Sekhar Deo, (13) Raja Parasuram Sekhar Deo, (14) Raja Jagdev Sekhar Deo, (15) Raja Chandra-bhanu Sekhar Deo, (16) Raja Madan Mohan Sekhar Deo, *alias* Raja Panika Sekhar Deo, and (17) Raja Janardan Sekhar Deo.

². OHRJ, Vol.V., No. 3, p. 175

to the throne was Chandrabhanu Sekhar Deo, a cousin brother of Jagadev Sekhar Deo. Chandrabhanu Sekhar Deo had three queens, Kunjamani Kumari, Sarabanga Sundari, and Asha Kumari. Of these, the second queen Sarabanga Sundari, who was a daughter of Bonai family, gave birth to a posthumous son named Madan Mohan Sekhar Deo who survived only for six months. As there was no lineal descendant, there arose a dispute for succession to the *gadi* between Gajraj Sekhar Deo and Raghunath Sekhar Deo who were respectively the second son and the grandson of Danardan Sekhar Deo, Kharposhdar of Birbira. Raghunath Sekhar Deo was the only son of Pitambar Sekhar Deo, the eldest son of Danardan Sekhar Deo. Rani Kunjamani Kumari supported his claim. When the matter came up before the Bengal Government for decision, Danardana Sekhar Deo was considered as the legal heir, and therefore, he was recognised as the chief. Danardan Sekhar Deo further shifted the capital to Suadihi. He was killed by the family priest while proceeding to Ranchi for attending a Durbar, and Raghunath Sekhar Deo succeeded to the *gadi* in November 1858, when he was a minor. Rani Kunjamani Kumari, and after her death, Gajraj Sekhar Deo, the uncle of Raghunath Sekhar Deo, managed the affairs of the State as Sarbarakar during his minority. Raghunath Sekhar Deo took over the charge of the State on January 27, 1871. But after a few years he was implicated in a murder case of two women who were suspected as witches. Hunter makes the following observation on the chief :

“The present chief, Raja Raghunath Sekhar, is (1875) suspended and under arrest at Ranchi, for having been concerned in the murder of two women as reputed witches. The estate is in charge of the Rani and the judicial and police duties of the Raja are carried on by two of the most influential Jagirdars of Gangpur”¹. It is said that Raghunath Sekhar fell victim to the intrigue of his uncle Gajraj Sekhar Deo who wanted to get the *gadi* for himself. However, after the disposal of the murder case and stay at Ranchi for one year, Raghunath Sekhar Deo was again entrusted with the administration of the State. He has his capital at Suadihi. Hunter reports, “The residence of the Raja at Suadi on the river Ib, in latitude 22° 10' and longitude 84° 5', is a collection of low thatched buildings, one of which is used as a court house. There is also a school at which Oriya and Hindi are taught to about 30 boys”². This Suadihi, which was mentioned earlier by Dalton was renamed as Sundargarh by Raghunath Sekhar Deo.

¹. W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal* Vol. XVII, p. 189

². *Ibid*, p. 195

In the sphere of revenue administration, Raghunath Sekhar Deo introduced Nazar-kut Settlement in some villages in 1874 A. D. Though the system of assessment made by seeing only was defective and was a sort of guess work, it helped to raise the revenue. While the revenue of the State, according to the Jamabandi prepared by Gajraj Sekhar Deo in 1865, was Rs. 5,200 and a number of abwabs, the Nazar-kut Settlement increased the revenue to Rs. 15,000 in addition to supplies of rice and pulses. In 1900 A. D., there was another settlement by which the rents of kuttet villages increased by 25 per cent and non-kuttet villages by 50 per cent. In the mean while, the Chief custed some aboriginal Gaontias by granting leases in favour of some rich Hindu bidders of Sambalpur. Great discontentment was consequently generated and eventually, it culminated in a rebellion in 1897, which was only suppressed by the British assistance. To improve the administration, the British Government appointed in 1900 A. D., Babu Surendranath Majumdar, Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector, as Dewan, with executive and judicial powers. However, he could not pull on well with the Chief, and in June 1902, J. A. Craven, Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector was appointed as Dewan of the State. E. A. Gait, Chief Secretary to Government of Bengal makes the following observation on the Chief in 1907 : "The only bar to progress is the chief himself, an uneducated and ignorant man, of a grasping and suspicious nature, who has obstinately opposed all efforts at reform excepting when likely to further his own personal interests". The regime of Raghunath Sekhar Deo was unusually long (he ruled from 1871 to 1917) and this ensured the continuity in administration. When Bengal-Nagpur Railway offered for the construction of railways, he made a free gift of all lands required by the Railways and helped the authorities by giving large quantities of material for the construction. Because of railway communications, the untapped mineral resources, like lime stone and dolomite, could be utilised. The effect has been a great development of trade and employment of thousands of subjects in the quarries. In 1899, Raghunath Sekhar Deo was granted Sanad by the British Government. His reign also witnessed some remarkable changes in the administration of Gangpur which was transferred from the control of the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur to the charge of the Commissioner of Orissa in 1905. The first regular survey and settlement of the State was taken up in 1907 and completed in 1911 by C. W. E. Connolly, a member of Bengal Provincial Civil Service. In 1915, His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India was pleased to confer upon Raja Bahadur Raghunath Sekhar Deo, the title of Maharaja as a personal distinction¹.

¹. Vide No. 98-IC dated Simla, June 3, 1915 in the Foreign and Political Department.

