

Exploring Social Customs in the Royal Families of Feudatory States of Coastal Orissa (1750-1850): A Brief Study

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Abstract: Emergence of the feudatory states located in coastal Orissa during the eighteenth and nineteenth century is regarded as one of the most significant episodes in the history of Orissa. Originally called as Garjhat, these hilly states became converted into princely states during the British period. The history of the feudatory states can be traced back to the early part of the medieval period and they played a vital role in the reconstruction of the political as well as the cultural history of Orissa. The present work attempts to explore the social customs prevalent in the royal families of the feudatory states located in coastal Orissa. Being segregated from the main stream of the culture and civilization of other major developed regions on the basis of inaccessibility, these primitive states and their social life in addition to various unique customs was quite different places of Orissa. Especially in the royal families of these states, a composite culture consisting of traditional Hindu social customs and some exceptional practices influenced by their own regional and tribal culture and even if they continued it by maintaining a degree of autonomy during the British period and these hilly states occupied a premier position in the history as well as in the geography of Orissa. The work chronologically covers the period between 1750-1850.

Keywords: Feudatory states, rituals, royal families, social customs, Social hierarchy.

Introduction

Geographically situated on the borders of Orissa and connected with each other, the feudatory states located in the coastal Orissa proved as the strong protectors as their strategic position determined the safety and security of Orissa. The total area of Orissa in the nineteenth century was 23907 square miles out of which 16184

square miles belonged to the feudatory states. The state of Mayurbhanj comprised of highest 4,243 miles while the state of Tigiria contained only 46 square miles (Kulke, 2011, p.61).

Social customs provide a framework for social interaction and considered as key mechanism for transmitting cultural values, beliefs and traditions from one generation to the next. The social customs associated with the royal families residing in the feudatory states of coastal Orissa in the eighteenth and nineteenth century included elaborate marriage rituals, distinction in social hierarchy and a strong emphasis on lineage and ancestry as genealogy and ancestry were highly valued with the royal families tracing their lineage back through generations. Though the royal families (also known as Raj families) followed the traditional Hindu rituals and festivals, but some unique customs were in vogue and were observed exclusively with great faith and belief. Some major social customs which were prevailing in the royal families in the tributary states are to be discussed.

Objectives

The overall objective of the present work is to study the basic contours of the society in addition to different social customs residing in the royal families of the feudatory states of coastal Orissa in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

- The objectives of the present work are to be enumerated as below.
- To analyze the social scenario of the feudatory states of coastal Orissa.
- To explore different social customs prevalent in the royal families in the feudatory states of Orissa.
- To analyze the ritual connection of the feudatory rulers with the *Gajapati* Rajas of Khurda and the Sri Jagannath temple.

Methodology

The present study is mainly be a combination of both primary including government reports, records and gazetteers while the secondary sources comprised of various books and different journals.

In the social hierarchy of the feudatory state in Orissa, the feudatory chiefs commonly known as “Raja” occupied the highest position in the society and they enjoyed their power and autonomy in their respective regions. As the Indian society was feudal in nature, the possession of land was always regarded as a positive source

of social status. As a consequence, the ruling chiefs constituted as the highest privileged section and a leading as well as dominating material group in the society (Raghuvanshi, 1969, p.19). Besides the ruling chiefs inherited the princely status and position on hereditary basis which conferred upon them both power and privileges and the feudatory Rajas were no exception to it (Richard Temple's Record, 1860, pp.23-24). Based on culture and tradition, these tribal kings followed some established customs which were continued through generations and contributed a sense of cultural identity and social cohesion.

