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# Genealogies of the “Paika Rebellion”: Heterogeneities and Linkages

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## Abstract

The “Paika Rebellion” of 1817 in Orissa, India has been depicted by colonial officers as a local disturbance caused by the dissatisfaction of one powerful individual deprived of traditional privileges who instigated the *pāikas*. The nationalist reconstruction has depicted the event as a popular freedom movement involving various castes and classes of Orissan society. This has culminated in a current move to declare the “Paika Rebellion” the First Indian War of Independence. I would like to suggest a third perspective, which focuses on the heterogeneities and linkages of the Rebellion. It is important to note that the “Paika Rebellion” was a meeting point of plural genealogies: “tribal” revolts to protect autonomy, “peasant” resistance to secure livelihood, restorative attempts by the traditional landed class, and ruling class efforts to defend and expand authority. Appreciating the plural genealogies of the Rebellion leads to more perceptive understandings of the heterogeneous characteristics of popular movements and their aftermaths in modern India. Lastly, in order to go beyond colonial and dominant-caste centred perspectives, I propose that we name it the “Orissa Uprising of 1817”.

**Keywords:** Paika Rebellion; India; Orissa; tribe; caste; nationalism; the First War of Independence

## Introduction

The year 2017 marked the bicentennial of what is called the “Paika Rebellion” that took place in coastal Orissa<sup>1</sup> in 1817. Although the rebellion is relatively well studied as far as the available historical records are concerned, and well-remembered in coastal Orissa through various representations, including novels, dramas and legends,<sup>2</sup> I dare say we have not yet reached a satisfactory conclusion as to the most important question concerning its history: what exactly was the Paika Rebellion?

With the publication in 1957 of *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, vol. 1, edited by Harekrushna Mahtab and Sushil Chandra De, which has a chapter on “The Paik Rebellion of 1817”, all the basic facts of the rebellion that would form the basis for later research and discussion were put in black and white. Subsequently, with Sushil Chandra De’s *A Guide to Orissan Records*,

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<sup>1</sup>As this article deals mainly with historical Orissa, I will use “Orissa” and “Oriya” respectively for the current “Odisha” and “Odia”, save when I refer explicitly to the present time.

<sup>2</sup>Manoranjan Das wrote a play called *Bakshi Jagabandhu* in 1949, which reflects an Oriya nationalist rendering of the rebellion, centred on Bakshi Jagabandhu, a key protagonist of the event, as the hero (Das 1951; cf. Mubayi 1999, p. 45). Godabarish Mishra’s novel, *Atharaśaha Satara* (“Eighteen Seventeen” in Oriya) also depicts the heroism of Oriya *pāikas* under Bakshi Jagabandhu (Mishra 1986; cf. Behera 1999, p. 151). In 2000, there was an Oriya television serial called “Eighteen Seventeen” based on Godabarish Mishra’s novel of the same title.

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Vols. II and III, published in 1961 and 1962, major historical records concerning the rebellion became readily available to researchers. There has, since then, been only limited discovery of any further historical facts and data. The challenge to historians now lies in expanding the scope and resources for further study of the rebellion.

Yaaminey Mubayi's work, published in 1999, extensively discusses various aspects of the rebellion and adds a new perspective on how the memory of the rebellion influenced "popular consciousness and the formation of a regional ethnic identity".<sup>3</sup> This was part of the endeavour to understand the historical making of Oriya regional identity and Oriya nationalism from a constructivist perspective.<sup>4</sup>

Mubayi's article makes an important contribution to scholarship on the rebellion. What concerns me, however, is that there has not been sufficient critical reflection on the basic characteristics of the rebellion even in this significant work. The basic historical characterization of the rebellion remains the same. Let us have a look at how Mubayi begins her article:

In March 1817, the *paiks* (landed militia) of Khurda, near Puri, rose in rebellion against the Company government following their dispossession through the new tenurial policies. They were joined by the *paiks* of Kujang and Harispur, neighbouring principalities and the Khond tribals of Ghumsur.<sup>5</sup>

Here, the main protagonists of the rebellion were the "*paiks*" (landed militia) of Khurda who were then joined by "*paiks*" and "tribals" from other regions. The main reason for the uprising is the "dispossession" of their landed property. In her basic characterization of the event in terms of "whose rebellion for what purpose", Mubayi adheres to the orthodox historiography on the "Paika Rebellion" that has persisted from early imperialist to more recent nationalist writings.

What I would like to attempt in this article is to unsettle these basic premises of the rebellion's conventional historiography. Were the *pāikas* of Khurda really the main actors? Can we really say that the cause of the rebellion was the dispossession of *pāika* landed property? Against this argument, we can point out, for instance, that chronologically it was, in fact, the Khond "tribals" of Ghumsur who first initiated the rebellion, and who were then joined by the *pāikas* of Khurda, and not the other way around.

Strictly, even the categories "*pāikas*" and "tribals" are also problematic. Who were the "*pāikas*"? What we should recognize is that there were a great variety of participants in the rebellion, not only within the category "*pāikas*", but also within the other social nomenclatures in common currency. We have to be sensitive to the diversity of participation rather than limiting ourselves to using just the two categories, "*pāikas*" and "tribals". Further, in so far as the Khond "tribals" of Ghumsur are concerned, it is problematic to denominate them as just "tribals", since they were also militias and, therefore, "*pāikas*" in the Ghumsur kingdom.

The colonial government adopted the term "tribal" to distinguish certain social groups from the "caste" groups. This category continues to be in use till today for administrative purposes through the statutory term "Scheduled Tribes".<sup>6</sup> The administrative and political rationale for the use of these categories is understandable. However, in academia, the tribe-caste and tribe-peasant distinctions and continua have long been discussed and problematized.<sup>7</sup> Analytical terms such as "tribe", "caste" or "peasant" exist only as ideal types or contingent categories in particular contexts, and the reality cannot be reduced to or contained within these fixed categories.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Mubayi 1999, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup>Other works from a similar constructivist perspective include Bishnu Mohapatra's discussion of the process of construction of the Oriya identity through an analysis of the Kanchi Kaveri legend, and Subhakanta Behera's discussion of the construction of Oriya nationalism through literature (Mohapatra 1996; Behera 1999).

<sup>5</sup>Mubayi 1999, p. 44.

<sup>6</sup>"Scheduled Tribes" are statutorily designated indigenous peoples whose status and entitlements are acknowledged in the Constitution of India.

<sup>7</sup>Bailey 1961; Sinha 1965; Skoda 2005; Tanabe 2007; Hardenberg 2017, pp. 52–63.

<sup>8</sup>Sinha 1965.

Therefore, in the context of these terminological ambiguities, we must not only be careful when using such terms, we must also go beyond such limiting categories and be sensitive to the diversity of participants and non-participants in the rebellion, to the various ways of (non-)participation and to the varying reasons for their (non-)participation. Rather than ascribing the cause of the Rebellion to just the miseries and discontent of the *pāikas*, we should recognize the heterogeneities and linkages that together formed the event.

A historical approach sensitive to the assemblage of diversities is necessary in order to give due place to the different voices that have been excluded in hitherto dominant historiographies. This involves critical reflection on how to use historical archives. Obviously, we cannot simply reproduce the colonial viewpoint by repeating the hegemonic discourse in government records.<sup>9</sup> Neither can we impose “Indian” or “Oriya” proto-national subjecthood onto the “rebels” when “nation” in any sense was hardly nascent. How can we avoid these imperialist and nationalist readings and listen to heterogeneous and alternate voices? Firstly, it is necessary to read the archival records “against the grain” to unravel how the colonial discourse suppresses alternate, heterogeneous voices.<sup>10</sup> Careful attention to discrepancies within the archived text and what is “un-archived” in the archival categories and classifications would lead us to sense the existence of unheard and forgotten voices that are covered under or excluded by discursive power.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, it is necessary to expand the sources of our historical knowledge to the “non-canonical”, such as indigenous writings, legends, songs, drawings, martial arts etc.<sup>12</sup> The expansion of sources poses a challenge to historians to widen and transform the very episteme of the discipline beyond adhering to positivistic “facts” to include imagination, affect and practice. This article can only begin to broaden the agenda of research and suggest new questions for a better understanding of the heterogeneous history of the “Paika Rebellion” by means of sensitivity to diverse voices.