A new kachery building was constructed by him at Sundargarh at an expenditure of Rs. 1,67,218. The old kachery building was converted into a hostel for boys attending Sundargarh Middle English School. The new magnificent court buildings were formally opened by the Lieutenant Governor of Bihar and Orissa on December 20, 1915. Maharaja Raghunath Sekhar Deo died in June 10, 1917 and was succeeded by his grandson Bhawani Shankar Sekhar Deo. But as he was a minor, J. A. Craven, formerly Dewan of Gangpur was posted as Superintendent of State. He was a "sound and capable officer" and with the help of missionaries, he recruited as many as 1081 persons mostly from the Oraon class to serve in the labour corps of the First World War. These men did very good work in France with the Chota Nagpur Corps. After receiving training in the actual administration of the State, Bhawani Shankar Shekhar Deo received charge of the State on May 16, 1919 and was formally invested with the powers at a Durbar held by J. F. Grunning, Commissioner of the Orissa Division, at Sambalpur on 2nd February, 1920. He was a ruler with liberal ideas and he acquainted himself with the needs and conditions of the people. On the whole, he observed "economic conditions are good as can be expected, but the majority of the cultivators, particularly in the western half of the State, are poor despite low rents. It is a remarkable fact that the substantial cultivator is extremely well off and his prosperity continues to increase ; the poor cultivator, is however, very very poor and the reasons to me are obvious. One is that the system of *bethi* as we have it here is wrong ; the poor cultivator, who has to cultivate his fields single handed, has to render the same amount of *bethi* as his wealthy neighbour with two or three or more hired labourers or family member. *Bethi* hardly affects the latter whereas it makes all difference in the world to the former ¹". Even though he was not prepared to give complete freedom from *bethi* and *begar*, he wanted that the system be revised so as to equalise the burden. He was also a patron of learning ; Bhavani Shankar High School, established by him at Sundargarh, was named after him. His reign witnessed many changes in the traditional life. Number of motor bus services increased, even an automatic fly shuttle loom imported from Manchester made its appearance in Gangpur. Referring to the progress in different branches of administration, the ruler reported in 1926 ; "We have excellent communications and public buildings which are in course of yearly improvement and on which we spend nearly a quarter of our income. There are eight State hospitals and dispensaries now in the State, which

¹. Review of the Annual Reports on the Administration of the Feudatory States of Orissa and Chota Nagpur for the year 1923-24, pp. 26-27.

is one to an area of every three hundred square miles, and male and female vaccinators who perform compulsory vaccination and revaccination of the people. We have fifty-nine State Primary Schools, in which teaching is given free of cost, primary education being compulsory there are in addition a Training School for teachers, three Middle Vernacular ; one Middle English and five Girls' schools ; and there are one hundred and thirty Mission Schools, a large number of which, complying with our conditions, are given aid. We have two veterinary assistants who tour the state, there are thirteen police-stations, each in charge of a sub-inspector of police of whom several have been trained at the Hazaribagh Training College" ¹. The same ruler who was interested in the welfare of the people could also spend Rs. 78,000 on the marriage ceremony of his sister. During his reign, Sir Henry Wheeler, Governor of Bihar and Orissa with Lady Wheeler visited Gangpur in January, 1926. Raja Bhawani Shankar Sekhar Deo died on May 5, 1930 at the early age of 32; he was succeeded by his eldest son Bir Mitra Pratap Sekhar Deo. Raja Bir Mitra Pratap Sekhar Deo was born on March 10, 1920 and as he was a minor at the time of his father's death, the state was placed under the direct management of the British Government. In December 20, 1935, his mother Rani Janaki Rathnaya Amarjee was made the Regent at a Durbar held at Sundargarh by Lt. Colonel A. S. Meek, the Agent to the Governor-General, Eastern States Agency. At first certain departments of the State were placed under her administrative control. However, on November 15 1936 full regency power were conferred upon her. The Superintendent of the State became her Dewan and exercised executive powers. The Chief Judge had full control over the judicial branch of the administration. Raja Bir Mitra Pratap had his education at Raj Kumar College, Raipur. He visited Europe twice, and during his second visit he died of Pneumonia in London on June 26, 1938. The town of Birmitrapur has been named after him. On his death, his younger brother Raja Bira Udit Pratap Sekhar Deo ascended the *gadi*. His succession to the *gadi* was celebrated in a Durbar held on December 26, 1938 by the Political Agent, Orissa States. He was born on September 25, 1923, and during his minority the Rani Saheba J. R. Ammerjee continued as the Regent. She was the daughter of the Zamindar of Kurupam in the Vizagapatam district. She held the Regency from 1936 to November 27, 1944 when Raja Bira Udit Pratap Sekhar Deo was invested with ruling powers by H. J. Todd, the Resident for the Eastern States Agency, in a special Durbar. The title of C. B. E. was conferred upon Shrimati Ammerje

¹. Review of the Annual Report on the Administration of the Feudatory States of Orissa and Chota Nagpur for the year 1925-26, p. 28.

on the New Year's Day of 1945. During her regency the revenue of the State was doubled. A general hospital, lighting and water supply system were completed at Sundargarh. On October 10, 1944 she set up a council. The Regent was the President of the council, the Dewan was the Vice-President and there were two other ministers. Bir Udit Pratap Sekhar Deo also continued the council form of Government. He was an enlightened ruler. Under the Village Panchayat Act, Panchayats were formed. The ruler toured in the Munda villages and took interest in their welfare. Raja Bira Udit Pratap Sekhar Deo was the last ruler of Gangpur, and during his administration, the State merged with Orissa in 1948. This ushered in a new chapter in the history of Gangpur.

