INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

A. THE ANTIQUITY AND CONTINUITY OF ORISSA FEUDATORY STATES.

Geographically and historically Orissa comprises two major divisions. One is the fertile and productive coastal region which formed the domain of the principal ruling dynasties of Orissa and from which the earlier Hindu sovereigns and their successors, the Afghans, the Mughals, the Marathas, and finally the British, derived their principal revenue. Since Akbar's conquest of Orissa this region which remained under the direct administration of the sovereign, came to be known as the Mughalbandi. The other division is the less fertile but more extensive hilly areas and forest tracts, parcelled out and occupied by a number of military chieftains. As this region contained innumerable forts or castles, locally known as Garhs or Killas, it came to be known as the Garšt area.

FEUDATORIES DURING THE HINDU PERIOD.

From a remote antiquity feudatory states have played significant roles in the political life of Orissa. During the age of Asoka certain portions of Kalinga were hilly and forest-clad tracts which remained under the political and cultural hegemony of the mainland; but in their internal administration they enjoyed good deal of sovereignty.¹ In his second Separate Kalinga Edict Asoka spoke of the people of these 'forest tracts' as "unconquered borderers".

¹ K.C. Panigrahi, History of Orissa, P-89.
who were lukewarm to acknowledge his lordship, and were considered a source of perennial danger by the Emperor himself.¹

In the period following the death of Kharavela there were rapid political movements in Orissa. The absence of a powerful central authority to keep in check the disintegrating forces paved the way for further feudalisation of the society. This process continued up to the tenth century A.D. The forest tracts mentioned in the Asokan inscriptions assumed definite forms of states during this period.² The Betul Plates of Samksobha mentioned these tracts as 'Astadasa - atavika-rajyam' or the eighteen forest kingdoms.³ The Kanas Plate of Lokavigraha - Bhattarakha of the year 599 A.D. contained the description of Tosali as comprising 18 forest states.⁴ In the early medieval copper plate inscriptions of Orissa these states were also spoken of as Astadas Gondramas.⁵ These were some of the earliest references to the tradition of the well-known Eighteen Garjat of Orissa.⁶

One of the prominent features behind the formation of these petty principalities was the 'persistent existence of a strong tribal element'. The states were originally inhabited and ruled by tribal people, but later on they came under the process of Hindu colonisation.⁷ As this period was marked by

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¹ R.G. Basak, Asokan Inscriptions, P-126
² H.Kulke, "Early State Formation and Royal Legitimation in Late Ancient Orissa", in Sidelights on History and Culture of Orissa, Ed. M.N. Das, P-105.
⁵ Ibid, Vol-XXVI, P-77.
⁶ D.K.Ganguly, Historical Geography and Dynastic History of Orissa, P-43
the absence of a strong central government, their political status and relation in reference to one another cannot be exactly defined.

This hazy political scene was, however, cleared with the rise of the Bhauma - Karas, the Somavamsis and the Imperial Ganges. The hegemony of these powerful royal houses ruling over coastal Orissa was definitely established over the numerous small kingdoms in central and western Orissa. The existence of various categories of vassal land-holders, as gleaned from extensive landgrants of this period, is indicated by such titles as Bhupala, Samanta, Mahasamanta, Mahasamantadhipati Mandalika, Mahamandalika, Mahamandaleswara, Ranaka, etc. These were important landed barons of the realm, among whom there existed a graded relation, regulated by the grant of land and the extent of the supply of military aid to the overlord.

The feudal relations between the sovereign ruler of Orissa and his vassals came to be accepted as a part of the political and social life during the Ganga monarchs. Anangabhimadeva (1211 - 1238 A.D.), a powerful Ganga king declared himself as the Rauta (a feudatory) of Purusottama(Lord Jagannath). In his land settlement he assigned half of his empire for the support of his Samantas or chieftains, army personnel and Brahmins. A large portion of the assigned lands lay on the frontiers for the protection of the kingdom against invaders. ¹ He also created sixteen samantas or great landlords.

