

**SELECTION FROM THE RECORDS OF THE  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA NO. V: HISTORY OF  
THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE  
OPERATIONS FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF  
HUMAN SACRIFICE AND FEMALE  
INFANTICIDE IN THE HILL TRACTS OF ORISSA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649469154

Selection from the Records of the Government of India No. V: History of the Rise and Progress of the Operations for the Suppression of Human Sacrifice and Female Infanticide in the Hill Tracts of Orissa by Various

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*Feb 1/48.*

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HISTORY

OF THE

RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE OPERATIONS

FOR THE

SUPPRESSION OF HUMAN SACRIFICE

AND

FEMALE INFANTICIDE,

IN THE

HILL TRACTS OF ORISSA.

CALCUTTA:

F. CARBERY, BENGAL MILITARY ORPHAN PRESS.

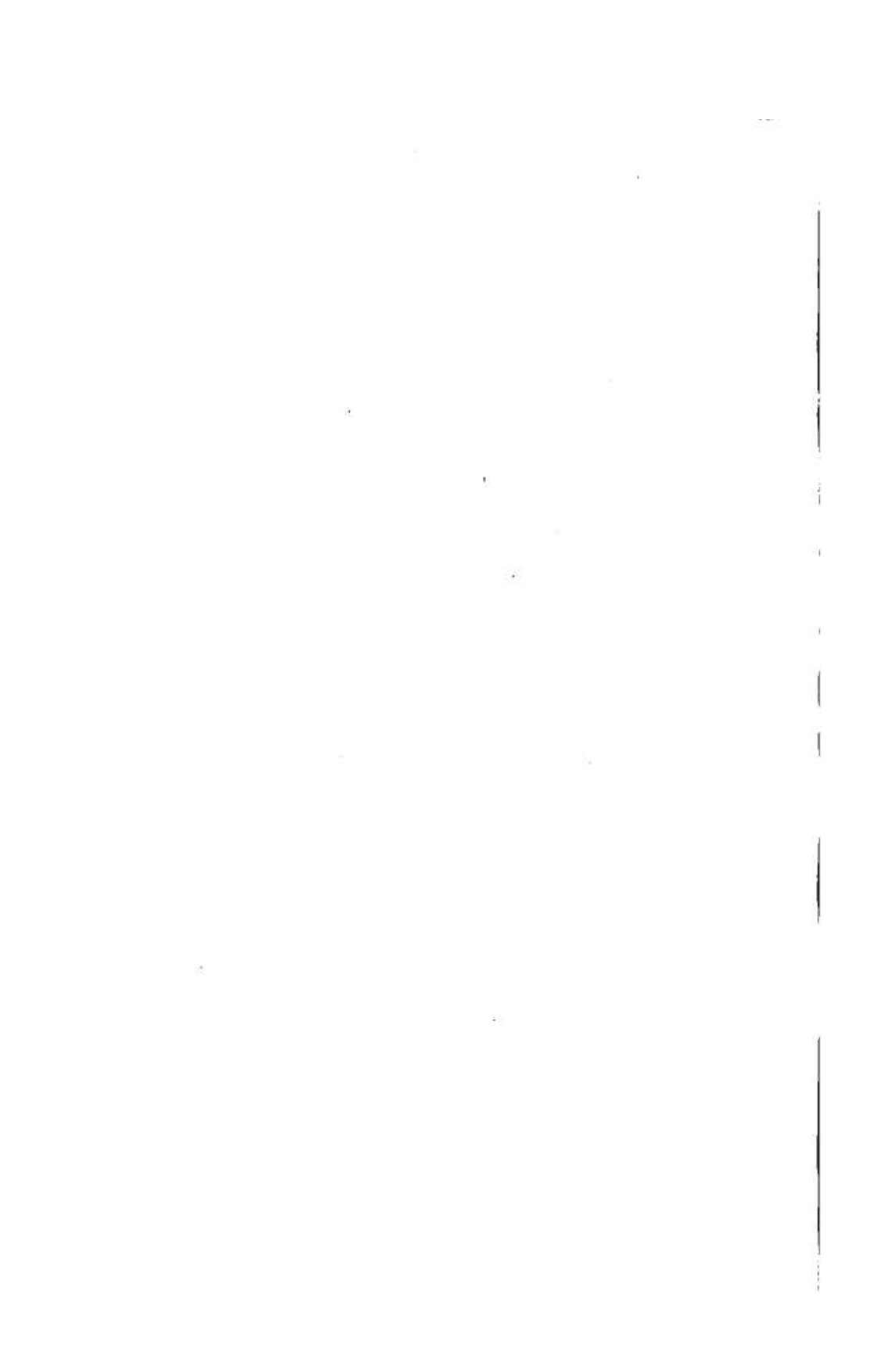
1854.