Bira Surendra Sai, a claimant to the throne of Sambalpur had been kept in jail at Hazaribagh. The mutineers during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 got him out. It is presumed that he must have travelled through Sundargarh district to his home in Sambalpur. But there is nothing on record to show any incident during that period. It is, however, obvious that he must have had the sympathy of the population to be able to go through long tracts of country without being caught and handed over to the British. Ultimately he was kept in jail at Asirgarh in Raipur district of Madhya Pradesh. His son Mitra Bhanu who had been in jail at Asirgarh was released in 1877 on the security of his father-in-law, the Raja of Bonai who kept him at Bonai for 30 years. During this period two petitions to the British authorities to allow him to visit his native village Khinda near Sambalpur had been rejected. Ultimately it was allowed in 1907. These facts could hardly be taken into any account of a freedom struggle.

GLIMPSES OF
FREEDOM
STRUGGLE

When Raja Raghunath Sekhar Deo of Gangpur became greedy about 1897 A. D. and started displacing aboriginal Gauntias in order to replace them by Agharias and rich people from Sambalpur, an agitation started under the leadership of an aboriginal Gauntia, Madri Kalo which ended in the Raja giving up his attempt. The following extract from the report of Sir Edward Gait, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, is interesting.

"The discontent had been smouldering for some years until in February 1897 it took the shape of open revolt by the malcontents, which culminated in a series of more or less serious dacoities and a general blackmailing of the villages in the disturbed tracts. It was

at length found necessary to depute the Deputy Commissioner of Singhbhum with an armed body of British Police to assist the Chief in restoring order and in arresting the insurgent leaders”.

These disturbances can hardly be called a freedom movement as they originated from the attempt on the part of the Raja to displace aboriginal Gaontias and culminated in pacification with the help of British police.

The Non-Co-operation Movement of 1921, the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, and the Quit India Movement of 1942 did not touch the district, even though Mahatma Gandhi's social reform had deep influence on the Harijans. Bhawani Shankar Sekhar Deo, the Ruling Chief of Gangpur, wrote in 1924:

“The Gandas still continue their abstinence movement, this is a people cognate to or the same as the Pan. After Mr. Gandhi was sentenced to imprisonment, this tribe or the most of them took a vow of abstinence from intoxicating liquors and flesh till he was released. The movement has nothing to do with non-co-operation; it is purely the religious and social side of what for want of a better term, one calls the Gandhian movement. Having taken the vow and kept it, the Gandas are now attempting to raise their social status, this being the logical and natural sequence in India of the former. Quite harmless meetings are occasionally held”.

This sensible view of the Raja of Gangpur in 1924 is quite unusual; as, to most other Rajas and other loyal citizens the name of Gandhi was like a red rag to a bull. Even though the political storms which were blowing over India, did not touch either Gangpur or Bonai, some of their subjects did leave the district to take part in the various movements. In 1927 Dwarikanath Kusum was imprisoned at Nagpur for joining the Gandhian Movement. The Salt Making Movement of 1930 in the coastal districts attracted Balabhadra Tanti who was detained at Bonai for a week. The following persons took part in the movement.

In 1921, Ghasiram Tanti, Jagan Tanti and Balabhadra Tanti were interested in the Non-Co-operation Movement of Mahatma Gandhi; but there was actually no such movement in the ex-Gangpur State. In 1930, there was no Civil Disobedience Movement as occurred elsewhere in India. But Balabhadra Tanti took part in the Salt Satyagraha in

the coastal areas of Orissa. Chhala Tanti, Ghasiram Tanti and Kendu Tanti were on their way to join the Salt Satyagraha but were arrested at Baudh and detained there for a week.

A serious agrarian movement took place in 1938 as a consequence of the enhancement of rent of the Munda tenants of north Gangpur. They were all Christians. The inspiration obviously came from Ranchi, even though the Mundas of Ranchi were paying higher rent than the Christian Mundas of Gangpur. The Raja brought two missionaries from Ranchi to pacify the Christian Mundas, but their speeches failed to produce any effect. It gradually gathered strength and ended in what is known as the Simko firing of 1939. This was purely an agrarian movement. It cannot go into an account of a freedom struggle. On February 9, 1939 a largely signed petition was submitted to the Regent Rani of Gangpur making a number of demands including abolition of Bethi and Begari. But these demands were not pressed very far. What was pressed was the enhancement of rent. Nirmal Munda, a Christian was the leader of the movement. The attempt to arrest him led to the Simko firing of 25th April 1939.

On this occasion strong representation was made by the Congress leaders of India asking for enquiry and redress etc. This was made the reason for the Congress leaders of Orissa demanding the taking over of Gangpur State by the Government. They also praised the bravery of the Mundas. However, this agrarian movement cannot be called a freedom struggle.

In 1938 under the patronage of the British Commissioner of the Chota Nagpur Division, the missionaries had brought Jaipal Singh to Ranchi to start the Jharkhand movement as a counter blast to the unexpectedly over-whelming victory of the Congress in the General Elections, 1936-37. It is not without significance that at the same time a no-rent campaign started among the Christian Mundas of the adjoining areas of ex-Gangpur State, even though the Mundas of Gangpur were paying lower rent than the Mundas of Ranchi. The source of inspiration of the movement is obvious.

In 1946 Praja Mandalas were formed in the ex-States of Bonai and Gangpur. It gradually gathered strength until the Ruler transferred power to the Government of India on the 15th December, 1947.