In the sections to follow, I will first look at the imperialist and nationalist frameworks that have been dominant in the historiography of the Paika Rebellion, and suggest a third perspective that recognizes the heterogeneities and linkages in the genealogies of the event. By genealogy, I have in mind the genealogical method in historical studies developed by Nietzsche and Foucault.<sup>13</sup> Genealogy “opposes itself to the search for ‘origins’”<sup>14</sup> as the attention to the origin of an event functions to maintain its identity and obscure the disparities and incoherencies of the event. The genealogical method pays attention not to the linear and progressive development of an identical subject – be it nation, citizen or modernity – but to the convergence of accidents and contingencies that gives rise to events, concepts and institutions in history. I say “plural genealogies” here as I would like to emphasize the social and historical heterogeneities inherent in the event that came to be called the “Paika Rebellion”, where various heritages and momenta encountered one another. There were various actors who were in different socio-historical positions in early nineteenth-century Orissa, where there was the simultaneous presence of historical non-simultaneities:<sup>15</sup> some continued with the socio-political forms of their pre-colonial world, whereas others began to adapt to the new modes and institutions of colonial rule.

<sup>9</sup>Guha 1983b.

<sup>10</sup>Walter Benjamin says, in his famous “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain” (Benjamin 1969: 256–57). Spivak adopts reading “against the grain” from Benjamin as a way of deconstructing historiography, and uncovering the asymmetrical gaps between subaltern, elite authority and historian despite their apparent discursive complicity (Spivak 1985, pp. 345, 351, 355–56). Reading text, archive, and historiography against the grain unravels the effects of power and discourse on subject-formation.

<sup>11</sup>As Gyanendra Pandey points out, the archive, as a site of remembrance, is also a project of excluding and forgetting. Archiving necessarily involves the process of “un-archiving” (Pandey 2012).

<sup>12</sup>Chatterjee 2012, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup>Nietzsche 2007; Foucault 1977.

<sup>14</sup>Foucault 1977, p. 141.

<sup>15</sup>I employ Ernst Bloch’s term “non-simultaneity” without implying the teleological assumptions inherent in Bloch’s argument (Bloch 1977).

These heterogeneities and their linkages, rather than a single aim – be it nationalist or restorative<sup>16</sup> – formed the event called the “Paika Rebellion”.

### Imperialist Historiography: A Limited and Local Disturbance

The Paika Rebellion has been depicted in imperialist historiography and the reports of colonial officers as a local disturbance caused by the dissatisfaction of a powerful individual, Bakshi Jagabandhu (Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Mohapatra Bhramarbar Rai), who instigated the *pāikas*, the traditionally privileged landed militia, to rise in revolt. It is often emphasized that the insurgency was motivated and prompted by an individual; those who took part in the uprising were limited to the *pāikas*, who formed but a small section of society, and the geographical extent of the uprising was limited to Khurda and other small estates.

For example, W. Ewer, the Commissioner of Cuttack, remarks in his famous report dated May 13, 1818 that “(t)he rising in Khoordah [*sic*] was quite an insulated movement, prompted by despair, hatred, and a thirst for revenge on the part of Jugbundoo [*sic*] and the misery beyond endurance under which the people of Khoordah were sinking,” and that “[i]t is essential to mark that no one zamindar, ryot, or inhabitant of whatever description of the Mogulbundee<sup>17</sup> ... , properly so termed, had any concern whatever with the insurrection.”<sup>18</sup> W. B. Bayley, Acting Chief Secretary to Government, in his report of August 10, 1817, also says, “In the various reports submitted by the Magistrate regarding these disturbances the Khundytes [*sic*] and Paiks are alone mentioned as being actively concerned in the outrages.”<sup>19</sup>

As regards the *pāikas*, who were named as the main insurgents, the colonial evaluation is quite severe. Regarding the treatment of *pāikas* in the aftermath of the rebellion, Forrester, in his report of October 17, 1819, says, “They are a miserable dastardly race; the sooner they are allowed to sink down among the common roots the better.”<sup>20</sup> This type of opinion of the *pāikas* is reflected in imperialist historiographies, such as Sterling’s on Orissa. He says, “The Paiks of landed militia of the Rajwara, combine with the most profound barbarism, and the blindest devotion to the will of their chiefs, a ferocity and unquietness of disposition,” and that “the Khandaits or ancient Zamindars of Orissa ... are grossly stupid, barbarous, debauched, tyrannical, and slaves of the most grovelling superstition.”<sup>21</sup>

The reason imperialist historiography gave the name the “Paika Rebellion” to the uprising of 1817 in Orissa should be obvious. The intention was to claim that the rebellion never had popular support and that the insurgents were limited to a small class of “barbarous” landed militia, called *pāikas*, who resided in the hills and jungles. It wanted to show that the rebellion was never supported by the majority of the Oriya population in the plains of Mogulbundee who lived happily under the British government’s rule. Imperialist historiography emphasized the cleavages between various actors and social groups within Orissa and India, whose class interests and cultural temper, as well as degree of civility, differed significantly, making overall cooperation meaningless and impossible.

### Nationalist Historiography: Nationalism’s Originary Moment

In contrast, nationalist historiography has depicted the same event as a popular freedom movement, or at least its precursor. It was Harekrushna Mahtab, a scholar-politician, who set the tone for a nationalist interpretation of the event with his *Oḍiṣa Itihāsa*, originally published in 1948. Here, Mahtab

<sup>16</sup>Hermann Kulke and Subhakanta Behera argue that the rebellion had a strong restorative character (Kulke 1978; Behera 2014, p. 143).

<sup>17</sup>Mogulbundee refers to “that portion of Cuttack paying revenue to government” (Hamilton 1820, p. 41).

<sup>18</sup>From W. Ewer to W. B. Bayley, Calcutta, May 13, 1818 (Hereafter “Ewer Report”), in *Selections from the Correspondence*, Vol. I (hereafter *Selections I*), pp. 3, 6.

<sup>19</sup>Report of W. B. Bayley, Acting Chief Secretary to Government, regarding Cuttack, August 10, 1817 (hereafter, “Bayley Report”) in De 1961, pp. 16–17.

<sup>20</sup>From W. Forrester to the Secretary to the Commissioner of Cuttack, October 17, 1819, in *Selections I*, p. 113.

<sup>21</sup>Sterling 1904, p. 48.

glorifies Jagabandhu as one who sacrificed his life for the freedom of Orissa.<sup>22</sup> Mahtab's *Oḍiśa Itihāsa* contained some factual errors – for instance, it was wrong to state that the British killed Jagabandhu in the jungle and that the Khurda king joined the rebellion with the *pāikas*. These errors were subsequently rectified in the 1957 publication, *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, vol. 1, edited by Mahtab and De.<sup>23</sup> The academic standard was thus established for the nationalist study of the Paika Rebellion. Various nationalist historiographies on the event were to follow after this.