Coronation Ceremony

The coronation ceremony known as *Abhishek* was regarded as the most significant ceremony to be observed in the Durbar (royal court) in every royal family of the feudatory states. Generally, these ceremonies were observed in the capital, but sometimes other places were also selected for this ceremony. Raja Divya Singh I, the king of Khurda was coronated at Rathipur near Khurda (Patnaik, 1979, p.64). This ceremony was celebrated with great joy. According to the customary tradition, with the death of the king, the heir-apparent to the throne (the prince or the 'Yuvraj') was to be accompanied with the *Rajpurohit* (royal priest), *Bewarta* (the chief executive officer of the Raja) and his near agnates. A silk turban was placed first on the head of the corps, immediately it was taken out and it was placed on the head of the heir-apparent. He was to be declared as the next Raja and the first custom was to place the ancient sword of the family in his hand. Then he had to sit on the *Rajgadi* (royal throne) and ordered the *Bewarta* to remove the dead body by saying '*Murdar Uthao*' meaning to remove the corpse (Dalton, 1872, p.93). After the completion of the funeral rites, the coronation ceremony (*Abhishek*) of the new king was observed with great pomp and splendour where the *Rajpurohit* and the *Bewarta* used to put *Raj-Tika* or a symbol of royalty was marked on the forehead with *sindura* (vermilion) and sandal paste (*chandana*) accompanied by the chanting mantras of the *Sama veda* by the officiating *Purohits* who performed *Homa* (fire ritual) (Dalton, 1872, p.145-147). It was a customary practice that the Rajas of other feudatory states presented valuable gifts to the new Raja and their names in addition to the gifted amount were recorded by the *Mohurrirs* (accountant). But in case of *ryots* (cultivator), they had to deposit a fixed amount in the coronation ceremony called as *Salami* which became a financial burden to them in such occasions (Patnaik, 1988, p.461).

It was a common practice on the part of the feudatory Rajas to consider themselves as the *sevakas* (subordinate) of the *Gajapati* Raja of Puri by performing various duties like carrying the torch (*Mashal*), royal umbrella (*Chattri*) and fanning the *Gajapati* with royal *Chhauri* (a ceremonial fan often made from yak or horse tail hair used in religious and royal purpose.) (BRR, 1814, pp.230-236). These feudatory rulers were connected with the *Gajapati* Rajas and Sri Jagannath temple by a network of social, cultural in addition to religious relationship. This is the network through which the sacred complex of Puri is maintained and perpetuated in entire Orissa. This ritual connection can be traced back to fifteenth century when Gajapati Purushottam Deva (1465-1495) granted estates to the minor Rajas who in turn as a mark of honour paid tribute to him by accepting his subordination. These Rajas came to be known as *Karada* Raja or tributary chiefs (Patnaik, 2006, p.152). The connection between the *Gajapati* Raja of Khurda and the feudatory states can be expressed through a synthesis of military, ritual and economic ground which all are interrelated. Due to the service to the Sri Jagannath temple, these *Garjhat* Rajas in turn were provided with certain specific privileges related to the temple and were honoured with ritual gifts from the *Gajapati* kings. *Chhamu Chitau* (originated from two words- *Chhamu* meaning *Raja* and the *Chitau* meaning letter), the royal letters issued by the *Gajapati* Rajas was a special feature containing special privileges which were granted to the feudatory *Rajas* (Mubayi, 2005, p.44).

It was *Gajapati* Virakeshari Deva who issued the *Chhamu Chitau* in the mid-eighteenth century which illustrates the status given to the feudatory *Rajas* through the performance of *Seba*, a ritual service in the temple of Sri Jagannath in Puri. About 160 royal letters drafted by the Deula Karanas (temple scribes) of the Jagannath temple in Puri which are collected from the researchers of German Orissa Research Project in 1971 and these royal letters were addressed to the feudatory Rajas for giving messages Patnaik, 2006, p.66). By conferring the temple privileges upon the feudatory Rajas, the *Gajapati* in the network of the temple ritual mobilized material resources (Mubayi, 2005, p.63). It was decided to provide the honour to the Raja of Daspalla to supply wood to the temple in the annual Car Festival (*Ratha Yatra*). It is evident from a letter issued by Gajapati Virakesari in 1741 in his seventh regnal year (7th *anka*) in the twenty second day in the month of *Mesa* (April- May) to the temple *Parichha* (high ranking official in the temple), “You should give *sadi* and *Mahaprasad* from the temple to the king Narendra of Ranpur in the traditional manner for supplying ropes (*simuli*)” (op.cit., p.57). Another letter issued again by