APPENDIX I

Tour Diary of J. R. Ouseley on Bonai, 1840.¹

Bonai was situated at a distance of two long and three ordinary marches from Keonjhar. The country was called by the name owing to its forest state in which it was, with some exception, supposed to have existed for many centuries. A small portion of the country was under cultivation although the country was particularly well-adapted to it. The *Raja Indra Deo*, a Rajput, and an elderly man had several sons, but all appeared to be in a degraded state of ignorance and depravity. The Raja experienced great difficulty in keeping his people in order, he complained of neighbours the *Rajas of Gangpur* and *Bamra* being unable to check the inroads of plundering *Thakurs* under them who visited his villages carrying off cattle and committing murders constantly. The productions were the same as those of Keonjhar, chiefly *rice*. But much could be done if taken directly under British management. The forest produce were *Hurra*, *Dhowra*, *Resin* and *Wild silk*: The wood could be applied to every purpose of architectural requisites. Some of the *Sakua* trees were of enormous size and height, and besides these there were a great variety of other superb timber. Near Bonai on the Brahmani a river about 600 ft. wide (sandy bed of 400 ft. included) was a small town with a *Garh* or *Killa* in which the Raja resided. The *Killa* was surrounded with a wet ditch and bamboo fence. At some distance from *Joreikela* on the dawk road 3 miles and 4 furlongs north, there were gold dust washing in the sands of Brahmani and the gold was reported to be excellent. Ouseley could procure a little at the market price of Rs 15 per a tola weight (but the price varied from Rs. 12 to Rs. 15). For want of leisure he could not trace up the gold to the place it was washed down from. *Cheria Paut*:—Near the *Kalapani* dawk station about 12 miles east of Bonai were the *Cheria Paut* table lands from whence rushed down one of the most beautiful waterfalls that could be imagined. The rock was *Parphyry* and ribbon Jasper capable of being cut and polished and made into the most beautiful chimney pieces and tables. Great abundance of wild animals were stated to exist on the *Cheria Paut* where were also inhabited villages. Tigers abounded, but from having so much prey in the jungle, few accidents occurred.

It could not be expected that the Raja who was unable to live respectably would go to any extent in procuring the improvement of the people. No reports of offences or crimes now made, but it was believed that many offences were overlooked for the payment of a sufficient bribe. The complaint against the post office people were as general as elsewhere.

¹ This brief report on the tour of Major Ouseley in Bonai, compiled by Dr. K. K. Basu, is taken from *Orissa Historical Research Journal* Vol. V No. 3 (October 1956) pp. 167-68.

APPENDIX II

Report on Lieutenant Colonel T. Dalton's Tour in Bonai and Gangpur during 1863-64¹

Bonai is a small hilly district lying very snugly isolated from all civilization, between Sarundah the wildest part of Singhbhoom and the Tributary Mahals of Keonjhur, Bamra and Gangpur. It is 58 miles in greatest length from east to west and 37 miles in greatest breadth from north to south, with an area of 1,297 square miles. It is for the most part a mass of uninhabited hills, only 12th of the whole being under cultivation, but about its centre, on both banks of the Brahmini river, which bisects it, there is a beautiful valley containing sites of upwards of twenty good, and for the most part coterminous villages, the houses well sheltered by very ancient mango and tamarind trees, with a due proportion of graceful palms. The tal and date appear to grow very luxuriantly in the valley, and sugar-cane thrives there. Many of the villages lie close to the river and their luxuriant groves meet and form long undulating lines of high and wellwooded bank. On all sides, at the distance of a few miles are hills, some nearly three thousand feet above the level of the valley, and thus a very pleasing and varied landscape is disclosed at every turn of the broad and rapid rockbroken stream.

The Brahmini river in its progress from Gangpore has forced its way through the barrier of hills separating the two districts, and enters the valley I am describing, after a course of eight miles through a beautiful glen, in a succession of rapids and loughs, the latter swarming with alligators. The shortest route from Gangpur to Bonai is by a rugged path through this pass; but is only practicable in the dry weather.

Bonaigurh, where the Rajah resides, is in the valley, occupying a bend of the river in latitude 28° 49' N. and longitude 85° E. being 508 feet above the sea level. It has the river on three sides, and is surrounded by a mud wall and moat, within which are about 150 houses, including those of the chief, his court-house, and jail: the village altogether, inside and outside the gurh, contains about 300 houses, but nothing that can be called a bazar. The inhabitants are the Brahmins and other retainers of the Rajah; his own family, including most of the collateral branches, legitimate and illegitimate; people

¹ The above extract is taken from Lt. Colonel T. Dalton's paper "Notes of a tour made in 1863—64 in the Tributary Mahals under the Commissioner of Chota-Nagpore, Bonai, Gangpore, Odeypore and Sirgooja" published in *Journal of the Asiatic Society* Part II, No.1 (1865) pp. 1—12.

practising trades workers in brass and pewter, potters, weavers, smiths ; and people of low caste, Gonds, Pahans, Ghassees and Domes. Ooriah is the language spoken, and the costume and customs followed are those of the Orissa provinces. This includes a lavish use of saffron in their ablutions, hair neatly dressed with silver ornaments, and a general tidy appearance. They have good features and are rather fair complexioned. The young girls, till they attain the age of puberty, are very scantily dressed. The only garment usually worn by them is a "Kopin" a scarf, round the loins and between the legs. This is national and classical, as we find from the images of the oldest temples, that it was the favourite costume of the Hindu goddesses, who thus enjoyed the full play of their limbs. The young people of both sexes are fond of adorning themselves with wreaths of bright yellow flowers.