¹ W.W. Hunter, History of Orissa, Vol-II, P-217
The feudal organisation of the government was further strengthened during the rule of the mighty Suryavamsi Gajapatis who also added to the number of feudatories. Kapilendra had allotted the newly conquered territories in the south and elsewhere in Orissa to his relations, loyal officers, and menial servants, from whom several of the feudatories claimed lineal descent.¹ Purusottamadeva, the second ruler of this dynasty assigned portions of his empire among his many brothers who thus became important vassals.² These Samanta chakras or groups of feudal lords were assigned revenue as well as civil administration, and enjoyed extensive power over local government.³

Following centuries of evolution the relation between the lord paramount and his feudal chieftains finally became clearly pronounced and perfected at the height of the Gajapati power. The kingdom of the Gajapatis comprised the fairest portion of Orissa, the rest of it was divided among several military retainers and dependants on certain specific conditions and obligations. Most of these chieftains were posted deep in the interior or along the frontiers of the kingdom with a view to defending it from intrusions of neighbouring powers, or the incursions and devastations of the savage inhabitants of the wild region in the interior who might be giving annoyance to the central authorities.⁴ All of them invariably held their estates under the condition of military service. They maintained a band of Paiks or peasant militia on the basis of land tenure, and were obliged, at any moment when called on by their supreme leader, to take up arms and accompany him to the field of war.

¹ A. Stirling, An Account - Geographical, statistical and Historical - of Orissa proper or Cuttack, P-40.
In times of war these feudal nobles of Orissa at the head of their respective contigents rallied round their master and fought unitedly for the monarch of Orissa.\textsuperscript{1}

 Besides military service, the feudatories had to discharge several obligations towards their lord paramount. They were generally expected to be obedient and faithful to the emperor. They had to attend the imperial courts on ceremonial occasions. Epigraphic records suggest that the feudatories assembled at the time of land-grants made by the monarch and were often addressed by him.\textsuperscript{2} Occasionally, they were conceded rare privileges like holding the mirror, the royal umbrella for the Gajapati and other personal services to the latter.\textsuperscript{3} Feudatories sometimes played significant roles in determining the succession of a monarch of Orissa.\textsuperscript{4}

 The measures of internal autonomy which the feudal vassals enjoyed and the degree of their submission depended partly on their status, and partly on the strength of the paramount power. Small feudatories enjoyed less autonomy than their powerful counterparts.\textsuperscript{5} A mighty monarch could effectively keep the feudatories in submission and collect the tribute without difficulty, but they became intractable when the central authority became weak.\textsuperscript{6} These chiefs were mostly de facto masters over their possessions under the suzerainty of the common sovereign. They held their territories on the basis of heredity, exercised uncontrolled territorial jurisdiction within their limits, enjoyed the entire revenue subject to the condition of rendering military

3. Krupasindhu Mishra, Utkal Itihas, P-113
4. EI, Vol-XXIX, Part-III, P-82
5. B. Mishra, Dynasties of Medieval Orissa, PP-84-85
service or other offices and duties at the court of their overlord. These services in course of time were generally commuted for a light tribute or money-payment.\textsuperscript{1}

FEUDATORY STATES IN THE AFGHAN AND MUGHAL PERIOD.

After the death of Mukundadeva in 1568 A.D. Orissa came under the possession of the Afghan rulers of Bengal. The Afghan rule in Orissa lasted for a very brief period from 1568 to 1592. The Afghans did not introduce any change in the ancient system of Orissa which was allowed to continue in the same fashion as it did during the Ganga and Gajapati regimes.\textsuperscript{2}

In 1592 Orissa was annexed to the Mughal Empire by Akbar's general Man Singh. The Mughal officers observed that the entire territory of Orissa was more or less divided into two political divisions; one was the royal domain comprising the fertile coastal districts under the direct control of the Raja of Khurda, who styled himself Gajapati; and the other division comprising the hilly regions was in the possession of generally the military chieftains.\textsuperscript{3}

