INTRODUCTION

Orissa as it is known today, consists of the ancient kingdoms of Kalinga, Utkala, Odra and Kosala. It is difficult to demarcate the territorial boundaries of those ancient Kingdoms. In medieval times the territories of Orissa are said to have extended from the river Ganges in the North to the Godavari in the South and from the Bay of Bengal in the East to Amarakantak in the West. Even in the middle of the fifteenth century the Suryavamsi Gajapatis extended their empire as far as the Hooghly district of modern Bengal. This was the pinnacle of a glorious rule by the Gajapati rulers in Orissa. Since then the empire began to shrink, centralised political units started operating within decentralised framework of the empire and became a prey to aggression from neighbouring rulers. As a result, Orissa's political destiny was controlled and ruled over by various dynasties in succession. In 1568 she lost her independence to the Afghan power. The last independent king of Orissa Mukunda Deva was killed by his own feudatory chief as the head of a gang of self-seeking, self-styled monarchs when Suleman Kararani invaded Orissa from Bengal. But the Afghan rule was a transient one since they failed to consolidate its hold over Orissa and Mansingh, the general of Akbar, conquered Orissa in 1592. Thus Orissa found a place in the political map of the Mughal empire. Akbar, the reigning
emperor, for the convenience of administration, divided Orissa into five "Sarkars" namely Jaleswar, Bhadrakh, Cuttack, Kalinga-Dandapat and Raj Mahendri. These Sarkars were placed under the Subah of Bengal. As regards the rulers of the hill territories of Orissa, they became feudatories of the Mughal Emperor and agreed to pay a fixed amount as peshkush (annual tribute). Soon after the settlement of Akbar by the end of the sixteenth century, the Sarkar of Raj Mahendri and a portion of the sarkar of Kalinga-Dandapat were annexed by the Qutbshahi kings of Golkunda. During the rule of Jahangir the South of Chilka became the boundary between the Mughal and the Bahmani Empires. This part of Orissa, was later on named as Northern Sarkar.

The Mughal Empire started to disintegrate after the death of Aurangzeb and Orissa merged into the rule of the Nawabs of Bengal. The Nawabs of Bengal, refused to remit royal revenue to Delhi due to a deflationary tendency owing to huge of drainage of money from Bengal and virtually declared themselves independent. In return the Bengal and Orissa revenue farmers and self-styled kings with their retinue of armed retainers and feudatory chiefs stopped remittance of peshkushand revenue to the royal court. Taking full advantage of this, Raghuji Bhonsle of Nagpur attacked and conquered Orissa in 1751. A treaty was concluded
between Alivardi Khan, the Nawab of Bengal and Raghuji Bhonsle, and according to the conditions of the treaty, the river Suvernarekha became the demarcating line between Orissa and Bengal. Orissa during the Maratha rule was divided into two political divisions: 'Mughal Bandi' and 'Garjat'. The Mughalbandi region comprised of the plain and fertile land in the coastal regions and was, thus, thickly populated. The Garjat area was a wild tract of land of Western Orissa covered by the hills and dense forests. The 'Mughalbandi' was under the direct administration of the Marathas but 'Garjats' were held by numerous traditional feudatory chieftains. They paid annual tributes to the Maratha Government. In 1803, East India Company conquered Orissa, established their direct rule over the Mughalbandi districts namely Cuttack, Puri and Balasore. George Hareourt and John Melville as the joint commissioners for Orissa opened negotiations with nineteenth Garjat Kings who agreed to remain as tributary rulers of the Company's government. The Sambalpur group of states refused to remain under the Company's rules, so they were restored to Raghujii II, the Bhonsle of Nagpur after negotiation in 1806. But in 1816 the weakness of the Bhonsle of Nagpur led to the annexation of these states of western Orissa, which were parts of Garjat region of Orissa and were as such kept under Governor-General's agent to the South West Frontier Agency stationed at Hazaribagh (Bihar). In 1849, Sambalpur relapsed into the
British rule in the absence of a legitimate heir and was ultimately converted to a British district. The indirect rule was strengthened in the satellite states. Bamra, Rairakhol, Sonepur, Patna, Kalahandi, Bonai, Sambalpur were transferred to Orissa division in 1860. But in 1862 Sambalpur and its states of Rairakhol, Sonepur, Bamra, Patna and Kalahandi were retransferred to Chattisgarh division. The language agitation in 1890's led to the transfer of Sambalpur district and the native states like Bamra, Sonepur, Rairakhol, Patna, Kalahandi, Gangpur and Bonai to Orissa division. The amalgamation of these states with the Tributary Mahals resulted in the formation of the feudatory states of Orissa.