Gajapati Virakesari Deva in 1750 by requesting to the Raja of Dhenkanal to supply iron for the construction of *Rathas* and in return, the honour of proving *sadi* and *chandana* (sandal) should be bestowed (ibid, p.57).

Another customary practice was practiced in the court of *Gajapati Raja* of Khurda which was called as *Sadi Bandha* meaning tying a cloth. Two types of valuable clothes were collected from the royal palace namely *Nakshtra Bhusan* and *Khandua* which were tied on the head of the respective feudatory chief by the own hand (*Sri Hasta*) of the *Gajapati* where specific responsibility was entrusted to the chief. The Rajas of Mayurbhanj and Tigiria were to hold the *Parichha* (a golden cane), *Khanda* or sword for the chief of Talcher, *Chhuri khanda* or knife and dagger for the Raja of Ranpur, *Pan Bata* or the betel leaf container for the Raja of Bamra and *pikadani* or spittoon to the Raja of Nayagarh (BRR, 1814, p.212).

Another significant custom prevalent in the feudatory states was the confirmation of titles by the *Gajapati* on the feudatory Rajas. Walter Ewer, the Commissioner of Orissa mentioned in his report that various titles were confirmed by the Raja of Khurda which were also continued even in the declining condition (OHRJ, pp.11-12). These titles were utilized by the feudatory chiefs on the hereditary basis. It was noticed that later on these titles were given by the Raja of Puri in a *Darbar* or royal court on the day of *Soonika* (*Bhadraba Shukla Dwadashi*) which was the inaugural day of the official year of Orissa. Different titles were bestowed upon different Feudatory kings such as the title *Viravara Mangaraj Mahapatra* to the Raja of Baramba, *Bhramarabara Srichandan* to Banki, *Mahendra Bahadur* to Dhenkanal, *Mardaraj Bhramarabara Roy* to Hindol, *Mahasimha Harichandan Mahapatra* to Narsinghpur, *Mandhata Nilagiri* to Nayagarh, *Mardaraj Harichandan* to Nilagiri, *Vajradhar Narendra Mohapatra* to Ranpur, *Virabara Harichandan Mohapatra* to Talcher and *Virabara Champat Singh Mohapatra* to Tigiria (Acharya, 1969, p.255)

Temple Visit Custom

In order to strengthen their own position and to regain the loyalty and support of the feudatory Rajas, the Raja of Khurda granted special ritual privileges during their visit to Puri for the *darshan* of Lord Jagannath which is an outstanding feature in our period of discussion.

Some specific customs were fixed for the feudatory Rajas to obey regarding the entrance to Puri and visit to the Lord Sri Jagannath decided by the *Gajapati Raja*. They were not allowed to open *Chhatri* (umbrella) and it was mandatory to shut

them after the entry into the temple (J.T.C., 1847). This privilege was only applicable to the idols (*Thakur*) and the *Gajapati* Raja. The feudatory chiefs were restricted to carry the umbrellas, the palanquins, peacock tail, sword and silver trumpet (*Turi* or *Kahali*) to the temple. It was only permitted up to the Lion's Gate (*Simhadwara*). Inside the temple, they were permitted to visit (*darshan*) in a traditional manner and if any chief desired to visit after sun set, then his palanquin was allowed up to the seventh step of *Dakshina Dwara* or the southern gate (BRR, 1810, pp.191-93).