Following the defeat of the Afghans and the submission of the Raja of Khurda the vast tract of fertile lands in the coastal districts came under the possession of the Mughals and was denominated Khalisha or crown land, while the half-subjugated chieftains in the other division were left in possession of their estates "with rights which could suggest essential elements of sovereign power, taxation and the administration of justice".\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Stirling, op.cit., PP-38-39
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Grant's Analysis to the Fifth Report, PP-136-7
  \item \textsuperscript{3} B.C. Ray, Orissa under the Mughals, P-105
  \item \textsuperscript{4} W.K. Firminger, Historical Introduction to the Bengal portion of the Fifth Report, P-37
\end{itemize}
The chieftains undertook to pay into the Imperial treasury a lump sum amount annually, representing the revenue assessment of their respective areas, and the surplus between what they actually collected from the ryots and what they paid by terms of their contract with the sovereign was their gain. This was essentially Man Singh's political and revenue settlement in 1592 A.D. The reigning prince, Ramchandradeva, was confirmed in his hereditary principality of Khurda with the title of Maharaja. His territory, called Killa Khurda, was alienated from the Khalisa and its jurisdiction extended from the Mahanadi to the borders of Kimedy in Ganjam. He was allowed to collect tribute from thirty-one subordinate Zamindars, including all the later Tributary Mahals of Cuttack, south of the river Mahanadi. The two sons of Mukundadeva were also styled Rajas and were assigned the estates of Patia and Ali.

The more distant Zamindars were separated from the control of the nominal Gajapati, i.e., the Ruler of Khurda, and were placed under seven principal Zamindars or Samantas who, however, were not styled Rajas. These important chiefs were the Zamindars of Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Bishnupur, Fatehabad, Narayangarh, Karrangah and Nag- or Begbhum. A certain number of small chiefs or minor Zamindars who were styled Sardars, were placed under the control of each of the above Zamindars.

The term 'Zamindar' which was widely used in the revenue accounts of the Mughal period had the same meaning as the local

1. B.H. Baden-Powell, "Is the State the Owner of All Land in India?" in Asiatic Quarterly Review, July 1894.
terms Bhuyan or Bhupati which were the common titles of ancient feudatories of Orissa. Abul Fazl, Akbar's court historian, had used the term, 'Zamindar', in his Ain-i-Akbari entirely with this sense. These Zamindars were the feudal chiefs holding their estates with certain amount of independence in their internal administration, but accountable to their sovereign for the performance of military service and certain other conditions. From the days of Akbar down to Aurangzeb's reign this term Zamindar was strictly applied to the old feudal lords and military chieftains. In course of time during the period of political instability and the weakness of the central government these Zamindars became bold and ambitious enough to style themselves Rajas. Before the establishment of British supremacy and ever since that period every hill and jungle Zamindar of Orissa had invariably appended this title to his name. But in 1592 A.D. at Man Singh's settlement only three princes of Orissa - the rulers of Khurda, Patia and Ali - were acknowledged as Rajas while all other chieftains were termed Zamindars and Sardars who were the officially recognised feudal lords.¹

Man Singh's modification of the Orissa system was more apparent than real. Virtually he did not introduce anything new. The turbulent feudal chiefs were left to rule over their respective estates as they were doing for centuries together, because they were considered best qualified to manage and control their people from their hereditary influence. The Mughal government exercised little power in their countries, except exacting only a small tribute. For the administration of the

¹. Stirling, op. cit., p-52.
Khalisa or the crownlands Man Singh found it expedient to adopt, with little variation, the system which was existing then and there. As this region was under the direct control of the Mughals it was called the Mughalbandi, while the rest of Orissa under the hill chiefs was named Garjat.

In the years following the death of Aurangzeb Orissa became a whirlpool of political chaos. The hold of the titular Mughal Emperor on far off provinces started progressively decreasing. Murshid Culi Khan, the Nazim of Bengal, became virtually independent of the control of Delhi. During the first half of the eighteenth century when Orissa was ruled by the Naib Nazims appointed from Bengal, everything was in confusion. The venality and perfidy of the officers obliterated every trace of civil administration in Orissa. The feudal chieftains made the confusion more confounded by their unruly behaviour.

Most of the Zamindars became refractory; they not only resisted the revenue demands of the Mughal Subedars but developed a tendency to extend their land-holdings by waging war against the neighbouring estate-holders and committing depredations.