1. Importance of the period

The starting and terminating points of the present study are 1803 and 1900 covering the whole of the nineteenth century. The year 1803 marks a period of major political transition as observed by scholars. It was a transition leading to the end of the Maratha rule and the beginning of the Pax Britannica which resulted ultimately in the clash between the traditional ideas, life-style and socio-economic value system and those of the modern world. The period between 1833 and 1897 was a period of transition from feudal economy to the capitalist development in Orissa. The main features of feudal economy lingered until 1833, Maratha rule in Orissa led to the decentralization of the government responsibility for undertaking works of public utility and
for maintaining and the growth of an local peace and legal
system, unproductive class of parasite revenue farmers of
self-styled rajas in the agrarian economy in terms of a
middle peasantry and landlords below the rank of feudatory
chiefs who committed military aggression with one
another to enhance their annual income and extended lan-
ded estates. Excessive pressure for money rent led the
money-lenders to exploit the free peasants who in return
sought shelter from chiefs with superior military skill.
Therefore in 1803, the East India Company found little
resistance from the native rulers for conquering Orissa
who readily agreed to the British rule to end political
anarchy. The period is also significant as the creeping
degeneration since the Muslim rule of the agrarian economy
with its village-based salt and textile industries despite
various preventive measures taken by the British Government,
reached its climacteric point. The study ends in 1900, the
last year of the nineteenth century which witnessed the
final settlement of land revenue in 1897 and the growth of
the spirit of economic nationalism under the emerging
middle class.

The British government followed the policy of
Laissez-faire in the economy with the passing of the Charter
Act of 1833. In Orissa the Company abandoned its policy of
investment that ultimately paved the way for the decline
of silk and cotton textile industries in Orissa. With the
passing of Regulation VII of 1833 the problem of revenue administration was solved. The Regulation XIII of 1833 defined the political status of the Tributary Mahals of Orissa by bringing stability in the economic condition of the people. Some important administrative changes like transfer of Salt Agency of Orissa from Madras to the Bengal Presidency and extension of Irrigation projects in the Mahanadi delta took place.

While assessing the socio-economic life of a particular region within a particular period, it is difficult to trace the germinating and terminating points in terms of particular years as socio-economic history is a continuous process of development. However, during the period between 1803 and 1900 it is possible to notice the discernible process of changes and continuity which in the end led to the emergence of the socio-economic tension giving way to the capitalist formation in the agrarian economy of the twentieth century Orissa.

2. Historiography of the nineteenth century

Historiography of a particular period often serves to provide a clear insight into the different aspects of the socio-economic and political life of a country. As one begins to study the Historiography of the nineteenth century Orissa, one discovers the paucity of materials from native historians to give precise description of the
contemporary society. Whatever material is available on the period, is either written by the contemporary British Civil servants or the Military Officers, who wrote the history of the period by exploiting their official position for the benefit of the later British officials to be deputed to Orissa to rule a terra incognita in course of their negotiation with the people at first and the society at large.


Some military commanders like Captain S.C.Macpherson in 1842, Major John Campbell in 1864, A.L.Fraser in 1911, William Lee Warner in 1910 have given accounts of their military operations in the feudatory states and have described the socio-economic condition and customs of the aboriginal tribes in the nineteenth century Orissa.
The Christian missionaries like W.F.B. Laurie and J. Peggs wrote historical treatises attacking traditional socio-religious institutions of Orissa. Of course, they may not be called historians in the proper sense of the term as their works revolved round preaching, teaching and distributing sacred Christian literature to save the destitute humanity from superstition, ignorance and idoltry, yet it serves some purpose in our sociological study.

Pyari Mohan Acharya was the first Indian to write the history of Orissa in the middle of nineteenth century. The other scholars like R.L. Mitra, R.D. Banerjee and M.M. Chakravorty wrote the history of Orissa stressing on the history of ancient and medieval period, their scholarship was undesirable as pioneers they braved the language barriers and got themselves acquainted with a half-known culture and lifestyle but their scholarship was vitiated by Bengali chauvinism and unspeakable hatred for the destitute populace of the then Orissa.

