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Banditry of Sannyasis-Fakirs and the Adivasis (1767-1800): Social Banditry or Criminal Activities?

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Abstract
In this article the author would like to discuss various perceptions about Banditry in India. The author would cite two instances of banditry in Bengal- the resistance movements of sannyasis – fakirs and the adivasis of the Jungle Mahals. In the article I shall discuss the nature of their violence and banditry in the countryside and attempt to discuss whether any of these rebels can be labeled as social or criminal bandits (or neither) in Bengal.
Keywords- *Adivasis, Bandits, Crime, Chuars, Sannyasis, fakirs, social-bandits.*

Introduction

Bandits have been romanticised in literature. At the same time, scholarly works have also asked some very pertinent questions regarding banditry. They have repeatedly made us question the definition of the term bandit and ask whether the colonizers had invented the term or not. Some of the scholars have attempted to demonstrate a peasant-bandit alliance while others viewed banditry as truly opportunistic,[i] a parasitic endeavor. Moreover, they have also questioned why the landlords and the government used to retain some of the alleged bandits in their paramilitary troops. Scholars have written about a relationship between rebellion and banditry as well. Furthermore, some of them view banditry as a form of defiance. In the following sections I shall discuss different perceptions about banditry in and outside India. I shall go on to cite two examples of banditry in Bengal and discuss either of them could be called social banditry or criminal banditry or not.

Brief Historiography of Banditry in India

The scholarship on banditry in India is not that vast. There are three major works that are worth mentioning. Ranjit Sen penned a book on social banditry in Bengal. As the title suggests, it has attempted to link social banditry with resistance movements of the rebels during the years 1757-93. According to the author, banditry was certainly an expression of violence and self-assertion in the countryside. It was an expression of anger. But the author warns us that it was not the only form of lawlessness. 'Banditry was significant in Bengal because it offered livelihood to the paupers, security to the commoners and compensation to the rich who otherwise suffered under the terrible fiscal squeeze of the state".[ii] The second work I would like to mention is by Kim Wagner. He dealt with the 'thugs'.[iii] Anamitra Chattopadhyay wrote her paper on the riverine dacoits of Bengal. She also wrote her doctoral thesis on the riverine dacoits,[iv] My analysis of banditry would be somewhat different. I shall deal with the phenomenon within the context of resistance movements by the sannyasis, fakirs and the adivasis of the Jungle Mahals during the years 1767-1800.

Methodology

In this article, a wide array of secondary sources, books and articles have been used in forming the arguments. In addition to the secondary sources, documents from West Bengal State Archives and National Archives of India have also been used to complete the article.

There might be a connection between banditry and rebellion, robbery and resistance movements. In the next segment we shall briefly discuss various perceptions on banditry and rebellion.

Banditry and Rebellion: A Brief Historiography

Scholars have for long have attempted to find a link between banditry of the rebels and the ordinary peasants. Erick Langer, for instance, observed for Bolivia peasant stories that 'exhibit a selective memory that emphasises only certain traits among bandits. No tale deals with robbing other peasants'.[v] Giannes Koliopoulos concluded that in nineteenth-century Greece, bandit images in ballads 'did not correspond to the actual outlaws'[vi] and Paul Sant Cassia observed that Mediterranean 'bandits are often romanticized afterwards through nationalistic rhetoric and texts which circulate and have a life of their own, giving them a permanence and potency which transcends their localized domain and transitory nature.'[vii] A bandit thus was a popular hero, an avenger, and a good thief. There is also skepticism about his role as a poor man's defender.[viii] At the same time, it is also believed by some scholars that these legends tend to 'overlook the brutality and indiscriminate terror and killing of real-life bandits.'[ix]
Bandits were viewed as outlaws. Eric Hobsbawm based his theory on the idea of social banditry. For him, an outlaw working on the periphery of the society, involved in some form of rebellion against the government and the state would be considered as a social bandit as opposed to an ordinary robber, if they received a form of popular support from the general population.[x]Joseph wrote that 'it was the popular support that most determined the social content of banditry.'[xi] On the other hand, the phenomenon of social banditry was a myth for Anton Blok.[xii]