FEUDATORY STATES UNDER THE MARATHAS.

The Muslim rule in Orissa came to an end in 1751 when, following a decade of incessant warfare with the Marathas, Alivardi Khan, the Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, concluded a treaty with the Maratha ruler Raghuji Bhonsle of Nagpur, whereby he surrendered Orissa to the latter. Orissa then became a province of Nagpur and continued to remain under the Marathas

2. CPC, Vol-II, No.1247.
till 1803.

The Marathas were interested more in the revenue of Orissa than in its administration. The political system which they inherited from the Muslims was retained. The division of Orissa into the traditional two regions - the Mughalbandi and the Garjat - was accepted by them. They established direct relations with the previously existing feudal chiefs of Orissa who accepted the Maratha supremacy. The Marathas also converted some of the dependent Zamindars under the Raja of Khurda into tributaries of their own. This they did out of a fear of the position of the Raja of Khurda who, even without great military might, commanded great respect and obedience from most of the chieftains of Orissa because of his being the successor of the former Gajapati rulers of Orissa. Moreover, since the time of Man Singh's settlement the Raja of Khurda had been exercising his authority over several Zamindars south of the river Mahanadi. These territories were considered strategically important for the Marathas who naturally felt apprehensive of the Raja's power and tried to curtail it. A contemporary British traveller, Thomas Motte, wrote in his travel accounts of 1766 A.D. that the power and position of the Raja of Khurda seemed "formidable to the Marathas who, apprehensive lest he might seize a favourable opportunity to cut off the communication between Nagpur and Cuttack, resolved to reduce his power by dividing it. He (Raghuji Bhonsle) made the petty Zamindars independent of him, and formed the chuklas of Dinkanal (Dhenkanal), Bonkey (Banki), Narsingpur (Narsingpur), Tigerea (Tigiria), Tolchair (Talcher), Chunda Parra (Khandpara), Dispulla (Daśpalla), Hindole (Hindol), Ungool (Angul), and Bood (Baud)."¹

The newly created tributaries and the others already existing elsewhere in Orissa were left under the control of their respective Rajas; so long as they continued to pay the annual tribute to the Marathas there was no interference in their internal administration in which full freedom was granted to the Rajas. The Marathas, however, did not lay down any fixed principles on the basis of which the amount of tribute was to be paid by a state. This created a nexus of problems, frequently leading to serious military engagements between the Maratha governors of Orissa and the tributary chiefs. The tribute was so ill-paid that the Marathas were obliged to march their troops into these states after the rainy season and extorted not only the tributes but also the charges of expedition against them. Frequent expeditions into the Garjat, either to chastise some insolence or to enforce the demand for tribute resulted in the most sanguinary punishments and destructive ravages and other evils of great magnitude. Under such circumstances the position of the tributary states was insecure and unstable. A strong governor could hold the Rajas effectively in check, but at other times they behaved as independent rulers.

The exploitation and oppression of the Marathas resulted in widespread discontent throughout Orissa. Both the people and the princes were impatient of their tyranny and desired to get rid of it at the first available opportunity. Consequently, when the

1. BSPC of 1 March 1804, No. 42; Harcourt and Melville to Government, 19th January 1804.
4. L.E.B. Cobden - Ramsay, Orissa Feudatory States, P-27
East India Company sent its troops to Orissa there was very little resistance to it; rather in some cases the English were preferred. \(^1\)

After Orissa was occupied by the East India Company, the same political arrangement was retained as during the Mughal and Maratha periods. The **Mughalbandi** remained under the direct administration of the Company's Government and the Bengal Regulations were introduced therein, whereas treaties were entered into with several feudatory chiefs. By these engagements the chiefs promised to remain loyal and friendly to the Company's Government and agreed to pay fixed annual tributes. \(^2\) They were exempted from the operation of Government Regulations into their territories. Of course, the British authorities reserved the power of interference if necessary. During the British period the Orissa states consisted of three groups; the largest group was known as the Tributary Mahals of Cuttack, and was placed under the control of the Government of Bengal, with the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals dealing with them; the Commissioner of Cuttack acted as ex-officio Superintendent. Five states - Patna, Kalahandi, Sonepur, Bamra and Rairakhol - were with the central provinces and two states - Gangpur and Bonai - were included in the Chota Nagpur Division. These last seven states were incorporated into the Orissa Division in 1905. All these states later on came to be known as the Feudatory states of Orissa. \(^3\)

