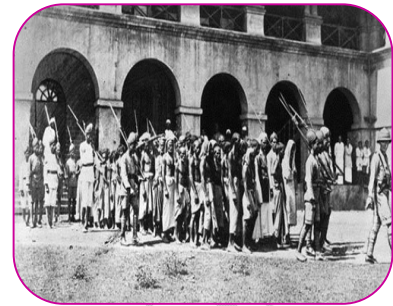




## HISTORICIZING MODERN POLICE SYSTEM IN THE PRINCELY STATE OF ORISSA UNDER THE BRITISH CROWN

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### ABSTRACT

There were 562 Princely States in India before the Independence and partition of India. Out of them 24 were located in Orissa. Most of the Chiefs of these Princely States were tyrants. They led a very luxurious life by collecting heavy taxes from the subjects. Generally, Rajas did not maintain regular police stations till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Due to the absence of efficient and well organized police system, crime was on the increase. The heinous crimes like dacoits and murder were frequent. Even the Rajas were indulging in the crimes of very serious nature. But since were improved after the reorganization of police in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A resume of such improvements in the police system is presented in the following paper.

**KEYWORDS:** organized police system , police administration , partition of India.

### INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the police administration in the Princely State of Orissa was in highly unsatisfactory. The police had little reputation either for efficiency or for honesty. There were frequent complaints regarding the corruption and extortion of the police. The oppression of the police was an important cause of the several popular risings that occurred in the Princely States of Orissa in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In his report on the village watch of the lower provinces of Bengal in 1866, Meneile mentioned, "No separate police staff was stationed by the state, no regular police station was there either. The chief continued to be police authorities. They were held responsible for the prevention of thefts, dacoity and other crimes, the apprehension of criminals and people of bad conduct and the restoration of stolen property.<sup>1</sup> The police administration, thus being the sole responsibility of the chief, he managed it with the help of the same executive and revenue officers, each remaining responsible to his immediate superior for the protection of the area allotted to him. The Dewan remained at the top to supervise the police administration. Under him the Santaras at Pragana level, Pradhans, Sarbarakars in the village level worked as ex-officio police officers. Their main duty was to protect the lives and properties of the people and in the discharge of this duty they were assisted by rural police."<sup>2</sup>

As mentioned by Hunter, till 1872 the Rajas of the Princely States did not maintain regular police stations and police duties were performed by the Paiks or Cultivators holding on a tenure of military service. However, a regular police force was organized in the 2 states under the Government Management, i.e. Angul and Banki. A police force was also maintained in the Khandmals. The total force thus maintained in the tracts under British Supervision in 1872 were 1 Superintendent, 2 first class and 28 second class subordinate officers and 180 foot police constables. There was an average of 1 policeman to every 8.2 square miles of area or one to every 851 of the population in these tracts.<sup>3</sup>

In former days, the defence of the state and maintenance of law and order were performed by the Paiks who were maintained by the Rajas through the system of jagir. They were the local militia who

performed military service in times of war and during peace time they discharged certain police duties in maintaining order in their respective villages. They usually enjoyed rent free lands or jagirs for their maintenance.<sup>4</sup> Besides, the Rajas did not maintain regular police stations and the police duties were performed by the Paiks.<sup>5</sup> Thus formerly, the Paiks or feudal militia served as the representatives of the law and order imposed by the chiefs. The employment of Paiks was confined to guards' duty at the chiefs residence, escort duty appearance on occasions of pomp and ceremony. Thus, it had become necessary to introduce regular police force in their place. So the Paiks were greatly reduced in number and their grants of land were gradually resumed.<sup>6</sup>

In the feudatory states, the vast majority of the rural police consisted of Choukidars and they were also remunerated with the service lands like Paiks. They formed the link between the regular police and the people. The Chowkidars mostly belonged to Pan castes. They attended regularly on fixed dates at the police stations and were gradually developed into a useful subsidiary aid to the police.<sup>7</sup> The village Chowkidars, locally known as Chhatias, performed a number of police duties in the village level. They constituted the backbone of the rural police. In most of the feudatory states, the Chowkidars were under the police department. But in Nilgiri, they were under their Sarbarakars, whom they assisted in the collection of revenue throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1903, the Chhatias or the Chowkidars in Nilgiri were placed under the police department and were required to submit weekly reports on the law and order situation, the commission of crimes, information about birth and death in their respective areas to the Sadar police station.<sup>8</sup> Compared with the area and population there was 1 village watchman to 3.47 square miles of the area and one to every 499 persons of the population.<sup>9</sup>