Other scholars have criticised Hobsbawm. They have argued that banditry is a complex phenomenon and is governed by a number of factors including social, political, cultural and ecological and it challenges Hobsbawm's model of one dimensional, the single-toned conceptualisation of the European countryside.[xiii] They also argue that bandit-elite alliance was more common than bandit-peasant solidarity. The 'special relations' between the peasant and bandits as supposed by Hobsbawm was also negated by William Taylor who argues that peasants demonstrate no support for the highway robbers.[xiv]Alan Knight however finds some popular support for the bandits.[xv]However, his arguments are often negated. Slatta opined that Knight made the error of overgeneralization by equating common outlaws with social bandits.[xvi] J.B. Chandler argues that the problem with Hobsbawm was that he treated the bandits as both myth and reality.[xvii] Hobsbawm had responded to the criticism by saying it was extremely difficult to divorce myth from the reality of banditry. However, he admits that Anton Blok was right about one aspect of his earlier works. Hobsbawm had yet to explore different kinds of myths; the ones the bandits held and the ones that were created later.[xviii] The revisionist critics of Hobsbawmian model too have been criticised and critiqued in the academic circles. For instance, Gilbert Joseph opined that Slatta had acknowledged that a small group of peasants had participated in the everyday forms of resistance (including banditry) and had recognised the peasant participation in insurgencies that were branded as banditry by the state, yet he (Slatta) was reluctant to admit a peasant–bandit solidarity.[xix] C. Birkbeck is Joseph's staunchest critic. He neither subscribed to the Hobsbawmian nor Josphian nor Slattan model. Instead, he wanted to do away with any attempt to read social/political content into the question of banditry.[xx] Joseph, on the other hand, believed that Birkbeck eventually adopted a narrower legal definition of the term banditry. However, he added that the problem was, banditry can only be less problematic if one uncritically accepts the definition of banditry in terms of crime and deviance.[xxi] Paul Sant Cassia treated banditry not as a unique phenomenon but as something that takes different forms and shapes in different conditions. For him, it is neither pre-political form of protest nor means of suppressing one, but under certain circumstances, it acts as both as it is instead an 'aggressive form of illegality'. For him, banditry is rather a myth, not a hardcore reality; a myth employed by the urban middle class to legalize their political strategies.[xxii] Works of Mary McIntosh,[xxiii] John Markoff, and Silvio Duncan Baretta[xxiv] also provide valuable insights on the subject of crime and criminality.

Banditry thus can be studied in a number of ways. On the other hand, some scholars see a close relationship between banditry and peasantry. There are scholars like Anton Blok who feels that bandits

had no loyalty toward the peasants. They garnered peasant support through terror and by carving out avenues of upward mobility. However,Anton Blok[xxv]denied the existence of a type of banditry that could be regarded as an elementary form of peasant protest. However, it appears that the colonial government treated every act of defiance as a rebellion or crime. It would appear that banditry is often linked with social protests against oppressive regimes. There is also a belief amongst social scientists that banditry might be a very basic form of social protest. Paul Collier suggested that modern economic models treat rebellion as a form of crime or banditry. In conventional economic analysis he adds, rebellion is indistinguishable from bandits or pirates even though they are not identical. He concluded that rebellion is associated with crime in modern economics. There are other views as well. On the one hand, there is a sharp contrast between rebellion as a crime and rebellion as a justice-seeking movement.[xxvi]

In recent years, the subject of crime, banditry and rebellion have been approached in a quite different manner. It no longer remains within the jurisdiction of social sciences, but it has been approached with the interdisciplinary methodology. Today criminology has become intertwined with the social sciences in dealing with the subject. Works of Donald Crummey[xxvii]and Yves Brillon[xxviii] are two such examples. Donald Crummey believed 'crime is inherently a form of protest.' Social scientists have often been accused, of not being concerned with,

> the theoretical connections between crime, law and the state which have so preoccupied the new criminology. They devote a few paragraphs to Hobsbawm and perhaps some other literature on social banditry and then - correctly - get down to the business of their history.[xxix]

Banditry is thus a multifaceted endeavor. Bandits could be social bandits. They could be allies of the peasants. They could indulge in brigandage as a form of protest and defiance of the government. They could have popular support. At the same time, they could also be professional bandits. They could be antagonistic to the peasants. They could also be in solidarity with the landed proprietors.

It is evident from the above mentioned arguments, that there are basically two broad strands of thoughts. One argues that there is a link between outlawry and robbery with the peasants. They are social bandits. They were rebels and chose banditry as a form of their defiance. The other one stresses that there is no such thing as peasant-robber alliance. In the next segment we shall discuss how banditry, robbery and outlawry were perceived in India through time.