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1. SNRR, Vol-I, PP- 54-58; E.S. Broughton to Government, 2 April 1804.
The Nilgiri State was situated between 21° 17' and 21° 37' north latitude and 86° 25' and 86° 50' east longitude with an area of 284 square miles. The headquarters of the state was named Raj Nilgiri and lay between 21° 29' N. and 86° 48' E. The state was bounded on the north by the Mayurbhanj state, on the west by the Kaptipada Zamindari in the Mayurbhanj state, and on the south and east by the British district of Balasore. Out of a total area of 284 square miles 147 square miles comprised forests, hills and scrub jungles, leaving the rest to be cultivated or otherwise occupied. The entire range of hills which was known as the Nilgiri hills consisted of metamorphic rocks of various kinds, the most extensive being the black magnesian rock. This black granite stone was locally known as the Mugni stone.

The forests in the state contained valuable timber trees, but there were no high forests in the state due mainly to the presence of laterite stones below the surface.

No big river passed through this state; the only river worthy of the name was Sona, a small tributary of the Burhabalang. The other two small waterways, Tangana and Ghagara, were mere rivulets; for the greater part of the year they remained sandy beds except in the rainy season.

As regards the nature of the soil, there was every variety of admixture from poor stony soil to pure clacy leam, heavy soils, the clacy leams being the most abundant in the state. The soil received an annual deposit of silt from the washings of the hills and forests. The surface of the state being undulating, the washings find ready access to the low lands which were, therefore, more fertile than the higher tracts.¹

The state was divided into eight Chaklas or circles, and contained 313 villages. These Chaklas had been created for the purpose of revenue administration and continued from a very long time. They were Athkhunta, Banasima, Benagadia, Dantore, Jukjhuri, Kaspa, Khadpur and Panchgarh. Panchgarh was the largest in area while Banasima was the smallest. From the point of view of population Kaspa was the most thickly populated Chakla and Banasima was scarcely inhabited.²

The earliest available statistics on the population of the state date back to 1870 only. But they were not strictly accurate as the calculation was made on the basis of guess-work rather than careful enumeration. As per the estimate of the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals there lived 21,000 people in Nilgiri in 1870. But the Raja's return of the same year showed 27,665 inhabitants in his state.³ The first enumerations of the population of the Orissa states were taken up in 1872. According to this census report there lived in Nilgiri 33,944 souls in 6,319 houses. The aboriginal tribes and the semi-Hinduised

¹. Final Report, P-4.
². Ibid., Para-3.
aborigines such as Bhumijas, Pan, Bhuiya, Bathudi, Kurmi, Kandara, Bauri, Kadal, Dom and Chamar, formed 18.3 per cent of the total population. People of Hindu origin formed the majority with 81.7%, the most numerous castes being Khandait, Chesa, Brahmins and Gaur. A tiny community of native Christians was established at Mitrapur; they belonged to the American Free Baptist Mission which was started in 1854-55.

The average density of population as calculated from the census report of 1872 was 122 per square mile.

C. EARLY HISTORY OF NILGIRI.

The origin and the earlier history of Nilgiri, like those of most other Orissan states, are shrouded in obscurity. In many cases facts have been concocted with fiction and mystery. They follow the usual pattern which is found behind the creation of most Orissan principalities, i.e., a strong man connected in one way or the other with the foremost ruling race of Orissa (the Gajapatis) being rewarded with certain territorial possessions for his fidelity or notable services rendered by him to the sovereign. This common fiction, however, has a historical truth behind it, which denotes a significant phase of Indian history. That was the period of Aryan colonisation of the tribal and hilly regions of Orissa which contained almost all the feudatory states. This area might be regarded as the backwaters of colonisation by the Hindu settlers and probably was among the latest areas in India to be colonised by advanced

