

ART. XXV.—*Extracts from a Report on Chota Nagpore.* By
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[*Read February 6, 1841.*]

THE pergunnah of Chota Nagpore is about ninety-five miles long and eighty broad, and is bounded on the north by the pergunnah of Ramghur, to the south by Gangpore and Singbhoom, to the east by the zillah of Jungle Mohauls, and to the west by Sirgooja. A large portion of the pergunnah is uncultivated, and its aspect hilly and jungle; but there are parts highly productive and well peopled, such as Loadugga, Pitonia, Burkaghur, Govindpore, Tamar, &c., &c., the soil of which places is extremely rich and fertile; and owing to the rain which frequently falls in these parts, and the general humidity of the atmosphere, the ground produces the most abundant crops without the fostering aid of irrigation, and often in seasons when they fail altogether in the neighbouring pergunnahs. The climate, from the setting in of the rains until about the middle of December, is extremely unhealthy; indeed, to the inhabitants of other parts of the country who may be compelled by business to journey into and sojourn in the pergunnah at that season, it may be accounted deadly.

The former history of this district is involved in obscurity; official records throw no light on it, nor is there an inhabitant who can give an account of it antecedent to its subjection by the ancestors of the present family; it is vaguely stated, however, to have been parcelled out into petty chiefships, governed by the rajas of the *Cole Rucksul* and *Ronsaughur* tribes. It is now divided into forty-four pergunnahs of greater or lesser magnitude, and is computed to contain about 5130 villages.

The account of the origin of the present family is involved in fable: tradition states their descent from the Nágavansís, or serpent race, mentioned in the *Mahábhárata*; and they are stated as having come from Benares. Their ensign is a flag with three snakes; and a serpent temple still exists in Nagpore, which the raja visits at the period of the *Dasahrá*; the worship of Durgah and Lakshmi is, however, the prevailing religion. The first of the rajas, of whom a chronological list is preserved, was *Pun Mutukraj*, accounted to have been the son of the serpent Pandrak. This person is stated to have brought the whole of the pergunnahs under his subjection somewhere about the samvat year 1713, and to have obtained from the emperor of Delhi

the title of Maharájá Chhatradhári. From that period to the accession of the present rajah is reckoned 167 years.

Maharájá Jagannáth Sahi Deva, the present rájá, succeeded to the raj about four years ago, and is about twenty-six years of age : he appears of a mild disposition, and seems disposed to listen to good advice. Like the generality of persons, however, in his situation, he evinces neither talents nor inclination for business, and leaves the management of his affairs to his dewan and other officers. Of late he has made a change in his ministerial servants, having displaced Dewan Bisoaram, a man who had long been the confidential servant of his family, and appointed to the situation a Brahman named Jooram Guru, to whose care he has entrusted the interests of his zemindari.

The revenue which the raja derives from the jagirdars, according to a statement delivered into the hands of the magistrate in 1827, amounted to 3,38,077 rupees; independent of which he possesses the pergunnah of Tooreo, and a number of valuable Bandhar villages; and I consider I speak within bounds in stating his income from these sources at 80,000 rupees per annum, independent of abwabs.

Besides these sources of revenue, he receives money as nuzzerana, under the denomination of *Bundeapun*, whenever he bestows a jagir, or confirms the sunnud to heirs of deceased jagirdars. This sum not frequently amounts to 1000 or 1500 rupees, and is regulated according to the number, extent, and value of the villages specified in the grant. The new dewan is inclined to set up a claim on the part of his master, to recover the greatest part of the jagirs, under the plea that the word "Bundeapun" implies mortgage, and that the monies have been more than repaid out of the usufruct of the lands. When, however, it is considered that no such claim for recovery has been brought forward by any of the present raja's predecessors, and that the word Bundeapun is found inserted even in those sunnuds containing these words, it is impossible to acknowledge the correctness of such a construction.

Another source of revenue is the sale of titles: the raja, assuming the power of a sovereign prince, has not hesitated to confer the titles of raja, koer, thakur, manki, &c., &c., for a pecuniary consideration. About six months ago the title of rajah was bestowed on Thakur Hari Sing of pergunnah Burradah, and the raja received a nuzzerana of 1000 rupees on the occasion.