An exclusive privilege was given to the Raja of Banki who was permitted to visit the Lord (*darshan*) at night. The post of *Pariccha* or *pariksa*, the highest temple official was bestowed upon him. *Chamara Seba* or fanning the Lord with a silk fan tied with a golden handle was provided to the Raja which was regarded as a great honour. A provision was made to supply the *Bhoga* Prasad to the *Srichandan* Rajas of Banki in a similar way as the *Pariksa* of the temple enjoyed the benefit (Jagannatha Sthalavrttantam, 1971, p.94).

It is evident from the Ranpur *Rajavamsavali* that by providing military assistance to the Maharaja of Puri in a battle against the Nawab, Jagannath Patnaik of Ranpur helped the Maharaja of Tapanga Gada. Thus, the Maharaja of Ranpur was honoured and gifted by the *Gajapati* Maharaja with white umbrella and bugle which marked as a symbol of royal suzerainty due to the unconditional support of Ranpur (Ranpur *Rajavamshavali*, p.28). Consequently, large number of special privileges in the temple were granted to the Raja of Ranpur in the annual pilgrimage to Puri as a mark of favour.

Another custom regarding the visit to the temple by the chiefs was introduced during the Maratha rule. Any feudatory Raja desiring for a visit to the Lord Jagannath, then he had to collect a pass from the Raja of Khurda and his name was registered in the temple records. They had to pay a *Nazar* (offering or tribute) to the Khurda Raja (BRR, 1818, p.pp.191-93). They were also permitted to worship the deity which was called as *Shood*. When any Raja desired to worship for himself and his ladies separately, it was named as *Poora Shood* and the provision only for the ladies was known as *half Shood*. Their ladies were only permitted to the temple through the southern gate accompanied with two *massals* (light) (ibid, pp.229a-229b).

In May 1810, the Raja Padmanava Narayan Deva of Khemendi (the district of Ganjam) appeared in Puri to pay homage to the Lord accompanied by his aged mother and three queens, but he was not allowed to perform worship and even if he

was restricted to purchase *Mahaprasad* for which he paid thirty rupees. Being thus insulted the Raja reported to the Collector for such behaviour. On the contrary, the Raja of Khurda appealed to Samuel Bushby, the collector of Taxes of Puri on May 11, 1810 that the Raja of Khemendi had disobeyed the traditional custom of the temple which was against of the code of the *Madala Panji* (ibid, pp.191-193). But after investigation, it was known that the Raja of Khurda tried to disgrace the Raja of Khemendi. As a consequence orders were ensued to provide the benefits to the Raja of Khemendi for usual *darshan* or visit to the temple (ibid, pp.194-196). In March 1814, the Raja of Khandapara named Mardaraj Bhramarabar Ray appealed to the Board of Revenue to visit the temple with his family without informing the Raja of Khurdha. As a consequence, the Board issued orders to the management of the Jagannath temple to welcome the Raja in an appropriate manner suitable to his rank (BRR, 1814, pp.237-238). The Raja entered Puri in a palanquin with royal symbols and wished to arrive into the temple in the same manner to visit the Lord Sri Jagannath. The matter was informed to William Trower, the collector of Cuttack who instructed the Raja of Khurda through Samuel Bushby not to create any obstacle in this matter. But the Raja of Khurda disobeyed the order, thus a *parwana* (written order) was issued against him which included not to interfere with these issues otherwise he would be suspended from the post of superintendent of the temple. In the meantime Rani Mukta Dei, the Rani of Sambalpur was not permitted for a *darshan* by the Raja of Khurda (ibid, BRR, 1814). John Richardson, the member of Board of Revenue on deputation was entrusted to investigate the matter and after proper inquiry it was reported to the Governor General. On April 4, 1814 the Governor General in Council permitted the Raja of Khandpara to enter the town of Puri and a warning was issued to the Raja of Khurda not to continue any misconduct regarding the temple management (ibid, pp.246-249). Another serious conflict took place between the Raja of Khurda and the Raja of Dhenkanal when the latter claimed the '*Poora Shood*' for the ladies of the family and desired to use umbrella and *kahali* (trumpet, a musical wind instrument) during his entrance to the Puri town. It was protested by the Raja of Khurda and on 22nd August, 1848, a '*urzee*' (a humble petition) was submitted to the Collector of Puri but in turn it was observed by the Collector that "if the respectable persons want *Shood* for their families, the Raja of Khurdha is bound to permit it to take place" (ibid). It was further instructed that in case of the refusal of the Raja to follow, it would be better to resign from the position of the superintendent of the temple (ibid).