3. Objective of the study

The British Political historians writing on the nineteenth century Orissa have mainly narrated the administrative and revenue experiments of the East India Company and of the Crown of the later period. Some of the Indian historians also followed the same footsteps in their writings. But the modern historians of nineteenth century dealing with agrarian history of Orissa are confronted with three problems. First, what was the reason that inspite of the different developmental measures of modernisation taken by the British rule in Orissa, the peasantised
tribals revolted against them? Secondly, whether these peasant revolts were popular? If yes, how the leadership formation took place in these popular revolts? The other objective of the study was to ascertain whether there was any difference between the Prajameli of nineteenth century and Prajamandal revolt of the twentieth century? The third question is what was the nature of those revolts? Whether the revolts were feudal in nature or were the outcome of the capitalist formation of the society? The present thesis deals with an elaborate discussion of the above questions.

The advent of the British rule in Orissa in 1803 found little resistance from the people who possibly wanted to save themselves from the economic oppression of the Maratha Subedars. No doubt, the British Government introduced different measures of modernisation but the maximisation of revenue leading to maximisation of rent aggravated the economic misery of the primary producers. The segment of the revenue payers and non-revenue paying landholders were being increasingly replaced by the alien Dikus, agariahs (agrahara land owners) and other categories of improved cultivators. It also led to the emergence of a class of affluent middle peasantry who took the lead in the peasantised tribal resistance movements. The period also witnessed the upward mobility of primary producers as new landholders in subsequent land settlements enhancing means of production and expanding cultivation process
towards the periphery of villages. The tribal peasants were displaced by Kultas, Agrias, Gonds, Kurmis as improved cultivators. Again the British Raj intervened in the religious practices of the aboriginal tribes. So the leadership came from the middle peasantry against the new revenue payers in alliance with the elite middle class. The Prajamali of nineteenth century was different from the Prajamandal revolt led by the elite middle class with the beginning of the nationalist struggle for freedom against the growing exploitation of the British crown since in the Prajamali the middle class and the newly emerged middle peasantry looking towards an urbanised life style non-cooperated with the resistance movements as sinister moves to revive the lost glory of the village-raj, an unattainable utopia in the then socio-economic condition.

4. Methodology followed

The basic hypothesis tested in the present study are: (a) The British rule in Orissa had a beneficial character, but not in commensurate with the socio-economic necessities of the period. This is evident from their policy of investment which failed to achieve adequate capital formation for the regeneration of the nineteenth century Orissa.

(b) Nineteenth century Orissa may be regarded as backward not only in terms of socio-economic and adminis-
trative attainments but also in terms of cultural and religious backwardness at a time when the neighbouring provinces of Bengal and Madras were economically developing rapidly in terms of capitalist enterprises. The tradition of successive foreign rules, natural calamities, uncongenial geographical conditions for a sustained economic development, socio-religious values had a profound impact on the people of Orissa.

(c) The significant features of the socio-economic degeneration are that the middle class leadership failed to guide the emerging force of nationalism due to their inherent class conflict and their dual character in embracing modernisation measures on the one hand and safeguarding their respect for the traditional socio-religious values on the other. This ultimately checked the growth of the middle class potentiality to accelerate the regenerative process.

(d) In the nineteenth century creeping decline of the agrarian economy could not be arrested owing to the exploitative tendencies of the British Raj, which exposed the traditional economy of the Asiatic feudal Orissa to the challenges of the world capitalistic market forces. It is also due to the failure of the national leadership of the middle class to stem the tide of the degenerating process as they had no economic programme to tackle the age-old degenerative processes in the body polity.
To answer the research questions raised by the present scholar research data and materials would be collected from both archival and non-archival sources. To visualise the revenue and administrative measures adopted by the British Raj materials would be collected from different record rooms. To picturise the leadership crisis in the nineteenth century Orissa biographical sketches of the contemporary literateurs, Government officials in the native states would be studied. From the state Archives of Bhubaneswar, Board of Revenue records, records of different districts of Orissa could be obtained which picturised the peasant resistance movements of the then Orissa and sequel to the peasant resistance movements. From the National Archives of India, New Delhi, besides Foreign and Home department proceedings, Sambalpur papers, threw light on the state of Sambalpur in 1849 when it lapsed to the British rule. From Sambalpur University Archives (Jyoti Vihar) government records like letters to the Commissioner of Orissa would be consulted. Attempts would be made to go through the printed reports, census reports and different state Gazetteers published by the British Government.