Though evaluations of the degree to which the Paika Rebellion had spread and the extent of cooperation among different social groups in the rebellion differ among various nationalist historians, the common framework depicts the event as one of the originary moments in the history of Oriya and Indian nationalist movements. Mahtab locates the early nineteenth-century rebellions in the history of Indian nationalism as follows:

The real fight for freedom actually took place in 1920 when, under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, non-violent non-cooperation was declared. That was the culmination of the process which started in the first quarter of the 19th century and temporarily ended in 1857. Historically speaking, the first half of the 19th century was full of resistance to the British everywhere. ... If we look upon the movement of non-violent non-cooperation as the full-blossomed lotus on the surface of serene water [*sic*] of nationalism, we have to treat the movements of resistance which took place in the first half of the 19th century as the roots of the plant deep down in the dark corner of history, full of mud, strife and corruption.<sup>24</sup>

Though recognizing the historical importance of the event as the originary moment of the later nationalist fight for freedom, the early nationalist historians were modest in the assessment of the rebellion itself. Mahtab and De say that “the insurrection was not pre-planned” and that “it was confined to a few *paiks* and their leaders, and the mass remained passive spectators.” They also plainly admit that the “Paik rebellion in itself was not something of outstanding features as an insurrection, it could hardly make any impression on the British power, and a few months' exertion on the part of the British force could bring the whole situation under control.”<sup>25</sup>

In a slightly different vein, the Paika Rebellion has also been seen as an early expression of Oriya identity and Oriya nationalism. G. N. Dash, for example, says, “The Paik Rebellion of 1817 A.D. may be interpreted as the spontaneous though premature outburst of this intensified feeling and aspiration” of “oneness taking shape among the Oriyas”.<sup>26</sup> He sees the process leading to the rebellion as “the first and the formative phase of Oriya nationalism”.<sup>27</sup>

Though earlier and moderate nationalist historiographies, such as those by Mahtab, De and Dash,<sup>28</sup> interpreted the Paika Rebellion as a yet premature and formative movement in want of systematic organization of the masses, later nationalist historians argue that the rebellion was indeed the origin of freedom movement in Orissa, and even India, involving various castes and classes who together fought against the tyranny of foreign, colonial rule. We may note a major transformation from the earlier nationalist historians during the 1950s and 1960s to the later nationalist historians after the 1980s in the understanding of the nature of the rebellion.

<sup>22</sup>Mahtab 1948. In fact, prior to this publication, earlier historiographies on Orissa by Oriya historians did not give a heroic tone to either Jagabandhu or the *pāikas*. For Pyarimohun Acharya, who wrote the first history of Orissa, *Oḍiśāra Itihāsa*, Jagabandhu led the rebellion in order to put the Khurda king back on the throne, to recover the kingdom and also his estate (Acharya 1925, pp. 141–43). The depiction of the rebellion and of Jagabandhu by Krupa Sindhu Mishra, in his *Utkala Itihāsa*, is more elaborate but the unheroic tone remains more or less the same (Mishra 1926, pp. 303–15; Behera 2014, pp. 156–57).

<sup>23</sup>Mahtab and De 1957. However, in Mahtab's *Oḍiśa Itihāsa* these errors were not rectified even in later editions (Mahtab 1948; Behera 2014, pp. 157–58).

<sup>24</sup>Mahtab 1957, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup>Mahtab and De 1957, pp. 145–46.

<sup>26</sup>Dash 1978, p. 363.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>Mahtab and De 1957; De 1962; and Dash 1978.

Jagannath Patnaik, for example, says, “mostly the Paiks and the Ryots of Khurda participated” and that “[a]lthough it originated in Khurda, it spread gradually to other places.”<sup>29</sup> Further he says, “Of course, the Paiks of Khurda were in forefront [*sic*], but the entire civil population was reported to have participated. ... Thus, judged from this angle, the rebellion of 1817 was not a mere Paik rebellion, it was a freedom movement of the Khurda people to throw off the foreign yoke.”<sup>30</sup> K. C. Jena, as well, says, “It was certainly not a rebellion confined to the Paiks; it was much more than that. It should be admitted that much before 1857, in Orissa, there was a resistance against the British authorities and that had certainly come from almost all classes of the people. The Paiks came from all sections of the Khaṇḍāyatas and they constituted more than 80% of the total population.”<sup>31</sup> Though there is an obvious exaggeration in the percentage of *pāikas* in the population, his intention of depicting the Paika Rebellion as a popular freedom movement is clear.

In the nationalist zeal to interpret the Paika Rebellion as the origin of the freedom movement, B. C. Ray raises the evaluation of the rebellion even higher and states, “[T]here is enough justification to call [the] Orissa Revolution of 1817 as the first significant regional Freedom Movement of India” as “[n]owhere in India on the regional level, in the pre-nationalist age, a Freedom Movement was ever so carefully planned and so vigorously launched.”<sup>32</sup> P. K. Pattanaik, quoting B. C. Ray, goes even further when he says, “[T]he freedom movement launched by the people of Khurda in 1817 A.D. may justifiably [be] regarded as the ‘First Indian War of Independence’.”<sup>33</sup>

Thus, later nationalist historians such as Jagannath Patnaik, K. C. Jena, B. C. Ray and P. K. Pattanaik interpret the Paika Rebellion as an originary moment of Oriya nationalism through three claims: 1) that the *pāikas*, who were the main insurgents, consisted of all classes and castes; 2) that there was widespread popular support for the Paika Rebellion; and 3) that the rebellion spread beyond Khurda to other regions in Orissa.<sup>34</sup> To this, Ray and Pattanaik add a further claim, namely 4) the high degree of planning, vigorous execution, and the long duration of the revolt.<sup>35</sup>

This kind of nationalist historical discourse has now also become dominant in the narratives of the governments of Odisha and India. The wave of passion to push forward the Paika Rebellion as the “First War of Independence” surged with the bicentennial commemoration in 2017. On July 19, 2017, Odisha’s Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, urged Union Home Minister, Rajnath Singh, to declare the 1817 Paika Rebellion as the first War of Indian Independence on the occasion of its bicentenary celebration.<sup>36</sup> Further, Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister, Prakash Javadekar, said, at a function held in Bhubaneswar on October 22, 2017 to commemorate two hundred years of the rebellion, “Odisha’s Paika rebellion will find a place as the First War of Independence in the 2018 history books and include details of the rebellion against the then British rule.”<sup>37</sup> There is certainly political momentum to characterize the Paika Rebellion as the First War of Independence.

### Beyond Imperialist and Nationalist Historiographies: Heterogeneities and Linkages

In this article, I would like to suggest a third perspective, which attempts to take into account the heterogeneities and linkages in the rebellion. I will pay special attention to the plural genealogies inherent in the event and how they are linked.

<sup>29</sup>Patnaik 1988, p. 245.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>31</sup>Jena 1985, p. 95. Khaṇḍāyata is a peasant-militia caste from which many *pāikas* were recruited.

<sup>32</sup>Ray 2001, pp. 198–99.

<sup>33</sup>Pattanaik 2005, p. 99.

<sup>34</sup>Patnaik 1988; Jena 1985; Ray 1996, 2001; Pattanaik 2005.

<sup>35</sup>Ray 1996, 2001; Pattanaik 2005.

<sup>36</sup>“Declare Paika Bidroha ...,” *The Pioneer*, July 20, 2017.

<sup>37</sup>“Odisha’s 1817 Paika rebellion ...,” *The New Indian Express*, October 22, 2017; “Paika Bidroha’ to be named ...,” *The Hindu*, October 24, 2017.