On the raja's accession to the raj, a collection of one rupee is made from every village throughout the pergunnah; this is called

Sihak Kharch. On his marriage likewise, a similar collection is levied, termed *Haldiyapun*. Whenever the *raja* has to perform a pilgrimage or a journey to visit the magistrate, or is pressed by the collector for revenue, in short, whenever his necessities are pressing, every village in the *pergunnah* is called upon to send in its quota to enable the *raja* to meet such exigencies. Thus under the terms *mandid* and *mangan*, it is impossible to say what the *raja's* officers collect from the villagers, upon whom the burden of furnishing the supplies principally falls. Under such a system of feudalism, giving rise and colour to every species of extortion and plunder, it is not to be wondered at that the population of the province is so limited when compared with the extent of the area.

Six subordinate *pergunnahs* are incorporated with Chota Nagpore, viz., Tamar, Buruda, Raio, Bundoo, Salee, and Bhurwa. How or when these *pergunnahs* became dependent on the *raja* of Chota Nagpore I cannot ascertain, but it would appear that for a long time the dependence was little more than nominal. It was not until the country came into the British possession that their *rajahs* were permanently and actually incorporated with Chota Nagpore. The revenue which these *rajahs* pay at present to the *raja* of Nagpore, was fixed by Major Crawford in 1840 *Samvat*, and is as follows:—The *raja* of Tamar possesses about 185 villages, and pays as *Malguzari* 2660 rupees; *raja* of Raio 83 villages, pays 1500 rupees; *raja* of Bundoo 88 villages, pays 705 rupees; *raja* of Salee 87 villages, pays revenue 847 rupees; *raja* of Buruda 255 villages, pays 1462 rupees; *thakur* of Bhurwa 29 villages, pays 846 rupees. The *raja* of Chota Nagpore has no rights in these *pergunnahs*, saving the revenue payable to him, and thus these *rajahs* may be considered in the light of *Talukdars*. The *rajahs*, however, still acknowledge the *raja* of Chota Nagpore as their feudal chief; and on the death of a *raja*, his successor waits on the *raja* of Nagpore, pays homage, and presents a considerable *nuzerana*, generally 1000 rupees, and receives the title from him.

The same feudal rights and customs prevalent in Chota Nagpore proper are exercised by these *rajahs*. Of the personal character of these chiefs much cannot be said in praise,—they are wholly illiterate, and for the greater part utterly ignorant of the most common affairs of life. On asking any question concerning their country, reference was invariably made to the *dewan* for information, to whose management they entrust everything.

In times prior to the period when these provinces became subject to the British government, the *rajahs* and independent chiefs of border-

ing districts were continually engaged in predatory and petty warfare; these invasions and intestine dissensions were so frequent, and the ravages committed so great, that it became necessary for the heads of the contending parties to contrive some method of keeping in a constant state of readiness and attendance a sufficient number of followers, for the purpose not only of defending themselves against sudden enterprises, but with the view also of possessing the power of making reprisals on their neighbours.

The plan adopted by the rajas that they might always have a number of partisans ready at a moment's notice, gave rise to the now long established custom of bestowing lands in jagir,—a feudal tenure, the very counterpart to those engagements which existed to so great an extent in Europe during the middle ages. Although, from the nature of these feudal tenures, jagirs were originally granted solely in consideration of military services, yet services of a civil and religious nature were afterwards similarly rewarded at the pleasure of the superior. The number of larger jagirs was twenty-six, consisting of about 2531½ villages; these jagirs have invariably descended from father to son; and both the custom of the *pergunnah* and the practice of the courts, hold them as hereditary in the direct male line. On a jagirdar dying without male issue, the jagir generally reverts to the raja, as females in this country do not succeed to real property.

The jagirdars (with few exceptions), particularly those who possess power, have always been considered a turbulent description of people; and their dependants, although oppressed by them, do whatever they desire, from the mere habit of obedience which they have always been taught to consider due to their immediate superiors, and are frequently excited by them to plunder their neighbours.