Hindu settlers. It was originally inhabited by the aborigines who lived there undisturbed in the seclusion of hills and jungles. But changing circumstances in north and central India had its inevitable impact on the future of these tribal people and their places. The Mohammedan incursions round about the 12th century A.D. brought about great changes in Upper India. Several established ruling houses were shaken and kingdoms underwent changes. A number of soldiers of fortune and princes without thrones who happened to visit Puri on pilgrimage found that these areas were easy to acquire and to hold. The primitive tribes who inhabited and ruled over these areas were either driven off or subjugated by these strong men who carved out kingdoms for themselves.2

This historical current is to be clearly marked behind the foundation of the state of Nilgiri. This state, as maintained by tradition, was inhabited by the aboriginal tribes, the most important of them being the Bhuyans and Kurmis. The last tribal patriarch of this state was Nila Sardar who ruled over those Bhuyans and Kurmis.3 In 1125 A.D. a Rajput prince of the Naga family of Chhota Nagpur, named Bhanukaran, came over to Mayurbhanj and established himself at Bamanghati. This adventurous and enterprising Rajput warrior shook off his subordinate position in Mayurbhanj, stepped into the neighbouring

2. Ibid.
3. S. Rout, Ed. Nilgiri Praja Andolan Itihas, P-23

* The Naga dynasty is considered to be one of the branches of the Scythian race.
territory, Nilgiri, where he killed the ruling tribal chief Nila Sardar and laid the foundation of his dynasty and kingdom there.¹ The word 'Nilgiri' is probably derived from the name of this tribal ruler - 'Nila'. The earlier name of Nilgiri was Nilagada, which meant 'the fort of Nila'; Gobindā Das, who accompanied Sri-Chaitanya in his journey from Bengal to Orissa early in the 16th century mentioned the state as Nilagada.²

Bhanukaran styled himself as Birata Bhujanga Mandhata. Bhanukaran and adopted as his motto an old, courageous black snake. This was obvious because he hailed from the Nagabansi family, and, therefore, emphasized in his motto the character of the cobra (Nag). The ruling house of Nilgiri was locally known as the Bhuchunga family.³ The word 'Bhuchunga' is but a corrupt variation of the Sanskrit term 'Bhujanga', meaning a snake.⁴

From the family records the names of thirty-six rulers are available upto the year 1803 with an approximately correct chronology, but the account given of the rise and progress of the state does not appear to be fully authentic. The following rulers are recorded to have ruled over the state since its Kshatriyaization in 1125 A.D.⁵