There are 217 inhabited villages in Bonai, and from the number of houses returned by the topographical survey recently completed, the population may be estimated at fifteen thousand six hundred souls. About one half of the agricultural population is of the "Bhooya" caste or race. They are doubtless the earliest settlers, and it was from their hands that the ancestor of the present Rajpoot Rajah first obtained his insignia as chief. The Bamra and Gangpore Rajahs are reported to have in the same manner derived thier chieftainships from the Bhooya aborigines, and when a succession to the Raj takes place in any of these districts, the acknowledged head of the Bhooya clan goes through a ceremony of making over to the new chief the country and the people. The person who claims this prerogative in Bonai is titularly called "Sawunt". He holds, at the very trifling quit-rent of Rs. 18 a year, twelve villages with their hamlets, and claims to be the hereditary Dewan of Bonai, but the chief neither employs nor acknowledges him as such. There are two other similar tenures with the title of "Dhunput" and 'Mahapater', and subordinate to them are certain privileged heads of villages called Naiks. Under the Swunt, Dhunput, or Mahapater, the Subordinate officers of the Bhooya militia, all the able-bodied males of the tribe are bound at the requisition of the chief or of the Government, to turn out for service fully armed and equipped. There are no military tenures in the hands of people of any other caste. The Bhooyas thus have great power in the little state. Nor is it only in consequence of their being thus organised as a military body; I find they have also charge of the oldest temples and shrines, and discharge the duties of levites to the exclusion of Brahmins. Yet the temples

are dedicated to Hindu gods. Whatever their origin may be, the Bhooyas are now completely Hinduized. They have no peculiar language or customs of their own. In Bonai and the southern part of Gangpore they speak Ooriah. In the northern parts of Gangpore and Jushpore, Hindi. They are a dark-complexioned race, with rather high cheek-bones, but with nothing else in feature or form to distinguish them as of extraneous origin. According to their own traditions, they were once a great people in Eastern India and had a king of their own but were dispersed by invasion from the west. They are now found in all the districts between Cuttack and Behar, but they are most numerous in this and the adjoining estates, and here may be found the most civilised and respectable and the most primitive of the family. While in the low-lands, they dwell in villages, clothe themselves decently and otherwise follow the customs, adopt the manners, and, I may add the intriguing nature of the more civilised Brahminical races. In the hills of Bonai they are found as naked, as simple, as truthful and unsophisticated as the wildest of the Cole tribes. There are a great number of Bhooyas in the Singhboom district and it is said that they were driven out of the west portion of it, by the advance and spread of the Lurka Coles.

The Bhooyas call themselves 'children of the wind' 'pawun buns' this would establish their affinity to the Apes, as Hunooman is called "pawun—ka-poot", the son of the wind*.

The Bonai hills shelter some thousands of the race commonly called Coles, who all represent themselves as having at some period emigrated from Singhboom or Chota-Nagpore. They have not benefited by the change. Their brethren on the Chota-Nagpore plateau and in the plains of Singhboom are better off and better looking. The emigrants must be the most unimprovable of the race, who, finding that the old country is becoming too civilised for them, fly from the clearances they have made, hide themselves in the hillforests, and elapse into the condition of savages.

Amongst the races of Bonai yet to be noticed are the Kolitas, a very enterprising and respectable class of cultivators, that are found in these regions, Sumbulpore, and strange to say, Assam.

*They very probably formed a division in Rama's army, hence their adoption of Hunooman's pedigree, and their veneration for "Mahabir".

A very large proportion of the purely Hindu part of the Assamese population are Kolitas, and in accounting the different races that are found in that province, the antecedents of the Kolitas have always been a difficulty. They have none of the peculiarities of the Indo-Chinese stock. They are considered, in Assam, as of very pure caste, next in dignity to Kaists, and are on this account much in request amongst the higher classes as house servants. Another difficulty in Assam was to account for what was called the Bhooya dynasty, of which traces are found all through the valley, and it is recorded in their history, that the north bank of the Brahmapootra have Bishnath was known as the country of the Barra Bhooya, long subsequent to the subjugation of the districts of the southern bank by the Ahoms. It appears to me, that there is a strong reason for supposing that the purely Hindu portion of the Assamese Sudra population was originally from this part of India. There is, in idiom especially, a strong resemblance between the Assamese and Ooriah languages, and though the Ooriah written character did not take root in Assam, this may be owing to all the priestly families having been introduced from Bengal*.

The appearance of the Bonai Kolitas reminded me very much of the Assam Kolitas, and I may mention that Ram Chunder, the seventh Avatar, is the favourite object of worship with both.

Of the mineral and other resources of Bonai, I have not much to say. Iron is produced, but the hills are for the most part quite unexplored, and their riches, if they possess any, unknown. The population with so much room for expansion, does not increase. They are 83 deserted village sites, and what are now small hamlets appear to have been at one time large villages. The cause is not apparent, as the people of the more civilised class are well to do and content, and rent is very low, and as in all tributary mahals, fixed. It is Rs. 2-8 for a hull of 17 khundeeds. Nevertheless the chief tells me he is obliged to grant all manner of extraneous, indulgences to his ryots to induce them to remain.

Wild beasts are very numerous, and in their ravages lie one great difficulty that villages bordering on or in the jungles have to contend against the ryots complain not of loss of life but of the destruction of

*In a paper in the Asiatic Society's Journal for June 1848, the Assam Kolitas are described by Col. Hannay as having the high and regular features of the Hindu, and many of them with the gray eye that is frequently found amongst the Rajputs of western India.

crops. They say they have to raise grain for the beasts of the forest as well as for their own families. On this account very little cotton is cultivated, though the soil is well adapted for it.

The store of Sal timber in Bonai is immense, but the isolated and almost inaccessible position of the forests will prevent their being utilised for years to come, except for the resin, to obtain which, so many noble trees are girdled and killed. Together with the Sal, are found vast quantities of the Asan tree on which the tusser silk-worm feeds and a considerable quantity of the wild tusser is exported from Bonai, but it is not much cultivated as the mass of the population look upon it as an impure or unorthodox occupation and non but people of the lowest castes, the Domes, Ghassees, Phans and Gonds practice it. (The Gonds are out of their element in Bonai and are thus classed).