Perceptions About Banditry and Rebellion in India

It would be pertinent to mention here what the traditional Indian law perceived banditry as a crime. According to the ancient Hindu lawgivers, a robber or anyone (including the highway robbers) who committed violence or depredations should be severely punished by the king.[xxx] The king was supposed to punish them, but the severity of the punishment depended on his discretion. The Muslim, as well as the Hindu rulers, used their discretion in punishing the 'criminals.' When the Company state took over, they found this kind of indigenous justice system deficient. Over the following decades, they brought the judiciary into its fold. Moreover, with time and the Company's regulations, the definition and meaning of crime, criminality, bandits and robbers changed as well. For the administration of Bengal, anyone disturbing law and order was a criminal. For them, banditry was most definitely viewed as a crime. They defined and redefined the concept of crime and criminality. It would eventually shape the law as well as the judicial process in the later centuries. The Company officials were quick to deem any disturber of peace as a criminal and anyone involved in plundering a 'banditti'. Throughout the state reports and correspondences, we find the mention of the terms bandits and banditry in the context of sannyasi-fakirs. These men often chose 'brigandage' as a method of resistance. There was a close connection between rebellion and banditry. However, the colonial administrators chose to put them in the same bracket as the criminals. We are dealing here with the colonial concept of 'banditti' that they applied to the individuals who rebelled during the period under review and plundered and robbed 'Company's territories.' The Company state did not differentiate between the bandits who robbed the people for their 'livelihood' and the rebels who looted and plundered the countryside and the Company's kacharis during

the time of these rebellions. It is unsurprising that they would have a different opinion of what constituted a crime or even banditry. The Company state, with their English sensibilities, considered bribery and poaching to be worthy of capital punishment in the eighteenth century.

Radhika Singha has argued that the regulations of 1772 initiated a process by which the colonial state claimed absolute judicial and punitive rights and perceived them to be the pillars of its sovereignty. These rights were different from the fiscal claims 'which could be farmed out or dispersed over the chain of social authority through which revenue tribute was collected.'[xxxi] However, in Arun Mukherjee's analysis, the British treated 'crimes', committed by individuals differently from the ones committed by gangs like the 'thugee bandits' (dealt with by William H. Sleeman). They viewed the collective criminal actions to be directed against the state or anattempt to weaken the Company state. The thugs, for example, represented an alternative political and cultural structure, challenging the exclusive authority of the colonial state over the Indian social order. He also finds a close link between scarcity and crime.[xxxii] Thus, the definition of crime and criminality came to be intertwined with the question of revenue and tribute under the colonial rule. It defined the sovereignty of the Company state. It did not matter whether or not a particular kind of 'crime' had 'popular support' or not. If it interfered with revenue collection, then that act was a crime. In people's minds, illegal predation also included banditry, rustling, theft, racketeering, and trafficking. However, criminal acts are also rooted in poverty and marginalisation, thus overlapping with legitimate resistance.[xxxiii]

It is true that the Company state viewed any form of defiance as banditry. However, how did the common people view them? The banditry in Bengal was not entirely a new phenomenon brought bythe Company state's invention. It is believed that 1770 was a watershed in Bengal's history. It was not a watershed because it marks the year of the great famine but also because of all the crime and criminals it produced. The famine unleashed the suppressed anger of the people in the form of rural violence. Moreover, the Permanent Settlement worsened matters. With the introduction of the Permanent Settlement, the moral economy was destroyed and shattered the old village life, including that of the paiks. This transformation created a new breed of dacoits. However, according to Anamitra Chattopadhyay, crime was not a colonial phenomenon.[xxxiv] It had existed since the time of the Sultans in Bengal. However, even then, these robbers like the thanageres, phasures, gumchamoras, river thugs, etc., continued to exist in the eighteenth century. These men were not a new brand of criminals. The existence of dacoits can be traced back to the days of Magasthenes, Kautilya, and Hiuen Tsang. Even Thevenot and Careri mentioned them. During the Mauryan period, the robbers meant swindlers involved in direct plunder while the thieves took a more indirect route.[xxxv] Even the thugees was an ancient band of robbers, cheats and swindlers.[xxxvi]It can be said that the people were quite disturbed by these men.[xxxvii] These robbers did not even spare Calcutta and were known for their cruelty. Public reaction to these crimes was not sympathetic.[xxxviii]A Mughal farman declared,

