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**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF  
 ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)**

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/7167  
 DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/7167>



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### BANKI IN THE PERIOD OF CRISIS AND CONFLICTS.

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#### Manuscript Info

#### Abstract

#### Manuscript History

Received: 22 March 2018  
 Final Accepted: 24 April 2018  
 Published: May 2018

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#### Introduction:-

The British occupation of Orissa in 1803 created a new chapter in the history of Orissa. Their administration brought far reaching changes in the life style of people of Orissa. Orissa was divided into three administrative units and the province of Cuttack was under Bengal Presidency. Cuttack became the seat of Commissioner, who became the Superintendent of Tributary States. During British Raj Banki belonged to the Cuttack States and a princely State of Orissa. Braja Behari Srichandan ruled here from 1779 to 1813 AD who was succeeded by his son Pitambar Srichandan (1813-1828) who died heirless in 1828. Now, Jagannath Srichandan Mohapatra, the adopted son of Pitambar Srichandan succeeded the throne of Banki, who ruled from 1828 to 1838 A.D.

During the reign of Jagannath Srichanda Mohapatra, Henry Rickets was appointed as Collector in 1827 and immediately after wards, the judge and Magistrate and Commissioner of Cuttack in 1836. But soon after his assumption of office certain atrocious crimes and unhappy incidents took place. In the year 1836 there started a conflict between Raja of Banki and Tigiria who invaded each other's territory. The burant and plundered fifty to sixty villages causing death of both sides. The dispute had its origine from a common matter. It appears that in 1828, the bullock of Banki royt was carried off by a Tigiria royt. When the animal was demanded back by Sardar of Banki State, he refused to give it up. In return, the Banki royts drove off two bullocks belonging to Tigiria. (1) In such critical situation, Rickets requested the Government to permit him to take action against such Rajas, who refused to allow for an investigation. He wanted to seize them by force as prisoners if required and confine them till the cases are settled (2). The Government authorised him to do so. (3)

The tyrannical activity of Raja of Banki increased which was unbearable to people. A great body of royts of Banki was unable to endure the exploitation and oppression of Raja. Mahadev Samanta Singhar and Lokanath Mohapatra, two victims went to Cuttack to complain the Superintendent against the Raja's Tyranny.

But the Mukhtar of Banki attached to Superintendent's Office persuaded the royts to return back promising that the grievances would be redressed. Then the Raja, accompanied by Raghunath Paramguru and his son went to them to pacify the matter. After the Raja returned back, he ordered Raghunath Paramguru and Gadadhar Mohapatra to be brought before him. He ordered them to be confined accusing falsely that the Rajas was betrayed by them in connection with buying a bad horse. But really, Raja suspected them as the agents of Balbhadra Bhramarabara who challenged the accession of Jagannath Srichandan & claimed for the Gadi of Banki. On the ground that he was the son of late Raja by a pholbebbhai or pholbahee woman, who was taken to the Raja's palace being given a garland of