The half-deserted villages which are frequently met with, evince the oppressive conduct of these people as landholders. On enquiring the cause of such almost universal desertion, one described it to be the *Hundeen*, or *Pachagi Tax*; which, however, had been abolished some time previous, and which in very many places the jagirdars prevented the *ticcadar* from collecting; another attributed it to the people being harassed by perpetual calls to furnish supplies to the military; but the desertion must chiefly be imputed to the conduct of the principal landholders towards their ryots, and their not granting receipts for the payment of rents, which alone opens a wide door to abuse: add to this the effects of the feudal system, which, under the most favourable circumstances, must ever act as a check to the increase of population, by damping the industry and independence of the people.

The *mankis* and *momdas*, after the *jagirdars*, are next in importance as a body of proprietors in this *pergunnah*. These people are of the *Cole* and *Bhungea* caste, and are principally confined to the *pergunnahs* of *Tamar*, *Raie*, and *Buruda*. The *mankis* and *momdas* hold their lands from the *raja* of the aforesaid *pergunnahs*, from whom they receive *begrees*, the form of their appointment, and to whom they pay a quit-rent. The *mankis* are generally holders of twelve villages, and the *momdas* of three or four; and the tenure is considered hereditary. The country in which these *mankis* and *momdas* reside is full of fastnesses, places difficult of approach and strongly fortified by nature. The *pergunnah* of *Tamar* at present is in a state of profound tranquillity, which is not likely to be disturbed.

The heads of villages in this *pergunnah* are called *Mahtons*; these men, in conjunction with the village *pujaris* called *Paons*, transact the whole of the business of the village; they make the annual settlements with the *ryots* and collect the rents; and the *Mahton* is answerable to the proprietors for the revenue due from the village.

In the month of *May*, the *mahton* and *paon* assemble the cultivators who may be willing to cultivate, and distribute amongst them their different portions of land. The *ryot* receives no *pattá* or written document; but the extent of his *jote* or field is pointed out to him generally before witnesses, on which he receives a piece of earth from the *mahton*; and this ceremony is the token of having agreed to lease the field, and is called receiving *goti*, the form of the *ryotwar* settlements in this *pergunnah*.

The rents throughout the *pergunnah* are universally paid in money, generally on three, but sometimes in four *kists*; viz., 1st *kist*, *Pancha*, in the month of *Assin*; 2nd, *Magni*, in the month of *Mugh*; 3rd, *Hakimi* in *Chait*; 4th, *Punti* in *Assar*.

The offices of *mahton* and *paon* are considered hereditary. The *mahton* is allowed by the proprietors one *pame* or two *pame* of land for his own cultivation, according to the extent of the village; besides which he receives at the period of cutting the crops, one *pakku fulás* from each *assami*. The *paon*, who is the *pujari* of the village, likewise gets a similar portion of land for his religious services in deprecating the wrath of the evil spirits with which all the villages are supposed to abound. The *pujari's* fees form the chief item in the village expenses, and sometimes amounts yearly to the sum of thirty *rupees*, for fowls, sheep, swine, &c., &c., for sacrifice; the expense generally falls on the *ryots*. The *puja* takes place three times a

year, viz., Assar, Paus, and Chait, but oftener in case of calamity occurring.

Lands considered as hereditary property of the cultivators are as follows:—

1st. Land which formerly was jungle, but which has been brought into cultivation by the labour of the ryot, is termed *boonheree-ket*, and no revenue is demandable for it.

2nd. Marshy and swampy lands brought into cultivation is called *hybut-ket*, and becomes the property of the cultivator, without being subject to the payment of revenue.

3rd. Land granted as *batkeeta* generally from one pame to one karee in quantity, the holders of which are liable to serve the proprietor as bogaries, or must find substitutes whenever the latter moves, or requires such assistance.

The land in this pergunnah is not reckoned by beegahs but by annas, pames, karies, barrees, and bands. A pame is a portion of land sufficient for sowing two or three maunds; four pames make one karee; eight karees one barree. A pame generally lets for three rupees, according to the quantity of the land. In Tamar they reckon by bands, or a portion of ground capable of receiving ten maunds of seed. When a ryot takes into his cultivation kist-shallee, or soil of the first quality, together with chira bárí, or ground near his dwelling, for garden, &c., &c., and zamin tar, or land of an inferior kind, such a jote is called *leka-ket*, for which he pays at the rate of four rupees per pame.