> in as much as thieves and robbers carry off peoples' goods in isolated places, it is ordered that new qasbas should be populated and jagirdars are directed, whenever they find considerable areas of waste and uninhabited land, to arrange to provide masjids, dharmasalas, and water-tanks so as to populate these areas.[xxxix]

The people feared these dacoits but not the government.[xl] In the eighteenth century, police had to detect such crimes and acts as it affected the peace of the general population. However, despite the Company state's actions, these continued unabated.[xli] Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay mentioned the existence of dacoity in eighteenth-century Bengal. In Devi Chaudhurani, we meet the eponymous bandit queen whose title suggests she was a female landowner. From Lieut. Brennan's accounts it is clear, she was the leader of a band of people the Company state deemed as 'bandits' and lived on boats known as bajras[xlii] and had a close association with another 'bandit' leader Bhawani Pathak. Majnu Shah appeared to have some connection with the latter. The book also depicted the oppressive ways of Rangpur's revenue farmer Devi Singh and collector Richard Goodland(Goodlad).In this novel, however, both Devi Chaudhurani and Bhawani Pathak were not merely 'bandits' but were defenders of the weak. Bankim

Chandra tried to attribute the dacoity to the 'Muslim misrule' in Bengal. Once the Company state stabilized itself and imposed 'strict but fair laws', dacoity ceased, and the dacoit leaders had no reason to indulge in the same anymore. Bankim Chandra thus portrayed them as Robin Hood-like social bandits. Devi Chaudhurani was a historical figure.[xliii]Anamitra Chattopadhyay states that the volume of rural crime increased during the colonial period. She adds that there may have been some socio-economic reasons behind the phenomena like Ranjit Sen and Basudev Chattopadhyay had suggested, but crimes such as these had been in existence for a long time. In the following section the present author shall cite two cases of violent resistance movements against the Company state. She shall attempt to analyze the nature of 'banditry' in these two rebellions- the rebellions of sannyasis-fakirs and the adivasis.

Analyzing The Question Of Violence and Banditry of The Sannyasis, Fakirs and The Adivasis (Chuars)

Before going into details about the supposed banditry and rebelliouness of the sannyasis, fakirs and the adivasis, it is neccessar to give some context of their rebelliousness and banditry.

The Company state had prohibited the itenerant religious mendicants (the dasnami sannyasis and the madariya fakirs) from making inroads in Bengal. They were also forbidden to make their annual prilgrimages. In addition, the adminsitarors also frowned upon their usury business and did not want them to give loans to the local zamindars.[xliv] The government preffered arrears by these zamindars as it would present them with an excuse to take over their lands and sell these zamindaries.[xlv]According to the administrators, their 'annual raids' affected the overall revenue collections. [xlvi]Thus the Company state interferred with their economic activities and livelihood. These factors quickly prompted the sannyasis and fakirs to rebel.[xlvii]

They would form bands of 4000-5000[xlviii] and march across different districts of Bengal and Bihar such as Saran, Purnea, Betteah, Malda , Murshidabad, CoochBehar, Khirpy, Rangpur, etc. They would use camels and horses. They were armed and did not shy away from using them. Sometimes the sannyasis and the fakirs 'raided' side by side. [xlix]They also 'asked' for alms and provisions from the common people. The administraors considered their journeys to be 'raids' and the method of asking for alms to be coersive.[l] In addition they would also 'harrass' the zamindars who owed them money.[li] They even committed 'robbery' at CoochBehar though they were apprehended by the Company troops and sent off for trial.[lii]

The sannyasis and fakirs used violence and banditry as two viable forms of defiance in their resistance against the Company state. This method proved to be quite useful. Most of the peasants, terrified of the rebels, often abandoned their homes and fled into the jungles. Desertion of the peasants meant a considerable loss of revenue for the Company state. They were also involved in the kidnapping of small children, abduction and extortion. They even murdered rich peasants. The Company state refused to recognize their grievances as real, rational and genuine. They attributed the violence and the 'grievances' to the flaws in their characters: it was either attributed to their bellicose nature or their evil temper. Their grievances were never associated with their collective violence, because the cause and effect of their actions were never recognised.

