

## Thuggee and Dacoity Suppression Acts, 1836 - 1848

The Thuggee and Dacoity Suppression Acts were a series of legal acts passed from 1836 – 1848 in British India under East India Company rule. The acts outlawed the practice of *thuggee*, which was prevalent in North and Central India. It consisted of ritualized murder, mutilation and robbery. The act also outlawed dacoity, a form of banditry prevalent in the same region.

### List of Thuggee and Dacoity Suppression Acts

Over the course of twelve years, many acts to suppress the practice of *thuggee* and *dacoity* were passed with subsequent amendments made over the years. The list below gives, in brief, the details regarding the acts.

#### Thuggee and Dacoity Suppression Acts, 1836 – 1848

Name of Act	Description	Date of Enactment	Presiding Governor-General
Act XXX	Provides for the trial and punishment of Thugs	November 14th, 1836	Lord Auckland
Act XVIII	Provides for the trial of persons charged with Thuggee.	August 7th, 1837	Lord Auckland
Act XIX	No person incompetent as a witness by reason of conviction for any offences	August 7th 1837	Lord Auckland
Act XVIII, 1839	Provides for a trial of persons accused of murder by Thuggee	July 15th, 1839	Lord Auckland
Act XVIII	An Act for the better custody of persons convicted of Thuggee and Dacoity	September 9th, 1843	Edward Law, 1st Earl of Ellenborough
Act XXIV	An Act for the better prevention of the crime of Dacoity	November 18th, 1843	Edward Law, 1st Earl of Ellenborough
Act XIV	An Act for regulating the proceedings of the Sudder Courts of Ft. William, Ft. St. George, Bombay, and at Agra in	July 6th, 1844	Edward Law, 1st Earl of

	regard to sentences of Transportation for Life.		Ellenborough
Act V 1847	An Act to facilitate the execution of the sentences of Courts established by the authority of the Governor-General in Council for the administration of Criminal Justice in States or Territories administered by Officers acting under the authority of the East India Company.	April 10th, 1847	Henry Hardinge
Act X	An Act for amending Act XXX. of 1836 relating to the trial and punishment of Thugs.	June 19h, 1847	Henry Hardinge
Act III	An Act for removing doubts as to the meaning of the words "Thug" and "Thuggee" and the expression "Murder by Thuggee" when used in the Acts of the Council of India.	February 26th, 1848	Lord Dalhousie
Act XI	An Act for the punishment of wandering Gangs of Thieves and Robbers.	May 20th, 1848	Lord Dalhousie

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## Impact of the Thuggee and Dacoity Suppression Acts

With the passing of these legislative acts, the British authorities began systematically cracking down on *thuggee* and *dacoity* cults in areas under their control. Those members who were caught by the authorities turned informants in order to get a lenient sentence from the courts.

These informants proved to be crucial assets in the hunt for the *thuggee* cults. Hideouts and anyone found there were eliminated and the survivors were brought to trial. The sentences ranged from life imprisonment to death by hanging, depending on the severity of their crimes.

By the 1870s the Thug cult was essentially extinct, but the history of Thuggee led to the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871. Although the CTA was repealed at Indian independence, tribes considered criminals still exist in India. The Thuggee and Dacoity Department remained in existence until 1904 when it was replaced by the Central Criminal Intelligence Department (CID)