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**HISTORY**  
OF THE  
**RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE OPERATIONS**  
FOR  
THE SUPPRESSION OF HUMAN SACRIFICE AND FEMALE INFANTICIDE,  
IN THE  
**HILL TRACTS OF ORISSA,**  
Compiled from Official Correspondence, from the years  
**1836 to 1854.**

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**PART I.**

**THE OPERATIONS OF THE MADRAS GOVERNMENT.**

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MR. RUSSELL, of the Madras Civil Service, the Officer so much distinguished by the settlement of two distinct insurrections, one in Goomsur, and the other in the similar zemindary of Purla Kimedya, was the first person who discovered the existence of the rite of human sacrifice among the Khonds, which he brought to the notice of Government in his first Report on the affairs of Goomsur, dated 12th August 1836, in the following passage, descriptive of his visit to their country :—

“ The change from Goomsur to the colder climate and open country of the table land, where the hills are bare of jungle, the inhabitants infinitely more numerous, and their houses greatly superior to those below, was very striking. Their language differs from that of all other classes, and is understood by very few lowlanders. The women, so far as we were able to judge from the few we saw, are very plain; the men remarkably well made and active, of a good height, and generally speaking, good looking. The only dress worn by the latter, is a cloth bound round the middle in such a way as to make the end hang down behind, about as low as the

Extract from Mr. Russell's Report, dated 12th August 1836—Describes the manners and customs of the inhabitants of the hill tracts of Goomsur, and mentions the existence of human sacrifice.

flaps of a coat. Their hair is tied in a knot on the temple, or forehead, which they are fond of ornamenting with a band of red woollen cloth; or if they cannot get that, with cloth of any other colour, or even paper. Every man carries an axe, and the far greater part of them, a bow and arrows also. Not only every tribe, but every village has its chief chosen, not from any hereditary claim, but because he is the best soldier, or the best spokesman of the day. Like other nations, they have their feuds, and frequently war with their neighbours. Head for head is their universal law. Their love of liquor and tobacco is excessive. The fruit of the Ippa tree affords them a very strong spirit, and a palm, peculiar to their country, yields a toddy, which though pleasant when fresh, is extremely intoxicating in a fermented state. They draw no milk from any description of cattle, yet they have none of the ordinary prejudices of caste, and eat any thing except the dog, domestic cat, beasts of prey, vulture, kite and snake. Among the tribes to the westward of Sooradah,\* the destruction of female children is common, I believe I may say general. The expense attending the marriage rites is said to be the motive of this cruel custom. They purchase their women from other parts of the country, without reference to their parentage. The same practice does not exist in the Maliahs† subject to Goomsur, but the barbarous ceremony of human sacrifices exists there, and among many of the neighbouring tribes, and is of annual occurrence. In some places the victims are of both sexes, in others males only.‡

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\* Kottingiah, Boonee, Goladsyee, Tarsbandy, Jiddoobody, &c.

† Hills.

‡ In this, and in most of the other extracts throughout this compilation, only so much of the writer's observations have been retained, as bear immediately upon the matter in hand. The compiler was ordered to prepare a succinct history of the operations for the suppression of the rite of human sacrifice, from the official correspondence in the Government records. It seemed to him that the simplest, as well as the most satisfactory mode of carrying out this object, was to state every event that occurred, and every proposition that was suggested, as far as possible in the very words, in which the officers concerned, conveyed them. But, as the despatches from which these papers have been selected, often contained information of which the Government was already in possession from other sources; and also often entered into matters relating to the management of these districts, entirely unconnected with the subject of human sacrifices, it was found that it would be impossible to publish the letters of the several Officers in extenso, without swelling the compilation to a bulk, far exceeding the limits of an ordinary selection. It is believed that the original reports and despatches have been curtailed of nothing of any public interest; and in the extracts throughout, the actual words of the several narrators have been scrupulously retained; except in a few unimportant instances, where it has been found necessary slightly to vary the text, in order to carry on uninterruptedly the thread of the narrative.

The Madras Government, in their letter to Mr. Russell, acknowledging the receipt of his Report and the valuable information it contained, observed, that they considered it "very desirable that measures should be taken for procuring the abolition of the practices of infanticide and human sacrifice, stated to exist among the tribes to the westward of Sooradah, and in the Maliahs, subject to Goomsur respectively. Wherever British influence already prevailed, or could be newly introduced, it should be vigorously exercised for the suppression of these barbarous rites, and the Governor in Council requested the particular attention of Mr. Russell to this point."

On the 11th May 1837, Mr. Russell, in a further Report on the districts entrusted to his control, wrote as follows on the subject of human sacrifices:—"The ceremonies attending this barbarous rite, and still more the mode of destroying life, vary in different parts of the country. In the Maliahs of Goomsur, the sacrifice is offered annually to Thadha Pennoo, (the earth) under the effigy of a bird intended to represent a peacock, with the view of propitiating the deity to grant favourable seasons and crops. The ceremony is performed at the expense of, and in rotation by certain Mootahs,\* composing a community, and connected together from local circumstances. It was not possible to ascertain the number of places in which these sacrifices take place, but they are understood to be very numerous. Besides these periodical sacrifices, others are made by single Mootahs, and even by individuals, to avert any threatening calamity from sickness, murrain, or other cause. It is believed that the victims may be of any caste, sex, or age. Grown men are the most esteemed, because the most costly; children are purchased and reared for years with the family of the person who ultimately devotes them to a cruel death, when circumstances are supposed to demand a sacrifice at his hands. They seem to be treated with kindness, and if young, are kept under no constraint, but when old enough to be sensible of the fate that awaits them, they are placed in fetters, and guarded. A girl made her way to Mr. Stevenson's camp at Patirilingia with irons on her legs. There appears to be no difficulty in procuring victims. Most of those who were rescued had been sold by their parents or nearest relations, a practice, which from all we could

\* Districts.