1. Final Report, P-89.
3. N.N. Vasu, Archaeological Survey of Mayurbhanj, P-xxxvi
5. BJ(P)P No.27 of November 1892; G.A.Toynbee, Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals, to Government of Bengal, No.1901 P of 3rd September 1892.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Chief</th>
<th>Period of rule</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bhanukaran Birat Bhujanga Mandhata</td>
<td>1125 - 1143 A.D.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Sasikaran Birat Bhujanga Mandhata</td>
<td>1143 - 1167</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Chatrikaran Birat Bhujanga Mandhata</td>
<td>1167 - 1208</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Kalskar Birat Bhujanga Mandhata</td>
<td>1208 - 1249</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Sadhukar Birat Bhujanga Mandhata</td>
<td>1249 - 1329</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Dinaram Birat Bhujanga Mandhata</td>
<td>1329 - 1341</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Ghunusaha Birat Bhujanga Mandhata</td>
<td>1341 - 1363</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Nounsaha Birat Bhujanga Mandhata</td>
<td>1363 - 1381</td>
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<td>Biraliswar Birat Bhujanga Mandhata</td>
<td>1381 - 1414</td>
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<td>1486 - 1520</td>
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<td>Narayan Basant Birat Bhujanga Mandhata</td>
<td>1520 - 1564</td>
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<td>Gopinath Das Harichandan Mardraj</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Narayan Das Mardraj Harichandan</td>
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<td>Chakradhar Mardraj Harichandan</td>
<td>1712 - 1741 A.D.</td>
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<td>Tribikram Mardraj Harichandan</td>
<td>1741 - 1742</td>
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<td>1742 - 1752</td>
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<td>Debya Singh Mardraj Harichandan</td>
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<td>1795 - 1796</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>Ramchandra Mardraj Harichandan</td>
<td>1796 (Fifteen days only)</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>Dasarathi Mardraj Harichandan</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>Ramchandra Mardraj Harichandan</td>
<td>1799 - 1801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Gopinath Mardraj Harichandan</td>
<td>1801 - 1802</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sl.No.</td>
<td>Name of the Chief</td>
<td>Period of rule</td>
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<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Ramchandra Mardraj Harichandan</td>
<td>1802 - 1819 A.D.</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>Gobinda Chandra Mardraj Harichandan</td>
<td>1819 - 1832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Krushna Chandra Mardraj Harichandan</td>
<td>1832 - 1893</td>
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<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Shyamchandra Mardraj Harichandan</td>
<td>1893 - 1913</td>
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<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Kishore Chandra Mardraj Harichandan</td>
<td>1913-1947</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The thirteenth Chief, Narayan Basant, who was a contemporary of the Gajapati ruler, Prataprudra Deva, received the title of Harichandan from him for having successfully defended the goddess, Bhudar Chandi, and her shrine at Sujnagarh from the hands of the Muslim intruders. The king of Orissa gave his sister, Kalara Dei, in marriage to him, and since then the Karala flower (Momordica Charantia) remained the emblem of the State.

The fourteenth ruler, Utareswar, came in contact with the Bhuyans, since he added the title of Bhuyan Mohapatra to his name. This implied that the Bhuyans could not reconcile themselves with the loss of their freedom since the death of Nila Sardar, and they continued to remain refractory till the time of Utareswar who subjugated them completely and assumed the title of Bhuyan Mohapatra. He was also honoured by the Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1596 for having assisted his minister Man Singh in his encounter with the Afghans on the bank of the river Suvarnarekha.

Krushna Das, the fifteenth Chief, distinguished himself by his valour and was awarded the title of Mardraj by

Emperor Jahangir in 1611 A.D. for his assistance to the Mughals against the Pathans.¹

Nilgiri came to authentic recorded history only in 1592 AD at the time of Man Singh's settlement of Orissa. Man Singh had made a political and fiscal arrangement with seven major feudatory Zamindars of Orissa, besides the three Rajas of Khurda, Patia and Ali. One of those seven Zamindars was the ruler of Mayurbhanj who was allowed to exercise supremacy over eleven other lesser Zamindaries, containing Killas or forts. Nilgiri was one of those petty estates left under the control of Mayurbhanj,² and remained as such till 1728.

The Raja of Nilgiri alongwith the Raja of Khurda had welcomed the rebel Mughal prince Shah Jahan when he had revolted against his father, the Mughal Emperor Jahangir.³

During the war of succession which started among the sons of Shah Jahan towards the close of his reign many Orissan princes became insubordinate. Upon the withdrawal of Mughal forces from Orissa by Shah Shuja, who was the Mughal Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Raja Krishna Bhanja of Mayurbhanj became independent, and created havoc in the neighbourhood by his plundering raids. The Raja of Nilgiri assisted Krishna Bhanja in this work. Krishna Bhanja was tragically murdered in the camp of Khan-i-Dauran, Aurangzeb's new governor for Orissa. After Krishna Bhanja's death his lieutenants were frightened, and

¹ BJ(P)P No.27 of November 1892; Toynbee to Government, 3rd September 1892.
surrendered. Some chiefs, including Debya Singh Mardraj Harichandan "the Zamindar of Nilgiri threw away their weapons and delivered themselves up as prisoners."  