The possibility of plural historical narratives on “rebellions” and “insurgencies” in colonial India was first brought to light by Ranajit Guha and the Subaltern Studies collective. Guha emphasized the importance of understanding the subaltern consciousness in its own right, and showed how plural viewpoints and narratives can and do exist coevally in practice.<sup>38</sup> The Subaltern Studies collective further developed a hermeneutic approach attentive to the plurality, multifacetedness, and ambiguity of meanings and values, utilizing a vast range of historical sources, both conventional and unconventional, with sensitivity to the oppressed and alternate voices.<sup>39</sup> In this tradition, which deploys “empathy and imagination” in the nuanced interpretation of multifaceted historical “facts”, there is now the recognition of “the impossibility of a singular narrative and understanding”.<sup>40</sup> A historical event such as a rebellion cannot be understood as having one cause or one aim, but must be seen as a confluence of heterogeneous, contingent and even contradictory factors and processes.

In this light, it is important to note that the Paika Rebellion was the confluence of plural genealogies, namely “tribal” revolts to protect autonomy, “peasant” resistance to secure livelihood, restorative attempts by the traditionally landed class, and the ruling class pursuing the defence and expansion of power and authority. As Sudipta Sen points out, there was a “juxtaposition of such disparate elements” that constituted the Paika Rebellion.<sup>41</sup> Further entangled with these were the British colonial government’s endeavour to establish its rule, and the attempts of various Indian actors to expand and secure their positions and holdings in the new situation: Bengali and Oriya government clerks, new purchasers of land who became landlords, feudatory rajas who secured their position under the colonial government, etc. Each of these sections of society provided historical momentum to the rebellion and later contributed to the Oriya and Indian nationalist movements in their own different ways. The heterogeneous genealogies of the rebellion, including that of those sections of the population which did not take part in the rebellion, have all played important roles in the formation of Oriya and Indian nationalisms through dialogues and negotiations, the dynamism of which continues till today.<sup>42</sup>

### *Ghumsar Uprising of 1817*

Let us look at the course of the rebellion in order to trace what I mean by heterogeneous genealogies and their linkages. The rebellion began at the end of March 1817, when four hundred Khonds, or the so-called “Chuars” from Ghumsar, entered Banpur region of Khurda kingdom and were soon joined by the *pāikas* of Khurda led by Baksi Jagabandhu.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the so-called “tribal” Khonds from

<sup>38</sup>Guha 1983a, 1985.

<sup>39</sup>For representative writings of Subaltern Studies, see Guha and Spivak eds. 1988 and Guha ed. 1998.

<sup>40</sup>Banerjee-Dube and Gooptu 2018, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup>Sen 2017, p. 94. Sudipta Sen’s attention to “the discrepant histories of the Paik Rebellion” and the existence of the “disparate groups” of “landless peasants, dispossessed zamindars, tribal Khonds of the northern hilly tracts, poor *malāngī* saltpan workers of the coast, as well as the priests of Puri” (p. 79) demonstrates sensitivity to the polyvalent nuances of what constituted the rebellion. His argument about “a collective notion of an *ahistorical* past”, whose curvilinear motion sets up “the possibilities of a world that *should have been*”, of equity and justice (p. 81) points us towards understanding the “moral” foundation of the rebellion (Thompson 1971). I have some reservations, though, about Sen’s perception of the temporary unity of these disparate groups around “a seemingly impossible vision of the expulsion of the British from their kingdom” (pp. 78–79). While recognizing people’s shared anger and dissatisfaction founded on the sense of injustice, I would like to promote the contingent and discrepant character of the rebellion further, instead of seeing unity in a collective vision, and pay attention to the various motives and interests of divergent groups. The shared “moral” sense provided the basis for imagining possibilities of a world that *should have been*, but not necessarily for forging a common vision for collective action. Unfortunately, Sen’s otherwise fine and perceptive article contains some confusion regarding the time frame of historical events and the process by which Jagabandhu assumed leadership. For example, the confinement of the Raja of Khurda in Cuttack took place not in October 1803 but in January 1805. Also, the insurgents led by Jagabandhu entered Puri not in October 1803 (pp. 78–79) but in April 1817. The initial resistance by the Khurda king against the British in 1804 took place under the counsellorship of Jaykrushna Rajguru. Bakshi Jagabandhu came to the insurgency only in 1817.

<sup>42</sup>See Tanabe 1995 on the martial arts (*pāika ākharā*) competition organized by the Orissan state government to celebrate the tradition of the *pāikas* as a living national culture of Orissa.

<sup>43</sup>Bayley Report, in De 1961, pp. xiv, 10; Toynbee 1873, p. 16.

Ghumsar estate triggered the rebellion. These Khonds were from the “Maliah hill tracts”, and though they did not pay tribute to the Raja of Ghumsar, they acknowledged his supremacy and provided military services in times of war and other need.<sup>44</sup>

What was the background to the Khonds’ uprising in March 1817? By the end of 1766, Northern Circars including Ghumsar came under British rule. From then on, there was constant unrest in Ghumsar throughout most of the nineteenth century. The tribute fixed by the British was heavy and was also frequently increased. Further, the British officials often interfered in the succession affairs of the zamindary. Hence there was discontent towards the British among the people in Ghumsar, including the Khonds who served as the zamindar’s militias.

Dhananjaya Bhanja, the Raja (zamindar) of Ghumsar, was summoned by the British authorities in 1814 for the crime of murdering some of his relatives. Dhananjaya failed to obey the summons. The British subsequently declared the zamindary of Ghumsar forfeited. Then, Dhananjaya submitted himself in June 1815 to the Collector of Ganjam and was imprisoned. During his absence, Dora Bisoi, a Khond leader well known for his vigour and leadership, managed the practical affairs of the estate.<sup>45</sup> It was this Dora Bisoi who led the Khond uprising in 1817 and again in 1836.

In December 1816, Pindaris (irregular Muslim<sup>46</sup> horsemen attached to the Marathas<sup>47</sup>) invaded Ghumsar. In this chaotic situation, the Khonds, under the leadership of Dora Bisoi, rose in revolt against the British in February 1817 and entered Banpur the following month. It was during this period of such complicated power struggles between the British, Pindaris, zamindars and the Khonds that the Khonds began their uprising.<sup>48</sup> Hence the situation was never one of simple opposition between the “British colonizers versus the Indian proto-nationalists”.

It should be noted that the name Chuar (or “Choor” according to W. B. Bayley) was used to describe the Khond insurgents in the British report.<sup>49</sup> The name reminds us of the “Chuar Rebellion” that took place from 1798 to 1816 in Jungle Mahals in present-day Midnapur and Bankura districts of West Bengal. The insurgents in the Chuar Rebellion included tribals, ryots (peasants) and *pāikas*. W. B. Bayley says, “The disorder which so long prevailed in the pergunnah [pargana, a subdivision of a district] of Bogree and Rypore in Midnapore as well as those now prevailing in Kemmedy and Mohury in the District of Ganjam, exhibits precisely the same features ... In all of them, too, the nature of the country and the terror inspired by the outrage of the paiks have proved the principal obstacles to reestablishment of tranquility.”<sup>50</sup>

In regions such as Ghumsar, Jungle Mahals, and Khurda, it was the anger of tribal people and the ryots opposed to the oppressive British government who demanded unduly high tax and the unreliable zamindars who often pursued only their self-interests, linked with the dissatisfaction of the *pāikas* who were dispossessed of their jagirs<sup>51</sup> that provided the basis for popular insurrection. The categories “tribals”, “ryots” and “*pāikas*” here overlapped and were part of a continuum that included a whole variety of different classes and clusters of the populace. It should be stressed that those who participated in the insurrections in Ghumsar, Jungle Mahals and Khurda share the common feature of being from forests and hills, and not from the alluvial plains. Here we may find a clue as to who suffered the most with the advent of colonialism.

<sup>44</sup>Behara 1984, p. 3, pp. 28–29.