Emphasis would be equally laid on the materials from the contemporary literateurs, vernacular newspapers like Utkal Deepika (1872-1890), Sambalpur Hitaisini (1890-1892), literatures like Sambalpur Itihasa, 1962, by

5. Chapterisation

This thesis may be divided into six chapters. The first chapter deals with the historical and administrative background of the British rule in Orissa. Attempts would be made to analyse the process of creeping degeneration in the economic life of people since the early Mughal rule which was further heightened by the short Maratha rule (1751-1803). The process reached its climax in the early periods of the British rule in Orissa.

The objective of the Raj was to modernise the Government machinery. Many welfare measures were introduced which led to the restoration of law and order. The revenue experiments proved to be disastrous since maximisation of
revenue led to resumption of non-revenue paying holdings and upward mobility of primary producers without land and tools of production. The first phase of Ghumsur revolt and the peasant movements led by Jagabandhu Vidyadhar would be analysed to explain the changed character of agrarian relations. The second chapter deals with the decline of the peasant economy. The beneficial measures dealing with public works, irrigation, embankment undertakings of the British rule have been analysed and to what extent agricultural developments took place and the interest of the primary producers protected also would be discussed. No doubt, the British government had implemented beneficial measures, even then the production of trade in salt had declined and had cumulative effects on the textile and other village level industries. The commodities exported through the ports were rice and salt, which indirectly affected the fate of the primary producers by eating away their saving capacity. Therefore, the great famine of 1865-66 occurred in Orissa. This chapter also deals with the government's famine policy and anti-poverty measures.

Chapter third discusses the crisis in the agrarian economy but there is economic regeneration also. An analytical study has been made to explain the economic aspects of the growth of the middle class and economic results of the introduction of the modernisation measures in the
country. The spread of education in Orissa resulted in establishing schools and colleges, led to the emergence of an elite middle class which excelled in the field of literature, served under the government as teachers, law-years, Dewans. The modernisation in the administration of the Garjat states and the language agitation of 1890's which swayed the province, resulted in two important movements: movement for the amalgamation of Oriya speaking tracts and nationalist movements in the first half of the twentieth century. But despite the rise of the middle class the brewing crisis in the agrarian economy of Orissa could not be arrested which can be termed by the word pauperisation although a process of depeasantisation did not take place. This chapter also deals with the economic consequences of the indirect rule of the British Raj in the Garjat states. The rulers of the native states known as Tributory Mahals of Orissa tried to modernise their states and strove for the capitalist developments paving the way for the emerging middle class to play a pivotal role in the administration. To some social historians peasant resistance movements are no more than tribal movements. A systematic analysis would be made to study the leadership crisis in the traditional economy. The peasant revolts are a part of defence mechanism of the tribal peasantry against the process of modernisation. The revolts failed in front of superior military might of the British army.
The fourth and fifth chapters in the thesis aim at studying the dimensions of the agrarian crisis in terms of peasant participation in resistance movements. The chapters would also prove the question, to what extent these revolts were successful? In these two chapters a thorough discussion of the peasant movements in Bamanghatty, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Patna, Kalahandi, Ghumsur, Angul, Beud, Athmallick, Narasinghpur and Duspullah have been done. The movements were led by the traditional landed and military aristocracy who had been dispossessed of their property holdings and were thrown out of this occupation by the new capitalist economy. These peasantised tribal revolts were resistance movements against the new classes of the people who were inducted by the new land revenue system, to the rank of evangelisation and humanitarian measures, the new landlords and government officials, land-grabbers and exploiters through money-lending and illicit trade practices, all of whom were thrown out in a violent upsurge. This formulation was applied to all the resistance movements of the early nineteenth century Orissa. In the last chapter the nature and sequel to the peasant resistance movements would be studied.

All these chapters end with a conclusion in which the present scholar attempts to present his views on the topics discussed above. It is to be believed that the last phase of the nineteenth century witnessed the formative
period of the British rule in Orissa which resulted in the national awakening and consequent nationalist movements and subsequent socio-economic regeneration in the twentieth century.

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