

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Judicial DEPARTMENT.

123-124	G.O. No. 966	Press
		~~Mis.~~
	Dated 14.6.1986	

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Judicial Department,
14th June 1867.

No. 123. Read the following letter from G. THORNHILL, Esq., Collector and Magistrate of the Kistna District, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George; dated Masulipatam, 23rd May 1867, No. 17.

I have lately been visited by the District Moonsiff of Karempudy, and have been informed by him of the prevalent opinion that secret murders and female infanticide prevail to a large extent amongst the tribes of Brinjarries, who carry on the trade in salt between the coast and the interior.

2. The enclosed are copies of reports addressed by him to the Assistant Superintendent of Police. It is, however, obvious that, owing to the mode of life of the Brinjarries, the ordinary local Police of any single District through which they pass can have but little opportunity of becoming acquainted with their secret practices.

3. The crimes attributed to them, of course, require confirmation, but the position of Karempudy, where the writer of these reports has been employed for two years, on one of the great Brinjarry tracks, and in a wild part of the country, near the Hyderabad Frontier, is such, that their habits are likely to be better known there than in more civilized places.

4. I am about to leave the District, and shall not have the opportunity of making any personal inquiry, but think it right that rumours which have reached me should be made known to Government. The Government are aware that but few Brinjarries have settled in any of the Districts in this Presidency; they have their homes in Hyderabad, and the Central Provinces, but spend three-fourths of their time in carrying grain and salt about the country.

From M. R. SABIAPATY, District Moonsiff, Karempudy, to the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Kistna District; dated Karempudy, 16th February 1867.

I respectfully beg to report that I am informed from a reliable source* that the Lumbadies or Brinjarries who frequent this part of the country, *i. e.*, Palnad and Tummarcottah Taluqs, and the neighbouring country of His Highness the Nizam, are in the habit of murdering, most

cruelly and with impunity, some of their own caste people, whom they suspect to be killing people, cattle, &c., by sorcery.

2. The following is a short account of the circumstances under which those diabolical murders are generally perpetrated.

3. The Lumbadies, who are a semi-barbarous and mercantile sect of people, travel through the jungles of this and the Nizam's Governments in large associations, with large numbers of cattle, &c., transporting salt into the Nizam's dominions, in exchange for wheat, tamarind, &c. They are half Hindoos by religion, and, therefore, possess all the superstitious notions of the paradox Hindoos. Every group of Lumbadies, which is called a "Tanda," has its own priest, or "Guru," who leads a very secluded and (apparently) sacred life, observing celibacy throughout the period of his existence. He is, therefore, looked upon by all the members of his Tanda, or association, as a very sacred personage (perhaps equal to a god), and is very much venerated, and even adored, as well as dreaded by them. He is believed to be omniscient and to foretell all future events. His word is, therefore, law to the Brinjarries; and any one transgressing it is supposed to incur the heaviest penalty in this and even in the next world: so, they take good care not to offend him for aught.

4. He is consulted by them on every important occasion and undertaking, *i. e.*, when they intend to buy or sell; when they are about to make an important journey; when they wish to

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Judicial Department,
14th June 1867.

celebrate a marriage; when a person is dangerously ill; and so forth. His fanatic advice is an oracle to them, and is invariably attended to with superstitious zeal. He is presented with a certain sum of money for every advice he gives them, and is fed and clothed at their common expense.

5. If any one of them were to meet with a premature or sudden death, or if a plague were to break out among themselves or their cattle (perhaps in defiance of their priest's prophecy), they consult him again as to the cause thereof. After a serious meditation, he implicates some one or other of their camp as the origin of the calamity, and attributes it to that individual's enchantments. The person so named by the Guru is considered to be their enemy. A meeting is forthwith convened, and that person, as well as all his nearest relatives, summoned. He is summarily sentenced, by the unanimous voice of the assembly, to be killed, and the relatives of the culprit ordered to deliver him up, so that their dreadful sentence may be enforced. His relatives dare not oppose the order, for fear of being excommunicated, and also incurring divine displeasure; for it is by the sacred advice of their Guru that the sentence is passed. If they happen to be a respectable sect of people, they would not like to see their relative killed by others— they consider it rather derogatory to their dignity; so, some of the nearest relatives of the supposed culprit carry out the sentence of their bloody priest, and of their assembly, with their own hands, by either beheading, or spearing, or strangling the culprit to death, in the presence of the assembly. If he is a common individual, he is surrendered to the assembly, who commission some of their own members to execute their cruel sentence.