<sup>45</sup>Behara 1984; Patnaik 1992; Nanda and Mishra 2017.

<sup>46</sup>While the majority of their leaders were Muslims, they were drawn from many different communities and were themselves quite a heterogeneous group, with many Muslims among them even practising an eclectic faith, worshipping many gods and goddesses.

<sup>47</sup>Between 1800 to 1818, the Pindaris and their leaders raided and plundered at will, independent of Maratha leadership, though they never officially repudiated the overlordship of the Marathas.

<sup>48</sup>Behara 1984; Patnaik 1992; Nanda and Mishra 2017.

<sup>49</sup>Bayley Report, in De 1961, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup>The British government abolished the jagirs of the *pāikas* in these regions immediately after annexation, as they deemed that these politico-military privileges granted to the traditional militias were not desirable under British rule.



In the so-called Paika Rebellion, the Khond and *pāika* insurgents were also supported by “tribal” Saoras (or “Sours”, according to Sterling), whose role in the insurrection was described as being that of “agents employed to carry into execution most of the schemes of revenge planned by its instigators”.<sup>52</sup> Aside from the *pāikas*, the so-called tribal groups, such as Khonds and Saoras, played vital roles in the rebellion, and this point needs to be emphasized.

### *Pāika and Non-Pāika Participants*

Here, it will be useful to discuss who the *pāikas* were, as well as the involvement of non-*pāikas* other than Khonds and Saoras, in the rebellion. *Pāikas* served as foot soldiers in the Orissan kingdoms. According to Sterling, the *pāikas* “comprehend all casts [*sic*] and classes, chiefly perhaps the Chasa or cultivating tribe” but also “Kandras, Pans and Bewaris” as well as “Kands”, “Mussulmans and Telingas”.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, it seems that there were many kinds of *pāikas* who were recruited from peasants, pastoralists, “low” castes, “tribals” as well as from among Muslims.

In Ghumsar, the *pāikas* were mainly Khonds. In Khurda also, as various family histories and legends tell us, many *pāikas* had tribal, peasant and pastoralist origins. There was a “military labour market”<sup>54</sup> in early modern India and Orissa where people – mainly peasants, pastoralists and tribals – searched for better positions as warriors and officials across kingdoms. According to the palm-leaf administrative records from the late eighteenth century kept at the house of the accountant (*bhuim̃ muḷa*) at Barabati under Garh Manitri in Khurda kingdom,<sup>55</sup> the payments to soldiers (*dala bartana*) took the form of a kind of contract and were determined for the year. The wage for twelve months is first stated and, for reasons which are not clear, one month’s wage was deducted, leaving eleven months’ wage as the final amount.<sup>56</sup>

To give an example of how military positions were sought after and acquired, let us look at the case of the chief of Garh Manitri in Khurda kingdom. The following legend illustrates how four brothers of unknown origin from a little kingdom wandered around to obtain the office of the chief by military and other merits:

There were four *Kṣatriya* brothers from Athagarh (a little kingdom in Orissa) who were searching for military positions in Khurda kingdom.<sup>57</sup> One day, they carried the king’s palanquin across a strong current of the Mahanadi river when local cowherds were unable to do so. The king, pleased with their prowess, appointed them to the position of doorkeepers.<sup>58</sup> After that, when the kingdom was attacked, the four brothers are said to have saved the queen by hiding her in the forest. The queen insisted that they be placed in better positions in the royal army and they were appointed as the door guards of the four cardinal directions. Later, the four brothers were successful in conquering the fort of Kanjia by attacking it when the formidable eighteen brothers of the fort were bathing in the pond.<sup>59</sup> Pleased, the king wished to elevate them to

<sup>52</sup> Sterling 1904, p. 52.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Kolff 1990.

<sup>55</sup> Palm-leaf scripts from 1776–1806. The documents dealt with here are state administrative records produced by officials of Khurda kingdom who resided in the locality. After such records were made, one copy was sent to the capital while one was kept in the locality (Pattanaik 1979). Interestingly, both the format and the vocabulary of the documents closely resemble those of the Mughal and Maratha administrative records. For example, see A. R. Kulkarni (1993) on source materials of the Maratha revenue records. As such, they are an example of the extension of the advanced administrative technology of the early modern state described by Perlin as “the ‘library’ of categories and techniques” (Perlin 1985, p. 435).

<sup>56</sup> For details of the “system of entitlements” including the contract with *pāikas*, see Tanabe 2005.

<sup>57</sup> The chief is sometimes derogatorily and secretly referred to as “Nahaka” by the villagers, implying the Saora origin of his lineage.

<sup>58</sup> This account that they performed the cowherds’ job as palanquin carriers is considered degrading for the chief’s lineage and told as a “secret” history in the village.

<sup>59</sup> This story is often told in the context of implying the chief’s cunning character and brutality.

the position of *dalabeherā* [chief of fort]. The three oldest brothers were given the forts of Atri, Bajipur and Kadaribari<sup>60</sup> as *dalabeherās*,<sup>61</sup> but at that time there was no fort available within Khurda kingdom for the youngest brother. The king promised to arrange a territory for the youngest brother, but this man said that being a *Kṣatriya* he would win his territory in battle. One day, during his journey in search of territory, he came to the hill of Rāmacaṇḍī and offered her *matṛ pūjā* (mother worship). The goddess told him that her abode, Garh Manitri, was at that time occupied by a Muslim chief under the King of Ranpur, a feudatory state southwest of Khurda, and that if he was willing to fight against him and conquer the fort, she would help him. The youngest of the *Kṣatriya* brothers, having obtained permission from and recognition by the Khurda king, and with the blessings of Rāmacaṇḍī, fought the battle and succeeded in appropriating the territory. Since then, it is said, Garh Manitri was annexed to Khurda kingdom and the youngest brother became the ancestor of the present chief. [Based on interviews by the author]

Those with military valour succeeded in being recruited as *pāikas*, and those with literary and accounting skills gained positions as *karaṇas* (scribes). A proverb from coastal Orissa succinctly depicts caste mobility: “*Khaṇḍāyata baḍhile karaṇa, chindile caṣā*”, meaning “If a *khaṇḍāyata* (peasant-militia) moves up, he becomes a *karaṇa*, but if he goes down, he becomes an ordinary cultivator.” Military and administrative positions, far from being confined to specific caste ascriptions, were open to attainment by people of different backgrounds. The boundary between various castes and tribes was more flexible than what we imagine today. Once people gained these military and administrative positions, such positions then became hereditary offices with entitlements to land and payment.

Not only were *pāikas* recruited from a great variety of people, but a great variety of people were also involved in Khurda kingdom’s military establishment. A late eighteenth-century administrative record (*bhīṇa*) from Garh Manitri shows that those who received “*pāika bartana*” (payment for *pāikas*) included not only foot soldiers but also administrators, such as the “state scribe” (*koṭha karaṇa*), “collector of fines” (*taṇḍakāra*), the “labourer” (*kāṇḍī*) and the “military musician” (*bājantari*).<sup>62</sup> Those who worked as foot soldiers included, besides *khaṇḍāyatas* and *mahānayakas*, one *daḷai* (sub-chief) belonging to the cowherd caste and three Muslim fort watchmen. In the Khurda region, *kāṇḍī* refers to the *bāuri* caste, belonging to the present “Scheduled Caste”<sup>63</sup> category. They appear to have been engaged in miscellaneous jobs, such as collecting fuel, chopping firewood, carrying loads and constructing temporary camping huts during military campaigns. The military musicians (*bājantari*) included *hāris*, who were drummers, and one *khaṇḍāyata* who played the trumpet.