The ryots generally use a plough, to which two oxen are yoked. In good seasons, after defraying every expense of cultivation, rent, &c., the profit accruing to the ryot on one plough is calculated from twenty to thirty maunds. It is not the custom of the proprietor to make advances to the cultivator; should the latter require pecuniary assistance, he must have recourse to his mahajun, who advances him the necessary sum, receiving as interest one anna per rupee. If seed is advanced the ryot must repay his mahajun at the end of the year double what he borrowed, viz., for one maund borrowed he must return two. The custom of cultivating villages by *pai-khust* ryots is not frequent in this pergunnah.

In Chota Nagpore, equally with the rest of India, it is established by custom, that the resident ryots have a permanent hereditary right in the soil, which they cannot be deprived of, so long as they continue to pay the rent justly demanded of them with punctuality. Receipts, though granted to jagirdars and likhadars, and even to the heads of the villages, are withheld from the ryots; it would be well that

the raja and principal landholders should introduce the practice of giving these people written receipts, thereby rendering respective rights more secure.

The principal crops in this pergunnah are the kharif and badari; the produce from the rabi is comparatively trifling. No measurement of the land takes place at the annual settlement; the Mahtoon, in parcelling out the lands to the ryots, divides the mewa trees amongst them; the produce from other trees goes to the proprietor. The price of field labour is one piala, or wooden cupfull of rice, or different kinds of pulse, and half an anna per diem; some, however, receive one bundle in twenty-one bundles of the crops cut. The proprietor does not receive karcharni, or money for permitting cattle to graze.

There are three different species of bondsmen in this pergunnah: 1st. When a person receives a sum of money from another, and executes a deed called sanunk patra, he becomes that person's bondsman, or sanunk for life, and cannot be released from his bond, though he offer payment of the money he received; the deed of sanunk patra, however, does not affect the children. It is expected that the master furnishes his bondsmen with food and clothing; generally he pays the expenses attendant on marriage. 2nd. A person who borrows a sum of money from another, stipulating by a deed to serve the lender for a specified time, or until the amount of the principal and interest be repaid. This bondsman has an allowance of a maund of rice a month, and one rupee is given to him at the cold season, besides which he is entitled to one bundle out of twenty-one bundles of the crops at the cutting season. 3rd. A person who hires himself for field labour, the period of which service is generally from Magh to the end of Paus, and should the bondsman run away within the period of service, the master is entitled to damages on account of loss of services. This kind of bondsman generally received six rupees a year and twelve maunds of rice.

The Coles emigrate in great numbers annually in search of employment, and are entertained by indigo planters and others. They are generally preferred to the labourers of other parts of the country, on account of their performing more work and at a lower rate. In a family consisting of four or five persons, two are left at home to take care of the family affairs, and cultivation, &c., the rest go abroad to seek service. Panchayets are not frequent, except in cases of witchcraft; when the people do not apply to the court, they resort to the head men to settle their disputes.

The peasantry, generally speaking, do not appear to enjoy a state of great comfort; their huts are miserable, and their ordinary food is of

the poorest kind. There are three descriptions of Coles, *Rumeen*, *Aorunn*, and *Moonda*; these vary in language more than in manners. Their language, especially of those on the frontier bordering on Singbhoom, is not generally understood, and when the Coles are brought into the Sudder station for criminal offences, they are invariably accompanied by an interpreter.

These people are of the lowest kind of Hindús, and in their manners and customs are little removed from savages. The only covering worn by the women is a small piece of cloth passed between their thighs. Their intimacy and connection (for they intermarry) with the Lurka Coles, was formerly considered so demoralizing and so detrimental in its effects to the welfare of that part of the country, that it was thought necessary to restrict such intercourse by every possible means. This may have been the case before Singbhoom came into our possession, but since that period the character of the Coles would seem to have improved, or they are better governed, as they now refrain from committing those lawless depredations on the borders, to which they were formerly so prone.

Markets are held once a-week in the principal villages throughout the pergunnah, which are stated to be sixty-seven in number. The various duties, under the denomination of *rusum ganjit*, were formerly let in farm by the proprietors, and were a source of considerable emolument; notwithstanding such collections are strictly prohibited, there is reason to believe that they are still secretly levied under the name of *mohtarfa*.