We meet with no Rajput or Khettree family except that of the chief. Nothing can be more absurd than the tradition handed down to account for this possession of power by one Khetree family over an alien population. The Nagbunsi family of Chota-Nagpore admit that they are sprung from child found by and brought up in a "Moondah" *family, and that this child was made chief of the whole Moondah race. It is I think highly probable that the chiefs of Bonai and Gangpore were originally Bhooyas who becoming leaders of their people and Rajahs, and allying themselves by marriages with other Rajahs were gradually admitted into the fraternity of Rajpoots or Khettrees. It may be said indeed of both of them, that the inter-marriage with families of better certified khettree descent has not yet obliterated their Bhooya lineaments, for they bear a very remarkable likeness to that race in feature.

GANGPORE

This is a very extensive estate lying between Chota-Nagpore, Jushpore, Oodeypore, Sumbulpore, Bamra, Bonai and Singhbhum. It is kidney-shaped. Its greatest length from east to west is about 97 miles, and in breadth from north to south it varies from 15 to 50 miles. The topographical survey of the estate is not yet complete and its area cannot therefore be computed with accuracy, but I estimate it at double the size of Bonai or about 3,000 square miles. Of this area not more than a tenth is under cultivation.

The Sunkh and Keol rivers from the plateau of Chota-Nagpore, unite near Gurjun in Gangpore and form the Brahmini. The Eeb, another river of some magnitude, flows through Gangpore south on

*Kole

its way to the Mahanuddee. The ordinary level of Gangpore is about 700 feet above the sea ; the highest hill yet noted by the topographical surveyor is 2,240 not much above the general level of the Chota-Nagpore plateau. The descent, however, from the plateau to the ordinary level of Gangpore is gradual, and there is a tolerable road. As in Bonai, the majority of the population are Bhooya, and they were no doubt the first settlers. All the Zemindars under the Rajah are of that race, and hold their estates as fiefs at low fixed rates and terms of service. Consequently the Rajah is under the necessity of adopting a conciliatory policy towards some of them at least. There are generally one or two in opposition, but fortunately for the lord Paramount the great vassals are too jealous of each other readily to combine. The largest estate is held by the vassal who bears the title of Mahapater. Its border on Singhbhoom, extends to the Brahmini river and comprises 100 villages for which the Mahapater pays only Rs. 200. This part of Gangpore was at one time more densely populated than it is at present, but all the more peaceably disposed of the old inhabitants including it is said, several colonies of Brahmins, were slaughtered or driven out of the country by the Lurka Coles. To the south, another great vassal, under the title of Gurhoutea, holds the Hamzeer estate, consisting of 84 villages, and an unlimited run of hill and forest. Gungadhur the Gurhoutea, boasts that he can travel twenty-four miles in a direct line over his own ground without seeing a human habitation, all through hill and forest, which, united to enormous tracts of hill and forest of Raigurh and Sambalpoore, forms perhaps the most extensive uninhabited region in all-India. The third of these vassals has his estate on the north-west of Gangpore and holds the passes into the country from Jushpore and Chhota-Nagpore. This estate is in advance of the passes, and looks as if it had been filched from Jushpore, to which from the geographical features it ought to belong.

The chief is of the 'Seekur' family and claims connectionship with the Rajah of Pachete. His ancestor the first Rajah of Gangpore, was, we are told, invited by the Bhooyas to take charge of their country ; from which, it is said, they had just expelled a Rajpoot family called the "Kaiserbuns", but as I stated above, I think it more probable that the ruling family are descended from the original Bhooya chiefs. The traditions, assigning to them a nobler birth, are founded on the supposition that the Rajpoots or Cshetryas were the only class qualified to rule, that where there was no one of this class over a nation or a people, "the Guddee" was vacant, and a Cshetrya had only to step in and take

it. The Cshetryas must have wandered about like knights-errant of old, in search of these vacant Guddee, as we do not find in the country any descendants of the followers whom they must have had, if they came in other fashion to oust the native chiefs and seize the country.

It was admitted to me that until these Tributary Mahals came under British rule, a human sacrifice was offered every third year before the shrine of Kali at Suadeeh, where the present Rajah resides. The same triennial offering was made in Bonai and Bamra, Bhooya priests officiating at all three shrines. This fact appears to me to be confirmatory of the theory that the Hindus derived from the aboriginal races the practice of human sacrifices.

In the above named districts, the practice of widows going "Suttee" was also generally followed in the family of the chiefs and in Brahmin families, up to a recent date ; many of the grand mothers of the present generation of chiefs and Brahmins having so distinguished themselves. One man was pointed out to me as having lost his mother by the rite of suttee. He would not say 'lost' ; he no doubt regards her as canonized by the act.

A rather romantic story of a suttee that occurred some fifty years ago in Gangpore is related.

A Brahmin took a dislike to a girl he had just married, and turned her out of door, a wedded maid. She took refuge with her parents who were poor, and who soon after died, leaving her destitute ; then she wandered from village to village subsisting on alms and leading a wretched widowed life. Her husband married a second time, and sons and daughters were born to him and grew up about him, and in the fullness of years he died. His second wife had preceded him, so this corpse was placed alone on the funeral pile, and the torch was about to be applied to it, when a poor emaciated and meanly clad female stepped forward, and as the first, the faithful and only surviving wife of the deceased, claimed the right of suttee. Her request was complied with. Bathed, anointed, clothed, and adorned with flowers like a bride she ascended the pile and clinging to the corpse of the husband who had so cruelly discarded her, and for the first time in her life pressing her lips to his, his flames arose and their ashes were mingled together !