From 1592 to 1728 A.D. Nilgiri remained under the suzerain control of Mayurbhanj. Only in 1728 was it separated and made independent of Mayurbhanj. Since then it assumed its separate political identity and remained a feudatory having direct relations with the sovereign authorities. The rulers of Mayurbhanj, however, could not reconcile to their loss of authority over Nilgiri. So, in order to maintain its separate status Nilgiri had to take resort to strategem. The Rajas paid heavy amounts to the Marathas for their security and protection. The Marathas maintained them against the claims of Mayurbhanj, but at a heavy cost to the state. They were never leniently disposed towards Nilgiri. Their main concern was money which they desired to extort on any pretext. Of course, the Marathas had rewarded the thirtieth chief of Nilgiri, Gobardhan Mardraj Harichandan, with the title of Fateh Singh Bahadur, but this was done more in the interest of the Marathas themselves than that of Nilgiri. Its ruler had assisted Motiram Pandit, the Maratha Faujdar of Balasore, in his war against the Jamkunda Bhuyan. Otherwise, the state was reeling under the heavy demand of the Marathas throughout the second half of the 18th century. There are copious references in contemporary Maratha records of the attempts made by Orissa Zamindars, including:

3. Early European Travellers in the Nagpur Territories, P-27.
Nilgiri, to get rid of the Maratha exploitation. When Bhaskar Pandit, the deposed Maratha faujdar of Balasore, revolted against his masters at Nagpur in 1764, he was promptly promised assistance by the rulers of Mayurbhanj and Nilgiri, where he was given shelter by the Raja. The Raja of Nilgiri cooperated with the rebel faujdar in his plundering and incursions into the border areas till 1767. The insurgency was put down by Bhawani Pandir, the Maratha Dewan of Orissa, who virtually plundered the State in the name of collecting the tribute.

The state used to pay a tribute of seven thousand rupees annually to the Marathas, but the latter exacted much more than that through highhandedness. Maratha officers took advantage of recurring political dissensions in the state in order to plunder and oppress the families of the Raja and the inhabitants. They used to dispossess the ruling princes and establish other claimants to the qudde in quick succession as best suited their rapacity. This practice became frequent in the last decade of Maratha rule. Upon the death of Raja Gobardhan Mardraj in 1795 the qudde became a bone of contention among three persons: Gopinath, the minor son of the deceased Raja; Ramchandra, his nephew; and Dondee Das alias Dasarathi Mardraj. The deceased Gobardhan, his son Gopinath, and nephew Ramchandra all represented the illegitimate line of the race whereas Dondee Das had a better claim to the qudde because of his legitimate lineage in the ruling family as he was born of a former ruler.

1. CPC, Vol-I, No. 2484.
2. Ibid., Vol-II, No. 63.
3. Ibid., Vol-I, No. 2665.
of the State. Each of the contenders approached the Maratha officers at Balasore and also at Cuttack. The Marathas without looking into the legitimacy of their claims adopted the role of King-makers. The three claimants were placed and replaced on the guddee six times within a period of seven years from 1795 to 1802, the sole objective behind such an unethical game being the exaction of the maximum amount of money from them. On one occasion Ramchandra Mardraj was replaced only after fifteen days' rule. The same ruler had been installed, removed and re-installed thrice. The process came to an end only with the end of Maratha rule in Orissa.

Originally, the state of Nilgiri was more extensive in area than what it was in 1803. From time to time it had suffered dismemberment and loss of territory due to various reasons. During the time of the Mughals when the state failed to pay regularly its tribute to them and fell into arrears, Killa Mangalpur Patna and Talmunda were taken away from it and converted into separate tehsils, consequently reducing its area considerably. It was forced by another superior adversary, the ruler of Mayurbhanj, to cede some more villages on its northwestern boundary contiguous to that state. Nilgiri also suffered at the hands of some scheming Zamindars of the neighbouring Balasore district in the time of the Marathas who allowed the Zamindars...

1. Morgan's Statement of 1804.
of Pargana Armala, Banchas, Mukhara, Khejuri, and Kudai to
annexe some of its eastern villages into their respective
Zamindaris. Once the state concluded the treaty engagement
with the British, all possibilities of recovering the lost
territories ended, since the Rajas could no more wage war or
make peace of their own accord.

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1. CPC, Vol-III, No. 508; Vol-V, Nos. 505, 506, 252;
Vol-VI, No. 189a.