There were constant complaints about the lawlessness of the village police and their utter inability to respond to the demands made upon them by the regular police. From a practical point of view they spent their time in looking after their jagir leads granted to them instead of salary. Further, the difficulty was experienced in punishing a Chowkidar who was paid by land, for misconduct. Under circumstance, some states like Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Nayagarh and Dhenkanal took steps to pay the Chowkidars in cash instead of by jagir lands.<sup>10</sup> This led to the considerable increase in the efficiency of the village police in those states. But in the rest of the states village police remained in the miserable condition.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, series of popular risings occurred in the states of Orissa, because the traditional police consisting of Paiks were unable to deal with the situations effectively. Thus, it caused the problem of law and order in the states and it became a matter of serious concern on the part of the British authorities. They exerted pressure on the chiefs to reorganize and strengthen their police system with a view to meet the emergence arising out of the popular movements. Hence, the chiefs undertook the pattern of the police system prevalent in British Orissa.

As a reformative measure, after 1880, the policy of establishing thanas or police stations headed by Sub-Inspectors was followed in most states. Considerable attention was paid to the proper housing of the police. Some excellent police stations and barracks had been established. A net work of police stations and out-posts, manned by officers trained at the police training colleges of the neighbouring provinces was opened in the state of Mayurbhanj by 1905.<sup>11</sup> In Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj, European officers were in charge of the police force. The chiefs used to send their police officers to the police training college at Ranchi, Bhagalpur and Hazaribag for a course of instruction.<sup>12</sup> When the states were under direct management of the British police officers used to be deputed from the British districts to help in the police administration of the States.<sup>13</sup> Hence onwards, the police administration in the states was to be vested in the hands of the Chief Executive Officer of the state under the general control and direction of the Commissioner and the political agent. After 1906, police officers above the rank of head constables were to be appointed, promoted, dismissed or reduced by the political agent.<sup>14</sup> There had been a great improvement in the pay of the police and there came trained and qualified officers.

As a result, in the larger states like Dhenkanal, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar, a large and well-staffed police force was maintained and the police administration was very similar to that followed in British Orissa.

In the smaller states, the police force was generally adequate and suitable to the requirements of the states.<sup>15</sup>

The work of the police in the states was comparatively light, because the states were free from major crimes. The prevalent offences were small scale burglary and theft, cattle lifting, stealing of rice and paddy and other minor mischiefs. Heinous offences and dacoities were rare in most of the states.<sup>16</sup> Another important development during the period was that, police of different states co-operated with each other for connected action. This was necessary to detect and catch hold of culprits of one state who fled and hid himself in another state. With this object in view, Regular Inter-State Co-Operation Meetings were held. Inquiry slips as to the movements of bad characters were regularly circulated. And a set of mutual extradition rules had been adopted. As a result it was no longer easy for the criminal of one state to find a secure hiding in a neighbouring state.<sup>17</sup>

The British authorities realized the necessity of formulating certain model rules to be adopted in the Princely States. The chiefs were advised to follow these guidelines in regulating their police administration in respective states.<sup>18</sup> In spite of so many reforms, in most of the feudatory states, corruption and inefficiency had been a part of the police system due to low salary and the lack of the knowledge and training necessary for their work. The record of detection of crime or recovery of stolen property was very poor and investigation was not always done with competence.<sup>19</sup>

In 1907-08, the management of the department of police of the major states like Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Patna and Kalahandi was each under a Superintendent, whereas in other states the Inspector of Police was in charge. The posts of Superintendent were usually held by the British Officers. The officials who assisted the Superintendent or Inspectors were Sub-Inspectors, Assistant Sub-Inspectors, Havildars, Writers and Constables. The state of Dhenkanal maintained a military police squad with a Commander-in-Chief from 1921. In 1914-15, a Deputy Superintendent of the British Police had assumed charge of the state police. He was under the immediate control and supervision of the Superintendent. In 1942, the post of the Inspector-General of Police-cum-Police Adviser was created and filled up in the state of Mayurbhanj. During the court of wards administration, police officers used to be deputed from the British districts to help the police administration of the concerned states.<sup>20</sup>

In due course the subordinate police officers were relieved of their multifarious duties which had handicapped their regular work in the past. Side by side educated men who had in many cases received training at state expense at the police training college at Hazaribagh were posted. Efforts were made to raise the standard of literacy of the constables. There was a special primary school for constables in Dhenkanal state.<sup>21</sup> The Head Constables of the states were sent from time to time to undergo training at the Nathnagar training school. The ruling chiefs of Dhenkanal and Talcher took much interest in the improved drill and discipline of their forces. In Dhenkanal, the police force received training in such things as sham fights, signaling and cavalry drill.<sup>22</sup> The police of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Kalahandi were given regular musketry training from the year 1925. It was followed in other states like Dhenkanal and Gangpur. The punishments were awarded to the police personnel for breaches of discipline. At the same time the police officers concerned were suitably rewarded in cases of instances of good detection. Trained men were gradually replacing the old type of officers who were unable to deal with more up-to-date methods of criminals.<sup>23</sup> Subsequently, the people placed greater confidence in the police and crime was more satisfactory reported.