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flowers which was placed on her neck.(4) As a counter to his claim, Jagannath Srichandan urged that the claimant was an off spring from a slave girl and as such, he had no right over the gadi. The matter being reported to Henry Ricketts, the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals. As Balabhadra failed in the allegation, he appeared before Sadar Dawari Adalat. Meanwhile, Balabhadra tried to poison ears of British authorities against the Raja of Banki. In December 1838, about 700 ryots from Kundupur area of Banki came Cuttack to complain against Banki Raja near Henry Picketts, headed by Madhaba Samant Singhar and Lokanath Mohapatra. The Raja also felt that they were instigating the ryots to complain against him to the Superintendent. The Raja ordered them to be killed and accordingly and both father and son were taken to jungle. Irons were tied in their legs and they were left there to be devoured by wild beasts. The Raja then decided to do away with the Prisoners. The prisoners were made to stand up in the water of a stream before they were executed, lest their blood will palliate the earth as they being Brahmins. Consequently, they were also carried to the jungle and Murdered(5). Next morning as per the instruction of the Rajas their dead bodies were burnt after removing two pairs of iron, fetters from the legs and the clothes were worn. Those were taken away by Dama Swain, while their ashes were scattered in the jungle and bones were thrown into the water. Next, Paramgura's wife and his mother-in-law were killed. Subsequently, come to turn of Raghunath's daughter, son of his wife's sister and his son's wife. Laki Mohanta, Nrusingh Bhanj and Madhaba Samantasinghar killed them respectively on the sands of River Mohanadi where all the dead bodies were buried. Finally, sister of Paramguru's wife and his little son were murdered at same place. Here, the chain of murders were completed. Thereafter, opened a new phase, i.e. phase of inquiry and trial. Similarly, another crude plan for pacifying Raja was suggested by Buxi Neelambar Pattnaik. He told Gangadhar to kill his father and succeeded to his assignment and property so that the Raja might feel gratified. The son had agreed to it and accordingly, one Pindakhee Samantasinghar, one of the Rajas Principal Sardars, communicated it to the Raja. But the plan did not work out which reason still remains mysterious. However, fearing their escape from jungle, the Rajas decided to put them all to death with the notion that "dead persons tell no tales".(6) The Raja in defence stated that Raghunath Paramguru and his family died one after another due to sickness and charges against him were false. But such facts connected with seizure, confinement and death of Paramguru was clearly established by the evidence of the witness.(7)

In 1838 in the states of Banki, the Raja seized and confined three Merchants on the allegation that they had falsely claimed Rs.10,000/- from three of his servants named Ram Sevak Singh, Gangadhar Mohanty and Buliarsingh. The Superintendent couldn't take any action as the Raja at Banki still held the right to apprehend and confine any of his subject. Further in the same state, 8 travelers with Rs.4,345/- were found missing. When the Raja was directed to enquire and report, he failed to ascertain their fate. Henry Ricketts wanted to take strong action but he was restrained by the Governments.

Another allegation against Raja of Banki was brought by Shadasiv Das on September, 1838. On hearing of the petitioner, the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals ordered Raja to send immediately three persons to Cuttack. The Raja immediately obeyed the orders of the Superintendent. But he gave a representation before the Superintendent that he had a claim of Rs.4,400/- against to person who were the holders of the land and carried on business in his territory. They were defaulters of the payment of their dues for the year 1837 and 1838. Subsequently, a reconciliation took place between the Raja and them.

Ricketts though it was a high time to make an attempt to introduce a regular system of Management in the Tributary Mahals. So, Ricketts submitted to the Government on January 21, 1839, a draft of civil and criminal rules for the Management of Killah of Banki. He also wanted to reform the administration of Banki. But the Governor General in council didn't approve his suggestions pointing out that the proposed rules were too extensive and they involve more interference than desirable. However it was felt that the Superintendent of Banki must have a discretionary power of interference in any "heinous cases" brought to his notice, where such interferences might appear to him indispensably necessary to secure the ends of justice.

Again, Ricketts was appointed as the Commissioner for the revision of civil salaries and establishments throughout India. Ricketts visited and consulted local authorities of Cuttack district and its periphery areas like Banki and Tihudi. Finally, he submitted a report which clarified civil administration of feudatory state of Banki. He also explained reasons for increase and decrease of salaries of various officials in tributary state of Banki.

In 1839, Jagannath Srichandan, the Raja of Banki had an account of an atrocious murder committed by his order. The matter was brought to the notice of Superintendent of Tributary Mahal, who felt that it was a case of demanding interference by the Government. Henry Ricketts, had made a Preliminary enquiry and convinced of the complicity of

the Raja in the Murder Case. But full inquiry was made by his successor, AJM Mills, who took the matter in right earnest.

**Conclusion:-**

Thus, it can be said that during the Commissionership of Henry Ricketts a long period of unrest continued in Banki. But Ricketts expressed that there is no evidence against the Raja of Banki that eight traders had been murdered before 50 eye witness. The Governor General in council tenaciously upheld the policy of non-intervention by the Government in their relation with the feudatory state of Banki. The British authorities in Orissa wanted to impress upon the British Government in England by avoiding intervention into internal affairs of Banki so that tranquility could be maintained and Anglo-Indian administration could be dressed-up.

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