Birth Ceremony

In feudatory states, the birth of a prince or the future ruler of the state was observed as a social ceremony with great pomp and splendor. The birth rituals varied from place to place and also in different states in addition to in different communities. These ceremonies often associated with a mixture of religious observances and social customs. Sometime it has been noticed that the pollution of birth was restricted in the family for 10 days though the mother was considered as unclean till the 21st day. The 21st day which was known as *Ekosisia*, on this day, the worship was observed and it was celebrated with great joy in royal families (Maltby 1918, p. 167).

Ear Boring Ceremony

The Ear boring ceremony which was commonly called as '*Karnaveda*' was a pious social observance in the feudatory states. This ceremony was celebrated in the ordinary as well as in the royal families. It was usually performed when the *Kumaras* (the royal princes) arrived at three or four years of age. While the *Rajpurohit* (Royal Priest) performed the ceremony in case of royal families accompanied with other Brahmins (Raghuvamshi 1969, p.92).

Upanayan Ceremony

The Investiture of sacred thread ceremony was generally called as *Upanayan ceremony*. This ceremony was socially obligatory in the royal families, It was also mandatory in case of Brahmin and Kshyatriya families for which they were regarded as '*Dwijja* or the twice born'. According to the Hindu *Shastras*, a person achieves '*Sansakaram*' or purification through the ceremony of *Upanayan* which was essential for a human being. In case of Brahmins, Kshyatriyas and the royal families, this social ceremony was considered as an important social institution and it was not delayed beyond the sixteenth and twenty-second years of age respectively (Saraswati, 1977, p.103). In the Kshyatriya families belonging to royal blood, this ceremony was performed by a Brahmin priest and on this auspicious day, the sacred thread which was commonly called as "*paita*" was worn by the prince on his left shoulder for the first time which became the prime symbol of his caste superiority and the ceremony also signified the second spiritual birth of a person (Raghuvamshi, p.52). Lavish expenditures were spent on the *Upanayan* ceremony in the royal families and during this ceremony, the *Rajas* of other states were invited as dignified guests.

Marriage

Marriage is always regarded as an important social institution in the society since time immemorial and it was the social responsibility of the parents to fulfill it timely.

In the Raj families, marriage ceremonies were celebrated with great joy and splendour with lavish expenditure. The marriage customs prevalent in the royal families varied and they generally followed Hindu tradition in addition to some unique regional practices.

The ceremony was arranged in the house of the bride where the princes used to arrive there in ivory palanquins decorated with flower petals, camphor and *Alta* (big size fans) accompanied by the relatives. In 1834, in the marriage of the daughter of Rani Pitbasa Dei of Dhenkanal, nearly 4500 rupees money was spent (BP, 1834, OSA Acsn 36). The distinguished guests were invited to attend the marriage and the Rajas of other states visited with valuable gifts for the newly married couple. Dowry was also connected with marriage as in the royal families, as in these occasions dowry was received generally in form of estates. Niladri Bhadra Patnaik, the *Bewarta* of the Raja of Puri was given Athagarh as a dowry having married to the sister of *Gajapati* Maharaja (Singh 1961, p.623; Ramsay, 1910, p.110.)