The Chowkidars in the village performed the duty of village police. Their duty was to report commission of offences, movement of professional criminals and arrival and departure of strangers. They also helped the police in the detection of crimes. They used to submit in the police station every week statistics of birth and death in the villages. The Chowkidars had different denomination like Kolo, Kotwal, Mahanayakos, Gondas, JHankars, etc. Gradually, the status of the Chowkidar was improved. He was given uniform at regular intervals and a fixed allotment of jagir lands. However, 5 acres of land was fixed as regular jagir for a Chowkidar. Prompt report of crime, movements of daxis, out breaks of epidemics or cattle disease

were encouraged and adequately rewarded in some states.<sup>24</sup> Besides, steps were taken in many states to provide an adequate grant in each case during the settlement operations.<sup>25</sup>

Rewards were granted to the Chowkidars more freely for good work. In many cases, the Chowkidars had to wait for months before they received their rewards.<sup>26</sup> In the state of Mayurbhanj, Chowkidars were paid in cash from the Chowkidari tax from the year 1908. Mayurbhanj was the only state where the ruler had introduced a paid system sustained by local assessment fashioned after the Bengal system.<sup>27</sup> There were several Chowkidars in the states like Bonai and Patna who had neither land nor did they get any such payment. They clung to their duties because of the position of being a Chowkidar and of the bare allurements of a dress uniform symbolizing some authority and also of a few paddy shares obtained at the harvest from villages they served.<sup>28</sup>

Crimes like burglary, theft and dacoity were common and they functioned in number from year to year. Good harvest often showed a decrease in the incidence of crimes while failure of crops showed an increase. The murder was committed mostly among the Adivasis who were less sophisticated and preferred immediate revenge to taking recourse to police and court. Burglary was a common crime. Professional criminals were mostly responsible for this form of crime. The modus operandi were wall-cutting and lock-breaking. The stolen of cash, clothes, utensils and jewellery were common.<sup>29</sup> The dacoities of serious nature occurred occasionally. The police of states succeeded to a great extent in reducing dacoity. The cattle thefts were common and continued to be a nuisance in many of the states. The concerted action by the forces of different states did much in checking this crime.<sup>30</sup>

The system of co-operative meetings between the police of different states and of neighbouring British districts was introduced to detect the criminals hiding in different places. In 1925 the ruling chief of Kalahandi said that the absence of dacoities and the non-existence of organized gangs of criminals was due to close co-operation with the police of neighbouring districts.<sup>31</sup> Surveillance of dacoits or bad characters was given increased attention. Hence, system of night patrol had been introduced to check the occurrence of serious crimes like murder, dacoity and robbery.<sup>32</sup> From the year 1914 candidates were sent annually to the Central Criminal Bureau at Bankipore to be trained as experts in verifying finger impressions.<sup>33</sup> The ruling chief of Kalahandi continued the process of bringing to headquarters isolated criminals from the interior. Many of them were provided with work at Bhawanipatna and it resulted in checking the crime in the state.<sup>34</sup>

In order to help in the investigation of crime, Criminal Investigating Department was created in the state of Mayurbhanj in 1939 and it was manned by one Sub-Inspector, three Assistant Sub-Inspectors, Five Writer Constables and Six Constables.<sup>35</sup> In 1940, a temporary force of two Sub-Inspectors, one Assistant Sub-Inspector, the Havildars and Sixty-six Constables was created to combat the smuggling of food-grains from the state of Mayurbhanj to the border provinces of West Bengal and Bihar. Despite this measure, the number of smuggling cases that were detected during 1947 was 52.<sup>36</sup>

The Pans were branded as a criminal caste and to them were attributed the dacoities and highway robberies committed in Talcher and Dhenkanal states. Prior to the abolition of human sacrifice, they carried on a profitable trade in kidnapping the children and selling them to Kandhas to be killed to be as 'Meriah'. In 1923, the Kothagarh system of the detection of Pans at night was introduced in the states of Talcher, Dhenkanal, Nayagarh, Khandapara and Daspalla. According to this system, the village headman forced the Pans to sleep in one place in order to keep watch over them at night.<sup>37</sup> It was abolished in Nayagarh and Khandapara during the year, 1925-26. It was abolished also in Dhenkanal with the exception of one village which had a large population of Pan criminals. It was abolished in Daspalla except in the case of those Pans who were active criminals.<sup>38</sup>

From the above analysis it is inferred that although the administration of police was far from satisfactory during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it was reorganized and improved from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which helped a lot for the detection of culprits, reduction of crime and corruption.

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