We discussed the existing literature on banditry as well as the idea of social banditry and how banditry was related to rebellion. We also discussed the colonial perception of banditry as a crime. It appears that therewas some form of alliance between the social bandits and peasants in other parts of the world. This phenomenon has regional variations. However, it was virtually absent in eighteenth-century Bengal. Despite the bandits being defiant and fearless, there was no connection, let alone an alliance between them and the ordinary peasants or even the ordinary rebels. However, the sannyasis and fakirs were not professional bandits like the thugees or phasurees. They were religious mendicants, who occasionally robbed and 'extorted' money. However, stealing and robbing professionally like the thugees was not their sole purpose. Banditry and robbery were not their sole means of subsistence. They were expert traders and money-lenders. Their subsistence did not depend upon dacoity, robbery or any variation of banditry. At the same time, they were not social bandits either. Their motivation for revolting was for their rights and privileges. They had no alliance with the peasantry. Unlike the 'social bandits'

elsewhere, sannyasis and the fakirs did nothing to alleviate the burdens of the ryots but rather, at least according to the Company records, terroriszed them. No Robin Hood-like legendary leader amongst them stole from the rich to give it to the poor. The question of popular support does not arise here. On the contrary, the sannyasis and fakirs were accustomed to violence. The rebellion was a form of defiance. The rebels targeted the merchants, looted the kachari sto instill fear amongst the Company officials. Loot and plunder of revenue from the government's territories was an act of defiance. However,terrorising the ordinary peasants in the guise of banditry during the time of rebellion was not a mere act of defiance. It was also a part of who they were. For the sannyasis and fakirs, these 'loots' were small legitimate contributions. However, for the traumatised masses it meant desertion of land out of sheer fear if we go by the Company correspondences. This negates the peasant-sannyasi-fakir alliance theory.

At the same time, it is interesting to note that some ordinary inhabitants did provide intelligence to the sannyasis and fakirs. They also provided them with information about the exact location of the government's troops. They also refused to cooperate with the government in apprehending sannyasis and fakirs. They might have provided the latter with logistical support, including provisions willingly on account of their religious calling and respect that ordinary people might have for them. However, it is not enough to conclude that they were willing to incriminate themselves on behalf of these religious mendicants. The sannyasis and fakirs occasionally refrained from actually looting the poorest of the ryots, but they did plunder the villages and killed the people if denied. However, these were not instances of social banditry. It is important to note that the concept of 'popular support' is widely contested. Moreover, besides large-scale peasant participation was hardly noticeable. Thus, the social bandits of Latin America and China were absent in Bengal.

Banditry is an opportunistic endeavour. The sannyasi-fakir rebels did have communal solidarity. They had it when they commenced their respective resistance movements. They demonstrated it in their collective actions and collective violence during the time of the rebellions. They acted as a group when they chose to rob, loot and plunder the 'Company's territories' and terrorised the ordinary inhabitants to express their grievances if we go by theCompany state's versions. It was not patriotism. They were not fighting for a homeland. They were not fighting for their independence. Their grievances were mostly economic. For the sannyasis and fakirs, it was marginally socio-cultural as it involved their 'ancient rights' to hold sanads for rent-free lands and to move freely bearing arms. For them, banditry served several purposes: 1. Material gains for the rebels. 2. Blatant defiance of the Company government authorities. 3. Strike fear amongst them and the inhabitants 4. Affect land revenue to force the Company state to listen to their grievances. The Company state did listen, but they retaliated with military measures. They were violent, and the 'raids' were suppressed with counter-violence.

The Company state had won many a war thanks to their military forces and was quite prepared to send military expeditions one after another against the sannyasis and fakirs. Even the death of Capt.Thomas and occasional losses incurred by their men did not deter them. The Company state that prioritised profit-making would never take this loss of revenue without retaliating. They countered the sannyasi-fakirs' violence and plundering with military expeditions. They burnt the rebels' villages, capturing and enslaved their family members and finally executed and hanged the rebels publicly to set an example. The word 'execution' is significant. We have all come to associate the terms like execution and condemnation with the jury/bench trials conducted by the state. So, when the British officials used the words and phrases like execution and enemies of the government, it subconsciously perhaps, was trying to legitimise their authority, and recognise the Company administered territories as the Company's legitimate possessions. That legitimacy (or lack of it) distinguished the violence and banditry of the Company state from that of the sannyasis and fakirs. [liii]