6. The relatives of the deceased, as well as all the members of the Tanda, afterwards observe utmost secrecy on the subject. They dare not divulge it, and they at once move on to some other place, as usual. Nobody knows anything about this murder (because it is perpetrated in a jungle), unless any of the jungle villagers, who may be previously acquainted with the deceased, are casually informed of it by the youngsters of his (deceased's) family, in course of conversation. The apathy of the ignorant villager who hears the news is such that he seldom publishes it.

7. My informant Koceti Rayulu Naick, a respectable Native, and Ex-Naikwady of this place, tells me that he heard (from some of the Lumbadies themselves) of the murder of seven Lumbadies, in the Tanda of one Ranea Naik, about five years ago, between the Nallagonda Pass and Chinna Ganjam, in this District. One Syed Mohadden, of this village, tells me that, about 10 or 12 years ago, he heard of the murder of a female and male Lumbady, under similar circumstances, near Mellayagu.

8. I am further informed that the most abominable crime of infanticide also exists amongst these Lumbadies, as it did amongst the Rajpoots of the North Western Provinces.

9. It appears they are averse to having more than two or three female children, and, therefore, should they happen to get more than that number, they either strangle to death, or bury alive, every such child as soon as it is born; and, perhaps, they do not care even as much for the loss of their child as a shepherd does for his newly born lamb or kid.

10. As one deeply interested in the welfare of the public, I feel it my duty to bring the foregoing inhuman practices to your notice, in view to their entire suppression.

11. As the Lumbadies are now passing by this village, and by Nakkerkul, to and from Chinna Ganjam, this seems to be a very appropriate time for your instituting preliminary inquiry as to the truth of the existence of these practices.

12. Hoping to be pardoned for my intrusion on your time with this long (but what I consider to be an important) report, I remain &c.

From M. R. SABIAPATY, District Moonsiff, Karempudy, to the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Kistna District; dated Masulipatam, 18th May 1867.

Since my communication of the 16th February last, I instituted further inquiries to ascertain the real cause of female infanticide among the Lumbadies. One Kota, a Lumbady of Machavaram, in Palnad Taluq, informed me that their female children are very burdensome to them—that on

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Judicial Department,
14th June 1867.

the occasion of their marriage, their parents are invariably bound, by the custom of their caste, to bestow upon each of the girls large presents, in the shape of clothes, jewels, cattle, &c., of an immense value, which actually drain their purses: so, they let only one, or at least two, of their first-born female children live, and get rid of the rest in the manner described in my former letter.

(True Copies).

(Signed) G. THORNHILL,
Collector.

No. 124.

ORDER THEREON, 14th June 1867, No. 966.

Resolved that a copy of the foregoing letter, and of its enclosures, be furnished to the Inspector General of Police, who will ascertain and report whether any inquiry has been made by the Officers of his Department into the matter brought to notice by Mr. Thornhill, and, if so, with what result.

(True Extract).

Chief Secretary.

To the Inspector General of Police.
,, Magistrate of the Kistna District.

Exd. J. H. Burns.

9. 6.
No 906 - 14 June 1867.

Resolved that a copy of the foregoing letter and of its enclosure be furnished to the Inspector General of Police, who will ascertain and report whether any inquiry has been made by the officers of his Department into the matter brought to notice by Mr. Thornhill, and if so, with what result.

W.D.H.

6/1

To the Insp. Genl. of Police } Sep 19/6
Majr of the 1st Bt

h