Generally the marriages in the royal families were held in their own castes and priority was given to family lineage, political connection, wealth and social status. Inter-marriages were also applicable among a few exceptional families. For instance, the Rajas of Athagarh usually married in the Dampara estate and in the *Karana* and *Mahanty* caste. The Rajas of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar married from the royal families of Bissenpore, Kasurgarh and Singhbhum. In the absence of any princess in these families, then the Rajas of Mayurbhanj would marry in the Nilagiri royal family and the Rajas of Keonjhar would marry in the *Bughel* caste. Generally, the Ranpur Raj family established matrimonial relationship in the Khandayat caste while the Raja of Nilagiri married in the same caste otherwise he could marry in either Khandayat or Mahanty caste. The royal family of Khurda married in the Bughail caste while the Raja of Kanika established matrimonial relationship with *Chada* Raj family and in case of absence of bride, they could marry in the Karan and Khandayat families. The Raja of Kujang married in the families of Aul, Marichpur and Harispur and in case of dearth, they could in Khandayat and Mahanty families (Questionnaire to Raja, 1905, pp.7-8).

According to Dubois, polygamy was also practiced in the royal families of the feudatory states (Dubois, 1953, pp.207-208). Raja Damodar Bhanj (1760-1796),

the ruler of Mayurbhanj had 11 queens (edited by Chanda, pp.60-61).The Raja Jagannath Srichandan of Banki state had ten wives (Hand Book of Records, p.97). It has been further noticed that the titles conferred on the queens varied from state to state. The eldest queen was designated in the state of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj as '*Pata Rani*' while the second one as *Sana Pata Rani* and the others as only '*Rani*'. In the feudatory state of Dhenkanal, it was customary to confer the titles given to the eldest one as *Bara* (chief) *Pata Maha Dei*, the second one as the *Sana* (less) *Pata Maha Dei*, the third one as the *Nova* (new) *Pata Maha Dei* and the rest of the queens were designated as *Pata Maha Dei*. In Khurda, the first queen was known as *Pata Maha Dei* and the rest were called as *Maha Dei* (Patnaik, 1988, p.482).

Similarly, the titles received by the princes born of the different queens should be noted. The eldest son born to whichever queen in the states of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Nilagiri was designated as '*Tikayat Baboo*', the second one as '*Chhotray*', the third one as '*Routray*' and the others were known as simple '*Baboo*'. In Khurda, the eldest son of the chief queen (*Pata Maha Dei*) was called as '*Jenamani*' while the title '*Ray*' was given to the sons of other queens. In Dhenkanal, the title '*Jubaraj*' was received by the son of the eldest queen, the second one as *Gambhir Sawanta*, and the third and fourth one was called as '*Rai*' and '*Sant Singhara*' respectively. In the feudatory states of Kanika and Kujanga the sons of the chief queens were called as '*Mangaraj*' and '*Beer Bar*' respectively. The male relatives who were nearest to the royal family were commonly known as '*Sawantas*' (BP, 1846, OSA Acn 129).

Besides legally married wives, another distinctive characteristic was prevalent in the royal families in the feudatory states. According to the custom, during the marriage ceremony the father of the bride gifted a youthful maiden to the bridegroom who accepted her as wife by putting down a garland of flowers around her neck. These young maidens were commonly called as '*Phulbahi*' and were belonged to respective families. After the marriage ceremony these maidens were kept in the Harem of the Raja and practically they were treated as queens. It should be noted that in case of the absence of natural heir to the throne, the sons born of these called *Phulbahis* could become Raja (Questionnaire to the Raja, Vol. I, p.15). It has been noticed that though the Rajas had so many wives, in certain cases they had no legitimate heirs. The Raja Damodar Bhanj of Mayurbhanj had no son and he had to adopt a son and the same instance has been noticed in case of Raja of Banki as his ten wives could not give him a heir to the throne. Thus, succession issues were observed in those days.