There is no doubt still a strong sentiment in favour of suttee in the Tributary Mehals, and States under native government. Its prohibition has not been long enforced in the eastern parts of Rewa. Not long ago, in that territory, on the death of a Brahmin, his widow, notwithstanding the prohibition, was so vehement in her desire to join her

husband on the pyre, that her relatives as the only method of restraining her, locked her up. When the ceremony was over they proceeded to release her, but found that her spirit too had fled. She had attained her object, as my informant declared, by a special interposition of providence in her behalf.

Proceeding north-west from Nugra and the banks of the Brahmini river, you enter the Nuagurh division of Gangpore and come to Laingurh near the confluence of several streams, which was once the capital and promises to be so again, as the present Raja is just now building there. It is very prettily situated, and the gurh on a little hill in the centre of the valley has a commanding position, but I fear it is not a healthy site, from the number of enlarged spleens and cases of skin-disease I observed amongst the people. There are many fine old village sites in Nuagurh, now occupied by impoverished squatters, mostly Oraons from Chota-Nagpore.

The old inhabitants have died off or removed to more civilised and securer regions further south. The shabby huts of the squatters huddled together under the shade of the grand old trees, the monuments of the more civilised race that preceded them, look as much out of place as mud cabins in a street of palaces. The Rajah and other Zamindars give these new settlers, when they first come, three years of absolute immunity from demands of every kind. In the fourth year they are called on to pay a light assessment. It is difficult to describe on what principle it is imposed, but in old settled villages of Oraons it does not amount, including rent and contribution, to more than Rs. 1—8 per house or family. The soil in this part of Gangpore appears very fertile, and there is still available much of the slightly swampy rich looking land, that gives the best crops of rice. I find "Sirosha" now in flower growing in great luxurians. It is sold here at one maund for the rupee.

The Coles are evidently a good pioneering race, fond of new clearings and the luxuriant and easily raised crops of the virgin soil, and have constitutions that thrive on malaria ; so it is perhaps in the best interest of humanity and cause of civilisation that they be kept moving by continued Aryan population. Ever armed with bow, arrows and pole-axe, they are prepared to do battle with the beasts of the forest, holding even the king of the forest, the "Bun Rajah", that is the tiger, in little fear. Mixed up with them are members of the Kherria tribe, who are as yet a mystery to me, and I will say nothing more about them till I learn more. I am assured that they have no affinity with either Moondahs or Oraons, i. e., with those who are generally called Coles.

Borgaon, near the Mahabeer hill on the borders of Bamra, is the largest village Gangpore possesses on this side. It contains 160 houses—20 of Brahmins, 20 of 'Telis' oil-pressers, 22 of various Hindu Ooriah Castes, and the remainder Oraons and Kherriahs. The two latter coming in contact with Brahmins, have at once succumbed and become their farm labourers. It appears to make little difference in the condition of Oraon emigrants, whether they are farm servants or farmers on their own account ; they have the same wretched huts, scanty apparel, and generally uncared-for appearance, as if they had in despair given up all ideas of rendering themselves attractive ; but the wonder is that they remain in this dependent position, when they can get land on such easy terms and become farmers themselves.

The village pays direct to the Rajah a rent of Rs. 34, magun or contribution Rs. 34 !, and 64 maunds of rice. The price of rice is from one maund to two maunds for the rupee. On births, deaths and marriages in the Rajah's family, the villagers are called on for additional contributions, and when that family, as it is just now, is a large one, the extra charge comes to from Rs. 30 to 40 a year. The total demand is therefore about Rs. 1.60 a year, and from the extent of land under cultivation, I do not think this would amount to more than three annas a beegah on the cultivated area. It is evidently a very old village site, surrounded by extensive groves of mangoes, and with several tanks of very insalubrious water over grown with water lillies. Hills are seen on all sides, but the most remarkable feature in the land-scape is the great Mahabeer hill ; a mass of rock tilted up, and shewing towards Borgaon, an uneven wall of disrupted ends, forming a cliff of fantastic outline, nearly 2,000 feet high.

The tutelary deity of this hill is favourite object of worship with the Bhooyas, and is more or less revered by all the country. The top of the hill or rock being difficult of access, Mahabeer has studied the convenience of his votaries, and entered an appearance down below in the form of a stone, in a sacred grove or 'Surna' at the foot of the hill. The idea of a 'Surna' is pretty and poetical. It is or ought to be a fragment of the primitive forest left when the first clearance was made, as a refuge for the sylvan deities whom the clearing might have disturbed. The best villages and most thriving portion of the population in Gangpore are found on both banks of the Eeb river, as we approach the boundaries of Sumbulpore. Here the very industrious and respectable looking caste called Agureahs are first met with. They are found in Gangpore, Sumbulpore, Raegurh, Raipore and Ruttenpore. They

number about 5,000 in the three first places named. According to their tradition, they are called Agureahs from having, ages ago, come from Agra.

They were a proud Cshetrya or Khettree family a stiff-necked generation, and refusing, when making an obeisance, to bow their heads, the Raja lowered some of them summarily by cutting them off. They therefore left Agra and wandered south through Central India till they came to Sumbulpore, and eventually settled in these regions. Acquiring lands, and determining to devote themselves entirely to the tilling of the soil, they divested themselves of their "paitas" making them over to the Brahmins, and no longer styling themselves or being styled Khettrees they became known as Aguriahs.