Here, it should be noted that while it was indeed possible for people from various castes, classes and religions to be employed as *pāikas*, there were also large differences in power, rank and payment between various *pāika* and other military posts in different kingdoms. In the case of Garh Manitri, the *dalabeherā* received around 544 *kāhāṇa* worth of payment in land and money, the *koṭha karaṇa* received 133 *kāhāṇa*, and *pāikas* 90 *kāhāṇa* on average, while military musicians received only 27 *kāhāṇa* on average, and twenty-one *bauri* (labourers) a mere 15 *kāhāṇa* on average.

As regards the percentage of *pāikas* among the population, *circa* 1800 in Garh Manitri, there were 62 *oḍa-pāika*<sup>64</sup> households out of 291, 23.7 per cent of the total number of households. This

<sup>60</sup>The forts of Atri, Bajipur and Kadaribari were annexed to Khurda kingdom after 1592 as they are not listed in the record of the arrangement of 1592 by Raja Mansingh (see Sterling 1904, p. 45). The legend probably reflects the historical fact that the three brothers were granted these newly conquered forts by the king.

<sup>61</sup>This tallies with the fact that the members of the lineage of the chief of Garh Manitri considered those of the lineages of these chiefs as belonging to the same lineage (*baṃśa*), and continued to have exchange relations with them, besides observing ritual obligations as lineage members, till the 1960s.

<sup>62</sup>Palm-leaf scripts from 1776–1806. See above n. 55.

<sup>63</sup>“Scheduled Castes” are historically disadvantaged caste groups whose status and entitlements are acknowledged in the Constitution of India.

<sup>64</sup>Oḍa or Oḍiā then referred to the *khaṇḍāyatas* of Khurda.

percentage is quite high as Garh Mantri was an important fort in Khurda kingdom. If we look at the census records, the number of “Khandayats” (*khaṇḍāyatas*) in Puri district was only 8,193 (0.87 per cent out of a total population of 944,998) in 1891, and that of “Chasas” (*caṣās*) 273,715 (28.96 per cent).<sup>65</sup> By 1931, however, the number of “Khandayats” increased more than tenfold to 112,571 (10.87 per cent out of a total population of 1,035,154), while the number of “Chasas” decreased to 231,021 (22.32 per cent). One census report mentions “the desire of the Chasas to improve their social status by converting themselves into Khandayats [sic]”,<sup>66</sup> and it seems that an increasing number of agriculturalists claimed to be *khaṇḍāyatas* in later years. So we can surmise that the percentage of *khaṇḍāyata* at the beginning of the nineteenth century constituted a small and privileged class.

### Effects of British Rule on Various Groups

In 1803, the British conquered Orissa during the Second Anglo-Maratha War. Before attacking the Marathas in Cuttack, the British wished to negotiate with the Khurda king for a clear and safe passage through his territory. They also requested that the king supply troops, munitions and other kinds of help that might be required. The Khurda king agreed on the condition of payment of rupees one lakh, and also in the hope that the British would return the most fertile parganas or districts in the coastal wet land, namely Rahang, Serai, Chaubiskud and Lembai, including Purushottama Kshetra, that is Puri, which had been taken away by the Marathas. The British succeeded in acquiring Maratha Orissa in 1803, but the Khurda king’s expectation of recovering the territory was not met. The Khurda king, Mukunda Deva II, and his councillor, Jaykrushna Rajguru, then decided to assert their right by force. The king sent his men several times to collect revenue from the four districts, and often raided villages in the British territory near Pipli.

Provoked by these incidents, the British decided to wage a campaign against Khurda. Khurda kingdom was then conquered in December 1804. King Mukunda Deba of Khurda was captured and imprisoned in Cuttack and later in Midnapur, while Jaykrushna Rajguru, the royal councillor, was given the death penalty. The former territory of Khurda kingdom became *khas mahal*, or government estate, under the direct management of the colonial administration. Major Fletcher, who led the conquest of Khurda, was appointed to the administration in 1805. When he came into office, he confiscated the land part of entitlement belonging to *daḷabeherās* (chief of fort), *daḷais* (sub-chief), *pāikas* and other office holders, which the British saw as “jagirs”.<sup>67</sup> The British viewed these “jagirs” as having been given for “political” office that had to be abolished under the new regime. Only those employed as *sarabarākāras*,<sup>68</sup> or tax-collecting officers under the colonial government, received new “jagirs” (land given in lieu of service) with quit-rent.

The people most severely hit by the early British colonial policy were the privileged *pāikas* and their superiors, *daḷabeherā* and *daḷai*. They were to suffer much hardship due to the confiscation of their “jagir” estates and the increase in their tax burden, besides the humiliation of being deprived of their honoured position as the king’s local representatives and soldiers. So it was natural that the *pāikas* were very dissatisfied at the beginning of colonization and eagerly participated in the rebellion.

This does not mean, however, that there was no misery among the other classes at the beginning of the colonization. There indeed was. Land tax was the major source of income for the Company government in the early nineteenth century, and Major Fletcher attempted to maximize revenue from

<sup>65</sup>Census of Puri district, 1891.

<sup>66</sup>Lacey 1987, p. 273.

<sup>67</sup>Since the British did not understand the mechanism of the precolonial system of entitlements, they mistook the land part of the entitlement as jagir or tax-free land. However, in fact, jagir (*jāgiri*), or tax-free land, was only granted to ministers and generals who were state-level high officers above the fort unit level in Khurda. See Tanabe 1999, 2005.

<sup>68</sup>The word *sarabarākāra* as well as its system was a new import into the area by the British. Ewer Report, para. 177, in *Selections I*, p. 61.

Khurda. As a result, through successive temporary settlements the amount of land tax increased at fluctuating and arbitrary rates from Rs 114,320 in gross in 1805–1806, to Rs 114,914 in 1813–1814, to Rs 122,306 in 1814–1815, and to Rs 141,845 in 1815–1816.<sup>69</sup> The result of the rise in tax was devastating for the peasants of Khurda, and many deserted their villages to escape from the oppression. In 1813, W. Trower wrote: “It appears evident that a system of extreme tyranny, violence and oppression has existed, which has proved ruinous to this once flourishing country by the consequent desertion of a great proportion of the cultivators of the soil. ... I am concerned to state too and [*sic*] that this system is to be dated from the conquest of Khurda by the British troops....”<sup>70</sup>

The condition of the Oriya cultivators was further aggravated by the depreciation of the cowry (*kauri*), which was the main currency in the local market as well as for the payment of tax in cash to the king.<sup>71</sup> The rate of exchange between cowries and the silver rupee was three to four *kāhāṇa*<sup>72</sup> per rupee under the Marathas.<sup>73</sup> The exchange rate according to the 1770 record in Garh Manitri was four *kāhāṇa* to a rupee. After colonization, however, as tax was required to be paid in rupees in 1809 and copper coins were introduced in 1811, the value of cowry depreciated to as low as 7 *kāhāṇa* per rupee.<sup>74</sup> The people in the locality also suffered as a result of this depreciation of the cowry, which they had been using for a long time as local market exchange and tax payment.

It should be noted that there were both general hardships that hit almost everybody in the forest and hill areas of Orissa as well as the specific impacts of the changed circumstances on people belonging to different classes, castes and gender. Besides the Khonds, Saoras and ryots mentioned in the British report, and although we do not have enough evidence here, it is possible that other non-*pāikas*, such as *bāuris* and *hāris*, who were indispensable in military campaigns as service-providers and military musicians in Khurda kingdom, also took part in the rebellion. Regarding the participation of ryots, W. Ewer says, “the *pāikas*’ first partial successes ... emboldened every ryot on the estate to join heartily and decidedly in the cause.”<sup>75</sup>

It is not clear which social groups Ewer refers to by the term “ryot”, but it does seem that there was a large participation of non-*pāikas* in the rebellion. Whether ryots and low-caste people participated in the rebellion with the same passion as the *pāikas*, however, remains an open question and an unlikely possibility. W. B. Bayley says, “It has been already observed that Paeks [*sic*] and Khundytes [*sic*] have been the active perpetrators of the outrages that have taken place, and that the body of the people whatever may be the grievances of which they may have cause to complain do not appear to have been directly concerned in openly resisting the authority of Government....”<sup>76</sup> Though we may note that the participants in the rebellion were not restricted to a small section of *pāikas* and included a variety of people, it was far from a national, common uprising.

