During the colonial era the Oriya-speaking territories, like the rest of India, had been divided into two administrative zones. On the one hand, the districts of Balasore, Cuttack, Puri, Sambalpur, Ganjam and Koraput were directly ruled by the British. On the other hand, there were twenty-six feudatory states which were ruled by the native chiefs and were also subject to the supervision and control of the British authorities, exercised by the Superintendents and Political Agents. In recent years considerable macro-level researches have been undertaken with regard to the various aspects of British administration in the directly ruled territories as well as the feudatory states. But the micro-level or sub-regional studies of the districts and feudatory states still remain a major lacuna in the field of modern Orissan history. This thesis is a micro-level study of the history of Nilgiri which was a 'B' class feudatory state until its merger with the Province of Orissa in 1948.

The early pioneering works on the history of Orissa by the British historians such as Andrew Stirling’s An Account - Geographical, Statistical and Historical of Orissa Proper or Cuttack (London, 1822), William Wilson Hunter’s History of Orissa, two volumes (London, 1872) and George Toynbee’s A Sketch of the History of
Orissa, 1803-1828 (Calcutta, 1873) give a sketchy account of the Orissa princely states. The treatment of the Orissa princely states in these nineteenth-century publications appears to be officially biased. Some more reliable and valuable data regarding these states are contained in a compilation of the official records as "Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal, XXIVB No. 3: Papers on the Settlement of Cuttack and on the state of the Tributary Mahals" (Calcutta, 1851, 1867). It contains the despatches and reports of Henry Ricketts and A. J. M. Mills, both of whom were Superintendents of the Orissa Tributary Mahals.

(Since 1803 most of the Orissa States were known as the Cuttack Tributary Mahals; from 1894 all the princely states of Orissa came to be styled as feudatory States)


Of the works in the present century L. E. B. Cobden-Ramsay's Feudatory States of Orissa (Calcutta, 1910) remains a commendable one in spite of its limitations. Cobden-Ramsay seems to have accepted the accounts of the origin of the princely states as narrated to him by the ruling Chiefs without scrutiny.
Though he was the first Political Agent of Orissa Feudatory States, he did not take pains to discuss the states' relations with the Paramount Power and the general condition of the people under the princely rule.

The modern researches relating to the Orissa Feudatory States can be broadly divided into two categories. On the one hand, general regional studies on the nineteenth-century Orissa, such as B.C. Ray's Foundations of British Orissa (Outtack, 1960), K.M. Patra's Orissa under the East India Company (New Delhi, 1971) and J.K. Samal's Orissa under the British Crown (New Delhi, 1977), have dealt with feudatory states in single chapters. On the other hand, comparatively more recent researches such as Jagannath Patnaik's Feudatory States of Orissa 1803-1857, two volumes (Allahabad, 1988), P.K. Mishra's Political Unrest in Orissa in the Nineteenth Century (Calcutta, 1983), Sadasiba Pradhan's Agrarian and Political Movements: States of Orissa, 1931-1941 (New Delhi, 1986), and Satyabhama Pati's Democratic Movements in India (Delhi, 1987), exclusively deal with the Feudatory States. J.N. Patnaik deals with the states in general during the East India Company's rule, P.K. Mishra analyses the popular disturbances in the states in the nineteenth century. The works of Sadasiba Pradhan and Satyabhama Pati are primarily concerned with the popular movements.
against feudal exploitation and movements for democratic rights in the states.

This sub-regional study of the Nilgiri State attempts to deal with the various aspects of its history such as its relation with the Paramount Power, its internal administration, social, economic and political life of the people, and popular movements from its subjugation by the British in 1803 till India's independence in 1947. It is based on primary as well as secondary, and official as well as unofficial source-material, collected from such centres as Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar, West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, Utkal University Library, Bhubaneswar, and Record Room of the Sub-Divisional Officer's office, Nilgiri. Some valuable pieces of information were available from interviews with Banamali Das, the first Secretary of the State Prajamandal and founder of the Communist Party in Nilgiri and Rajendra Chandra Mardraj, the eldest son of Raja Kishore Chandra Mardraj Harichandran, the last ruler of Nilgiri.

The first chapter deals with the evolution of the tributary states from ancient times, their position at different stages of Orissan history up to the end of the Maratha rule in Orissa, the location, topography and
The composition of the population of Nilgiri and its earlier history up to 1803 A.D.

The Chapter II analyses the circumstances under which the State came under British protection, the treaty provisions and relations existing between the State and the British authorities, and the extent of British involvement in the State's affairs. In this Chapter attempt has been made first to analyse the British policy towards the Orissa Tributary States, and then the particular treatment that the Nilgiri State received.

The Chapter III is devoted to the discussion of the administrative system in operation, land revenue administration, the other sources of revenue, items of expenditure, the administration of justice, police, jail and education.

The fourth Chapter throws light on the different aspects of the social and economic life of the people.

The Chapter V deals with the peoples' resistance to oppressive rule and economic exploitation and their movement for democratic rights.

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