They bury their dead, and for this departure, from the usual custom of Hindus, they can assign no specific cause, but that they gave up the practice of incremation when they resigned their pretensions to be esteemed Khettrees. They nevertheless now profess to be vishnoovis divided into two denominations, 'Ramanundyas' and 'Kubeer Punthees'. The vishnoovi doctrines they have probably taken up, since their migration to tracts bordering on Orissa and approximating the great fane of Juggernath. They say they gave up the worship of Kali when they resigned their "Paitas" and took to the plough. It is probable that they were Boodhists, obliged to leave the Gangetic provinces for refusing to conform to Brahminism.

Their physique decidedly supports the tradition of their Khettree extraction : they are distinguished amongst the dark, coarse-featured aborigines of this country, as a tall, fair, well-made and handsome race, resembling the Rajpoots in every thing but swagger. That went with the 'Paitas' as a farewell offering to Kali. The women, who are not very jealously secluded, have good features and figures, and a neat and cleanly appearance.

The latter are subjected to no field labour, their sole business being to look after the domestic arrangements, to gin cotton and to spin. They do not weave. Their spun thread is made over to the weavers, who are paid in kind for their labour. Their villages, laid out in streets, are comparatively well kept, and their own houses in these villages substantial, clean, and comfortable. Munguspore, near the Sumbulpore boundary is, I think, the largest. It contains 200 houses, those of the Aguriahs occupying the centre of the village surrounded by huts of

Coles and others of the primitive races, whose services they have secured as their farm labourers, and who are not allowed to hold lands, but repaid for their labour at the rate of three seers of dhan per diem, and a modicum of clothing doled out annually.

The soil in this part of Gangpore is exceedingly rich, producing magnificent crops of sirosha, sugar-cane and tobacco, besides the staple rice. The plants of the country tobacco grown by the Aguriahs are the finest I ever saw, and they grow more cotton than they require for their own use, though they do not stint themselves in raiment. I am certain the soil and climate is well suited for the finer kinds of cotton.

Proceeding north up the Eeb from this, the Arabia Felix of Gangpore, we came again upon untidy Bhooya villages, and their patches of cultivation, separated by miles of the monotonous Sal forests, and there is no change in the features of the country or the population, till we come to the estate of Bhugwan Manjee, which, as above mentioned, does not appear as if it belonged to Gangpore, as it is separated by a range of hills, and approached by a very narrow and difficult pass. We are still amongst Bhooyas, but here they speak Hindi instead of Ooriah, and the peculiarities of Ooriah costume and decoration are rarely met with.

APPENDIX III

Copy of Sanad granted to the Chief of Gangpur State in 1899.

Whereas the status and position with reference to the British Government of the Tributary Mahal of Gangpur in Chota Nagpur has hitherto been undefined, and doubts have from time to time arisen with regard thereto ; His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council is pleased to grant to you, Raja Raghunath Sikhar Deo, the following sanad, with a view to assuring you that the British Government will continue, as long as you remain loyal to the crown and abide by the conditions of the sanad, and of your other engagements with the British Government, to maintain you in the position and privileges which you have heretofore enjoyed or which are now conferred upon you :—

SANAD

I. You, Raja Raghunath Sikhar Deo, son of Lal Pitambar Sikhar Deo, are hereby formally recognised as the Feudatory Chief of the Gangpur State and you are permitted, as heretofore, to generally administer the territory of the said Gangpur State, subject to the conditions hereinafter prescribed. In like manner your heirs and successors shall become entitled to your privileges and liable to your obligations ; provided that no succession shall be valid until it has been recognised by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council.

II. You shall, during the next twenty years, pay a tribute or pesh-kash of rupees one thousand two hundred and fifty, and this amount may be revised thereafter, if His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council should so direct. Your successors shall pay nazarana to the British Government on succession in accordance with the general rules on that subject for the time being in force.

III. You shall conform in all matters concerning the preservation of law and order and the administration of justice generally, within the limits of your State, to the instructions issued from time to time for your guidance by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. You will appoint such officers, and pay them such emoluments as, on full consideration of the circumstances and of such representations as you may wish to make, may, from time to time, appear necessary to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, for the proper hearing of cases and administration of justice in your State. It will also be competent to you to nominate for appointment by His Honour as Honorary Magistrates or Munsifs such other persons as you may wish to be so appointed from time to time.

IV. You shall deliver up any offender from British or other territory who may take refuge in your State. You shall aid British officers who may pursue criminals into your territory, and, in the event of offenders from your own State taking refuge in British or other territory, you shall make a representation on the matter to the authorities concerned.

V. You shall administer justice fairly and impartially to all alike.

VI. You shall recognise and maintain the rights of all your people, and you shall on no account oppress them or suffer them to be in any way oppressed.

VII. You shall levy no tolls or duties of any kind on grain, merchandise, or other articles passing into, or out of, or through your State without the permission of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.

VIII. You shall consult the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur in all important matters of administration, and comply with his wishes. The settlement and collection of the land revenue, the imposition of taxes, the administration of justice, arrangements connected with excise, salt and opium, the concession of mining, forest and other rights, disputes arising out of any such concession, and disputes in which other States are concerned, shall be regarded as specially important matters, and in respect to them you shall at all times conform to such advice as the Commissioner may give you.

IX. The right to catch elephants in your State is granted to you as a personal concession and as a matter of favour, but this concession is liable to withdrawal whenever it may seem desirable either on account of abuse or for other reasons, and it will not necessarily be granted to your successor.

X. All questions as to boundaries between your State and British or other territory will be dealt with by the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur or such other officer as the Government of India or His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal may appoint, either generally, or specially in that behalf, with two assessors, one of whom is to be nominated by yourself, unless in any such case you should prefer that the question should be decided by such Commissioner or other officer alone in which case the question shall be referred for his decision accordingly.

Calcutta, the 8th March 1899.

CURZON OF KEDLESTON,
Viceroy and Governor-
General of India.