On the other hand, during the years 1767-1800, the adivasis of the Jungle Mahals started to resist the Company state, without much provocation or instigation from the Jungle zamindars. In the mid-1760s, the Company administrators had suddenly enhanced the revenues of the Jungle zamindars who had for long paid a nominal fee to the central authority. This sudden interference prompted them to rebel. The

zamindars had paiks of the Bhumij stock working under them. They rebelled as well. The paiks and the ordinary adivasis needed no prompting from their zamindars. [liv] During the second adivasi resistance (commonly known as chuar or paikan rebellion), the Company state's decision to sell off lands of the Jungle districts under the Sunset Law prompted the zamindars to rebel. They were also demilitarized and resumed the paiks' lands. The paiks and the landless tenants working under them found themselves out of work. As a result they also rebelled.[lv]

They might have provided leadership in certain cases (Rani Shiromoni or Durjan Singh), but these adivasis acted on their own as to preserve their livelihood. They used the technique of banditry and covert guerrilla warfare to attain their goals. They specifically targeted the Company state's strongholds, forming bands of 5000-6000 men. [lvi] These rebels would eventually join Rani Shiromoni of Karnagarh and as 'banditti' they would commit 'depredations' in the nearby non-adivasi villages. They would plunder them, and then set fire to the houses. They would plunder the villagers' cattle. These plunders often led to ryots deserting their lands. It may be inferred from their actions that loot and plunder were not their only target. They wanted to totally annihilate the Company's territories. There were many such instances where they would tie up or beat ordinary inhabitants such as Anuntram and Kushal Dey. They burned the houses of Shonachora only ½ coss away from Satpati. They also intended to cut off the supplies and provisions of the Company's troops. They carried of 4 bullocks loaded with grain.[lvii] Similar testimonies from Nimai Guri would attest the fact.[lviii] These rebel bandits would also plunder swords, Chadder, quilt, money, jewelry, utensils. They also attacked the Kachari and threatened to kill the jamedar Nur Ali. They specifically attacked these Company's territories.[lix] And Rani Shiromoni played a part in these incursions.[lx] According to Company records Rani Shiromoni of Karnagarh and Raipur Zamindar Durjan Singh encouraged these incursions. It led to peasant desertions leading to a drop in the overall revenue collections of the Company state. It appears that the Rani did not always have to implement coercive methods. She was able to entice the local inhabitants in cooperating with her. Sardar Paiks also joined her. [lxi]

Gobardhan Dikpati on the other hand was the head of Santhals and was always 'infamous' for his brand of banditry. His men looted, plundered and burn houses.[lxii] They would flee into the jungles afterward. [lxiii] It can be noted from the company records that the ryots themselves were unhappy with Dikpati. They lived in constant fear of him.[lxiv] Can we call him a 'social bandit'?

From the above two examples (sannyasis-fakirs and the adivasis), it becomes apparent that there were a number of anti-Company state resistance movements during the years 1767-1800. They chose overt methods to resist the intrusion of the Company state into their economic and social lives. Violence and banditry were their two methods of defiance. And they did so without any prompting from their zamindars; even though there seems to be some connection between the ordinary adivasi rebels with their jungle zamindars. This form of banditry is often misconstrued as either social banditry or criminal banditry depending on who is writing the history of rebellions in Bengal. A social bandit is someone who shared their loots with the ordinary people becoming Robin Hood like figures. This sort of banditry was absent in India. The adivasi rebels and their leaders were feared by the people. The ordinary people often had to flee from their villages because of the 'raids' committed by the rebels. At least in case of the adivasi (chuar) movement of the Jungle Mahals, there was no solidarity between the rebels and the ordinary people.

However we can hardly call their activities criminal. Unless of course we go by the Company state's definition of crime and criminality where they deemed anyone rebelling against them and building a fort as a criminal. But in reality these rebels had their rights stripped away and their livelihood was at stake. Therefore they chose to rob and plunder the Company's territories as a method of defiance. They intended to destroy these territories and force the Company state into restoring their ancient rights. In fact there was some sort of general populations' veneration toward the religious mendicants that

prevented them from actively cooperating with the Company troops. After serious consideration, it may be inferred that it was neither social nor criminal banditry but merely a form of defiance.

Conclusion

It maybe thus concluded that social banditry was absent in Bengal. The forms of violence, arson, murders, and banditry were merely rebels' methods of defying the diktats of the new Company government. Criminal banditry (thuggee) was a colonial construct.

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