### *Internal Cleavages, Heterogeneities and Pluralities of the Rebellion*

Going back to the unfolding of the rebellion, we may note differences and cleavages among the Oriya and other Indian actors. After the Pindaris entered Ghumsar, Charan Patnaik, a leading Oriya *sarabarākāra*, or tax-collecting officer under the colonial government in Khurda, informed the

<sup>69</sup>“The Rate Report of the Settlement Officer,” From W. C. Taylor to the Collector of Puri, Khordah, November 30, 1879, in *Selections from the Correspondence*, Vol. II (hereafter, *Selections II*), part I, para. 8–11. p. 26.

<sup>70</sup>W. Trower, Collector of Cuttack to G. Warde, Secretary to the Member, Board of Revenue, dated November 12, 1813, quoted in De 1962, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup>Ewer Report. Also see reports collected in De 1961.

<sup>72</sup>One *kāhāṇa* was equal to about a quarter of a rupee in the eighteenth century. The value of cowry depreciated dramatically after colonization. 1 *kāhāṇa* = 16 *paṇa* = 320 *gaṇḍā* = 1280 *kaḍā* = 1280 *kauri* (cowry).

<sup>73</sup>Sterling 1904, p. 36.

<sup>74</sup>De 1961, p. xxvi.

<sup>75</sup>Ewer Report, para. 6, in *Selections I*, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup>Bayley Report, in De 1961, p. 17.

Darogah<sup>77</sup> that Jagabandhu was collaborating with the Pindaris in rebellion and that he was in communication with *daḷabeherās* on the subject.<sup>78</sup> Jagabandhu had been reduced to a pauper after his estate, Killa Rorung, was taken away on the pretext that he failed to pay tax and was then sold to Krishna Chandra Singh, a rich Bengali.<sup>79</sup>

After the Company government attempted to seize the person of Jagabandhu on charges of treason, he could delay the uprising no longer. He immediately joined the Khond rebels after they entered Banpur. Charan Patnaik was later murdered in his village, Rathipur in Pargana Lembai, during the rebellion. Commissioner B. Thomas reports that no villager came to rescue him.<sup>80</sup> Those employed as *sarabarākāras* received new jagirs (land given in lieu of service) with quit-rent. Thus, it was natural that enmity developed between the traditional military elite, like Jagabandhu, the *daḷabeherās* and *pāikas*, and the new office holders and landlords under the colonial government, such as Charan Patnaik or Krishna Chandra Singh. Those Oriyas who worked for the British were not limited to government employees. It is stated that, "During the first phase of the insurrection in 1817 in the Tangi and Banpur areas, two persons, Sudarsan Narendra Dulbehera and Sanatan Patnaik, rendered valuable service to the Government. So their names had been recommended for reward. W. B. Bayley Acting Chief Secretary to Government, in his letter to the Commissioner dated 21-7-1818 (Rev. Bd. Vol. 20) conveyed sanction of reward of Rs. 100/- to each of the above named persons."<sup>81</sup>

The rebels marched from Banpur to Khurda, attacking and plundering government and civil buildings. From Khurda, some *pāikas* proceeded to Panchgarh, which was under the rule of Rani Mukta Dei of Sambalpur who had been sent there as a political prisoner. There, they were joined by *pāikas* of the *rani* and attacked the residences of the *rani* and her *diwan*.<sup>82</sup> Then, Jagabandhu and his *pāikas*, including the Khonds from Ghumsur, entered Puri on April 9, 1817. They met Raja Mukunda Deba, king of Khurda, in the hope of making him the acknowledged leader of the rebellion. However, the raja did not give his consent. Although the raja probably favoured the rebels in secret, he chose to play a safer role. One momentum in the rebellion was lost.

Although Jagabandhu also communicated with other rajas of the Tributary Mahals<sup>83</sup> to incite them to participate in the uprising, none of them afforded assistance. W. B. Bayley says, "Some communication intercepted by the English during the uprising, proved that Jagabandhu did make some attempts to interest the Orissan Chiefs in the liberation movement started by him, but none came forward to help him openly for obvious reasons."<sup>84</sup> *Phiringi Kalī Bhārata*, an Oriya manuscript written by Bipra Madhusudan Das, mentions that the Khurda king had been engaging in several wars against the feudatory and ex-feudatory kingdoms immediately before the British conquest of Khurda, and that the surrounding little kingdoms of Banki, Ranpur, Nayagarh and Khandaraparrah provided assistance to the British to conquer Khurda in 1804.<sup>85</sup> Though *Phiringi Kalī Bhārata* is not entirely reliable as a historical source, as rightly pointed out by Kailash Chandra Dash and others,<sup>86</sup> its attention to the

<sup>77</sup>Darogah or Darogā (from Persian *dāroga*) is an inspector or a head of police.

<sup>78</sup>Ewer Report, para. 8, in *Selections* I, p. 3. Although Ewer mentions that this report was "falsely" made, W. Trower seems to believe that there was some basis in Charan Patnaik's report. W. Trower says, "I feel pretty confident that the irruption of Jagabandhu into Khooradah [*sic*] with a view to carrying off the Rajah, was not a resolution formed on a sudden, but a plan decided in [*sic*] some months before and Charn Patnaik [*sic*] who was the first man there murdered long ago reported that Jagabandhu was tampering with the Dulbeherrars [*sic*] and principal surbarakars [*sic*]." De 1961, p. 33.

<sup>79</sup>De 1961, pp. 10–15; Toynbee 1873, pp. 14–16.

<sup>80</sup>De 1963, p. 16, p. 35; Ewer Report, para. 8, in *Selections* I, p. 3; Patnaik 1988, p. 266.

<sup>81</sup>De 1962, p. 31.

<sup>82</sup>Toynbee 1873, p. 18; Patnaik 1988, p. 266.

<sup>83</sup>After the British acquired Orissa from the Maratha in 1803, the local rajas were given the status of "tributary chiefs" and their estates became the "Tributary Mahals".

<sup>84</sup>Bayley Report, in De 1961, p. 17.

<sup>85</sup>Joshi 1986, p. 12.

<sup>86</sup>Dash 2017. In personal communication Professor G. N. Dash also kindly pointed out to me the unreliability of the information in *Phiringi Kalī Bhārata*. See Joshi 1986. To cite just one example, the Tapanga Rebellion of 1827 mentioned in

rivalry and warfare between the rajas before the British conquest opens up an important perspective.<sup>87</sup> Also, it should be noted that many rajas were satisfied with their feudatory status given by the British after colonization.

The rajas of Kujang and Kanika in Mogulbundee, who were not granted feudatory status and attempted to form an alliance with the Khurda king against the British in 1804, had a more positive attitude towards the uprising. The *pāikas* of Kujang played a principal role in the uprising, joined by the local *pāikas*, in the thanas<sup>88</sup> of Gop, Tiran, Hariharapur, Pattamundai and Asureswar, as well as in the estate of Kujang.<sup>89</sup> Ewer reports that the raja of Kanika “went so far as to assemble the leading ryots on his estate, and to propose formally to them to take up arms against the British Government. The Paiks and ryots, however, replied that they had lived happily and unmolested under that Government, and were not anxious enough for change to run any risk in accomplishing it.”<sup>90</sup> As we can see, there were both rivalries and alliances between the kingdoms within Orissa, and also differences in the attitude towards the British government between the rajas and their *pāikas* and ryots. These differences were manifested in their behaviour during the rebellion.