The 'Poili' system was also prevalent in the Raj families who were also called as 'Gharajhias'. According to the custom, during the time of marriage in the royal families, the bride's father presented a number of young unmarried girls who were commonly belonged to the poor families to the groom (Malley 1937, pp.94-95). But the sons born of these *Poilies* had no right to succeed to the throne (Questionnaire to the Rajas, Part. I, p. 19).

Funeral Ceremony

Funeral ceremony was another auspicious custom prevalent in the feudatory states of Orissa. Though they have followed some ancient customs which cannot be found anywhere and the funeral rites of some of these feudatory rulers followed many primitive rites which continued through generations even if today.

In case of royal families, shortly after the death of a Raja, the dead body was preserved by stepping in oil. Under the supervision and instruction of the *Rajguru* (royal priest), the new heir-apparent to the throne immediately summoned without any delay (Roy 1929, p.274). It was highly considered that the throne should not be vacant even for a few moments as the absence of the supreme authority in the state might create anarchy and gave the golden opportunity to the enemies from outside. In many cases, the ceremonies observed to hide the fact of death as long as the new Raja assumed the responsibility of the state in a normal condition. After a formal enthronement ceremony, a senior member of his menial staff approached the new king by informing about the death of the previous ruler who in return ordered the dead body through the special gate for cremation (ibid, p.274). The specific boundary wall is often broken and a passage was built through which the corpse could be carried to the place of cremation. In some places, it was noticed that a special gate was reserved for this particular purpose which was opened during this time. But immediately after passing the corpse, the gate was closed because it is a general belief that the dead body was considered as inauspicious and it should be passed through the main gate of the palace. Secondly, the arrival of the ghosts or spirits should be avoided through the main entrance to the palace in order to check their entry after cremation. The newly appointed Raja ordered "to remove the dead body at once through the special gate of the palace and to cremate it with so much clarified butter at a specified expense". Though these practices varied from place to place (ibid. p.274).

The cremation ceremony was observed with great faith and belief in a costly manner. Large quantity of sandal wood and clarified butter poured freely into the

fire (op.cit., p.275). The new heir apparent to the throne set light to the pyre and the ashes collected and carefully preserved which was later on put into the holy water. On the 10th day of the death, the new Raja shaved his head and pared his nails. Finally, on the 16th day he had to go to the temple and with that custom, the final purification took place.

To pay homage to the departed soul, many neighbouring Rajas even if the representatives of the villages under the estate attended the last ceremony and in such occurrence, lavish expenditure were also made. During the funeral ceremony of Raja Mukunda Deva (the Raja of Khurda), 10,000 rupees were distributed by Raja Ramachandra Deva in 1817 (BP, 1817, OSA Acsn 9)

Conclusion

The emergence of the regional culture seems to be a major key feature in the history of Orissa since the early medieval period. The establishment of a number of feudatory states resided in the coastal Orissa and their study in addition to their unique social customs is a fascinating chapter in the cultural history of Orissa. Though difference has been clearly observed in the social structure in comparison to the other parts of Orissa, a dynamic interaction also existed between divergent ethnic groups where the 'Jagannath Cult' was the centre of attraction. Though devoted to some powerful goddesses whom they regarded as a source of safety and security, a chain of network based on temple cult and rituals started developing between the *Gajapati* kings of Khurda and the feudatory states based in exchange of certain materials utilized in the Jagannath temple in Puri such as wood, *simuli* ropes and sandal wood in which the kingdom of Khurda and the feudatory states were inter-related. The *Chhamu Chitau* or the royal letters issued by the *Gajapati* kings bear a testimony to this fact. These feudatory states of Orissa are very ancient and some of the ruling chiefs of these forest states belonged to their descent for a thousand years or more. There were so many royal families in the feudatory states where various exceptional social customs were prevalent and traditionally the Raj families observed with great faith and belief. It must be said that these social customs were in vogue long in these regions before the Britishers established peace and order in these hilly tracts of Orissa.

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