Rice, cotton, sugar-cane, shurshuf, kunjíd, surguga, and several kinds of pulse, are cultivated in Chota Nagpore; the hills produce great quantities of gum lac, silk, rukh, silájit, bunstokhun, and tikhur. The cultivation of the poppy has not as yet been attempted on the part of the opium agent, though there are many parts of the pergunnah in which it might perhaps be successfully introduced. Iron ore is found in considerable quantities in these hills, and gold is picked up in the beds of some of the rivers. A diamond mine is stated likewise to exist, but the raja and the landholders are cautious, and withhold all information concerning its productive powers, or the mode of working it.

There are no navigable rivers in the pergunnah. The exports consist of rice, cotton, lac, iron, &c., &c.; in return are received salt, brass and copper utensils from Bancoorah, and cloths from Sumbhulpore.

The salt agent at Patna has a gomashtha in the pergunnah, to prevent the importation of contraband salt from the province of

Cuttack; but notwithstanding those precautions large quantities of salt are annually smuggled through the province, with the connivance of the gomashita.

Under the Mahomedan rule, the rajas of Chota Nagpore paid a peshkush of about 15,000 rupees annually. Notwithstanding the capabilities of this fine and extensive pergunnah, no increase in the jumma took place at the decennial settlement. At present the government demand stands as follows :

	Rs.
Land Revenue	14,100
Abkarce	12,000
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Sum Total	26,100
Deduct Expenses	5,004
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Balance	21,096

The perpetual settlement having been made with the raja for the whole pergunnah, no increase can now be expected in the land revenue.

On a consideration of the great extent and numerous population of Chota Nagpore, as well as the distance of the greater part of the pergunnah from the Sudder station, a native magistrate was appointed in the pergunnah. Since the establishment of the Moonsiff's Court (which took place in September, 1825,) to the 1st of January, 1827, the cases entered in the files are as follows :

Suits entertained	339
Suits decided	199
Suits appealed	2
Suits revised	1

Appended is a statement of crimes which have been reported, criminals apprehended, punished, and released, from the 1st of January, 1826, to the 31st of March, 1827.

It will be seen from the list that the total amount of cases for the year 1826 is 214, in which 488 men are supposed to have been concerned, 247 of whom have been apprehended, 156 punished, and 14 stand committed with every probability of their conviction. Of the 5 cases of murder, and of the 18 men supposed to have been concerned, 15 have been apprehended, 8 sentenced, 1 released, and 6 stand committed, and will most probably be convicted.

It is the characteristic of a barbarous people to be prodigal of blood, and to evince a want of tenderness and regard for life, when excited by the stimulus of strong passion; and murder stands prominent amongst the crimes prevalent in the pergunnah. The motives to

commit the crime originate generally in jealousy, not unfrequently in superstition, and sometimes it is perpetrated from a spirit of revenge. An aggravated case of this latter description was tried at the first sessions of 1826. A substantial zemindar hired assassins to murder his neighbour, on account of a grudge he owed the latter, for having lodged a complaint against him to the magistrate. The assassins bargained to undertake the business for a very trifling sum in money and a few maunds of rice; the deed was committed, but the perpetrators paid the forfeit of their lives.

List of heinous crimes which have been reported to the Magistrate from 1st January, 1826, to 31st December, 1826, by the police darogah of Chota Nagpore :

	Cases.	Persons concerned.	Apprehended.	Punished.	Committed.	Released.
Dacoity . . . . .	..	..	..	..	..	..
Rahzani	2	14	..	..	..	..
Wilful Murder	5	18	15	8	6	1
Manslaughter	3	6	6	..	1	5
Burglary	102	142	89	50	6	30
Theft	61	125	75	48	..	27
Cattle-stealing	39	70	55	46	..	9
Arson	1	2	2	1	..	1
Base Coin	1	5	5	..	1	4
Total	214	488	247	156	14	77
<i>Ditto, ditto, from 1st January to 31st March, 1827.</i>						
Dacoity . . . . .	..	..	..	..	..	..
Rahzani . . . . .	..	..	..	..	..	..
Manslaughter	1	1	1	..	..	..
Burglary	52	123	37	24	6	7
Theft	22	35	19	6	..	13
Cattle-stealing	17	26	16	9	..	7
Total	92	185	73	39	6	27