Thus, while the rebels were certainly not limited to a small section of the population, as colonialist discourses tend to depict, we may note that there were more differences and cleavages within the Oriya and Indian population than nationalist historiography would like to admit. There was a wide variety of nuances in people’s attitudes towards the rebellion; from eager participation, mild support to non-compliance, indifference and outright opposition. The major cleavages lay between those whose condition deteriorated under the colonial government and those who found new opportunities for prosperity and success.

We should view the heterogeneous and plural characteristics of the rebellion not only in terms of the actors, but also in their interests and aims. The kinds of “freedom” they sought were much more diverse than the word “independence” can express. At the same time, it is also essential to pay attention to the fact that the rebellion had some common resonances that cut across various actors. There was certainly shared anger and dissatisfaction that crossed the boundaries of social groups and was manifest as entangled revolts. Thus, the plural genealogies of the movements acquired at least some linkages in the echoes of anti-colonial feelings in 1817. We should also not forget that there were many in Orissa who did not take part in or opposed the rebellion for their own reasons. It is my contention that we should pay attention to both the heterogeneities and linkages in the genealogies of the rebellion, and trace the historical complexities of their entanglements, contradictions and contingencies in the process of formation of what is known to us today as Odisha and India.

## Conclusion

Why is it important to pay attention to the heterogeneous genealogies and their linkages in understanding the history of the Paika Rebellion of 1817? It is because paying attention to heterogeneous genealogies leads us to a more perceptive understanding of the different positionalities of plural actors, the existence of multiple axes of oppositions in society, and their complex interactions that together

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*Phiringi Kalī Bhārata* cannot be ascertained through any other historical resources, and even Srichandan’s *Khuradhā Darpaṇa* (*Mirror of Khurda*), which contains many oral histories and legends etc. of Khurda, does not mention the Tapanga Rebellion of 1827. See Srichandan 1989. The stories regarding the heroic activities of Tapang Dalabehera appeared only in the 1960s (Dash 2017). Though there are several historical works, including Sen’s, which depict the Tapanga Rebellion of 1827 as a historical event, the story should be scrutinized as a historical narrative reflecting people’s aspiration for *what should have been* rather than depicting a historical fact (Sen 2017, pp. 93–94). Cf. Mubayi 1999.

<sup>87</sup>The challenge for historians is to fruitfully incorporate these vernacular “histories” and legends into historiography. Even if they are “unreliable” as records of historical “facts”, they may open other ways of looking at history.

<sup>88</sup>A thana (*thānā*) is a district controlled by a police station.

<sup>89</sup>Bayley Report, in De 1961, p. 22; Patnaik 1988, p. 272.

<sup>90</sup>Ewer Report para. 8. in *Selections I*, p. 3.

form the dynamics of history. Such a historiography will be attentive to the multiple potentialities of the past, which is also rife with contradictions, going beyond teleological historicism that sees the past as a linear continuum progressing to the present.<sup>91</sup>

The reason why I suggest that we must go beyond both imperialist and nationalist historiographies is that both tend to fall into the teleological framework of progress. Imperialist historiography depicts how colonial intervention gradually uplifted Orissa and India from a pre-modern, feudal hierarchy to a modern, liberal democracy. From this viewpoint, the Paika rebellion was a conservative reaction by the traditional elite to restore their privileges at the cost of the general public's welfare. Nationalist historiography, on the other hand, depicts how elements of anti-colonial patriotism gradually developed into more organized and informed nationalism. Here, the Paika rebellion is seen as one of the originary moments – or *the* originary moment according to some – in which such proto-nationalism is expressed by its heroes. In both cases, there is no serious attempt to discover other potentialities that are left out of these dominant frameworks.

In the present age, when all corners of the world and all sections of society are interconnected due to globalization, it is especially important to be sensitive to the different positionalities of diverse people. The discourse of modernization and nationalism, however, often paints a picture of progress in one stroke, ignoring contradictions and conflicts in the process of change. To understand the problems and potentialities in the present age, we must also develop sensitivity to the heterogeneous actors and their diverse positionalities in history.

To think of the history of the rebellion of 1817 is to extend our imaginations to the diverse sections of people who were experiencing rapid changes with the advent of colonial modernity. Just as there are people who benefit from the current change as well as those who feel marginalized in today's Odisha,<sup>92</sup> there were diverse sections of people whose experiences of early colonial modernity differed according to caste, class, gender, ethnicity, religion, location etc.

To evaluate the historical significance of the rebellion is no easy task. Unless we take into account the heterogeneous positionalities and experiences of people, and also the transformation of their subject-positions in subsequent history, we cannot state what the event really meant. For example, if we were to say that one of the reasons why *pāikas* rose in rebellion was because the British confiscated their traditional jagirs, how are we to evaluate that historical event? How did the abolishment of *pāika* jagir affect the different classes of people in agrarian society? Was it not beneficial for some while it was hard for *pāikas*? How does that knowledge affect our understanding of the issues regarding land rights in today's Odisha?

Or take the example of those who worked under the colonial government at the time of the rebellion. Can we label them non-patriotic considering the fact these middle-class people played important roles in Oriya nationalism after 1866? What about the role and position of the so-called tribals? Have we given them appropriate place and agency in history and in present society? There are no simple answers to these complex questions. Therefore, my suggestion of looking at the plural genealogies of the rebellion of 1817 is not to provide a straightforward answer but to open up new questions: If we cannot reduce the rebellion to the binary opposition between colonialism and nationalism, then whose rebellion was it, for whom, who stayed out, who opposed it and why, how did the event and its representations affect the course of national formation in Orissa, and how do we understand the present contradictions and conflicts in Odisha in view of this past? To mark the bicentennial of the event, these are the questions I suggest we should be asking.

Lastly, in order to go beyond the homogeneous representation of the actors and their aim in the rebellion that reflects colonial and/or a dominant-caste centred perspectives, I propose that we name the event the "Orissa Uprising of 1817".<sup>93</sup> It is my intention to avoid presuppositions

<sup>91</sup>Benjamin 1969.

<sup>92</sup>Tokita-Tanabe and Tanabe 2014.

<sup>93</sup>It is interesting to note that both B. C. Ray and S. Behera, who take very different positions on the nature of the rebellion, agree that the term "the Paika Rebellion" is a misnomer. Ray argues that the rebellion was the first regional independence

regarding the question of “whose rebellion for whom” and start asking new questions sensitive to the heterogeneities and their linkages. Just as the hitherto so-called “Sepoy Mutiny” has been given new names, such as the “Great Uprising of 1857”, in historiography, and the study of its various actors, viewpoints and representations came to light,<sup>94</sup> it is perhaps time we reconsider our naming and approach to the so-called “Paika Rebellion” and shed light on the plural genealogies of the rebellion.

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movement in India and, therefore, participation was much wider than just *pāikas*. Meanwhile Behera argues that though the rebellion had a strong restorative impulse due to the traditionally privileged *baksi* (general), *dalabeherā*, *dalai* and *pāikas*, it also included various other actors, such as peasants and tribals, and, therefore, we should pay attention to the diversity of actors other than *pāika*. The subjecthood and nature of the rebellion – whose rebellion and for what? – remains the key question. Ray 2001; Behera 2014.

<sup>94</sup>E.g. Bates 2013–2017.



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