



## Contact Zone

### Ethnohistorical Notes on the Relationship between Kings and Tribes in Middle India

This article discusses political and ritual aspects of indigeneity in the former jungle kingdoms of southern and northern Orissa. It will ask whether “tribal” principles of authority and sociopolitical organization do or do not differ from “royal” ones, and argue that the dichotomy, which is often taken for granted, between states and stateless societies must be questioned. In place of using this dichotomy, this article identifies a “contact zone” in which acephalous segmentary lineage societies and kingdoms existed side by side and were interconnected in mutually reinforcing ways. But how can such aggregations of two apparently different forms of political organization, with their concomitant ideologies, be understood as forming a unitary whole? How was the relationship between the royal principles of rule and authority of the Hindu kind, on the one hand, and the tribal principles of rule and authority on the other, viewed and practically pursued by the indigenous, and sometimes exogenous, actors themselves?

KEYWORDS: Orissa—indigeneity—jungle kingdoms—contact zones—social organization

IN POPULAR as well as academic discourse, “tribalism” and “indigeneity” are often used synonymously. Tribal societies are seen as the epitome of what it means to be indigenous. Connected with this conflation are thought to be a number of globally occurring characteristics of tribal societies: egalitarianism and a democratic way of living together, being autochthonous or at least being the first settlers in a place, and living in harmony with nature. Furthermore, while in earlier views tribal societies were often seen as timeless and ancient, nowadays they have come to be regarded as prototypes of what it means to be sustainable in cultural, social, ecological, economic, and political terms.

There is evidence that some of these ascriptions—even though they have their foundations in an entangled symbiosis of romanticism and (post-)colonialism—depict reality to a substantial degree. However, one has to ask whether the objectification, reification, and ultimately commodification of culture that accompanies some of these ascriptions are really “doing good.” At the least what needs to be asked is whether the dichotomies that often go along with these ascriptions—for example, tribal versus modern, rural versus urban, hunter-gatherers versus agriculturalists, authentic versus inauthentic, locally born versus foreign settlers, nature-lovers versus nature-destroyers, and many similar ones—are helpful (including being helpful in a political sense). Would it not be more pragmatic to look at scales rather than oppositions and to also consider long-standing interdependencies and exchanges rather than retelling the story of tribal isolation?

This article will contribute to these issues by presenting and discussing ethno-historical data relating to the jungle kings of western Orissa. While Orissa is often depicted as being Hindu along its coasts and tribal in its mountains, it should not be forgotten that by far the largest percentage of the Orissan population actually belongs to what could be called a Hindu-tribal continuum. I have already discussed the interchanges and their hybrid results in some ethnographic detail as far as popular Hinduism in coastal Orissa are concerned (SCHNEPEL 2008). I shall focus on the politico-ritual aspects of the phenomenon of the jungle kings in the mountainous regions of southern and northern Orissa, asking mainly whether “tribal” principles of authority and sociopolitical organization do or do not differ from royal ones.<sup>1</sup>

Discussions by anthropologists concerning politics and political organizations in premodern societies have long been guided by a rigorous distinction between

tribes and states, or better, between segmentary lineage societies on the one hand and centralized, hierarchically organized political systems on the other. Many of these studies relate back to pathbreaking work on this theme in the 1940s and 1950s, especially to EVANS-PRITCHARD and FORTES (1940), EVANS-PRITCHARD (1940), FORTES (1945), and MIDDLETON and TAIT (1958). In these and other studies, it was shown that occasionally quite extensive political systems could be formed without kings or other forms of central government. Yet with hindsight, the dichotomy that was often taken for granted between states and stateless societies must be questioned. Where exactly does an acephalous society end and a state begin? Who does the Dinka “Master of the Fishing Spear” resemble more, the Nuer “Leopard-Skin Priest” or the Shilluk divine king? Did the Nuer prophets not rally great numbers of warriors from different lineages and clans behind them? Was the Shilluk king really the head of a kingdom or only the figurehead of a number of loosely connected clans? In pursuing such questions, considerations concerning the boundaries between states and stateless societies were often phrased in evolutionary terms: Nuer, Dinka, Anuak, Shilluk, Bantu kingdoms, and the Zulu state, for example, were presented as paradigms of different evolutionary stages from “no state” to a “fully developed state.” Mixed forms were usually regarded as resulting from conquests of agriculturalists by pastoralists.

Moreover, in these debates the identification of two diametrically opposed kinds of political system was often connected with two different kinds of mentality. This was especially the case when, in the late 1960s and 1970s, the “old” ethnographies were rediscovered by anthropologists, who, in line with the spirit of the time, looked for alternative models of society with which to formulate criticisms of their own and, possibly, develop alternatives for it. The Nuer and similar societies became the exemplars of third-world freedom fighters and the proponents of a mentality commonly denoted by the umbrella term “egalitarian.” The political systems of these groups were seen as a species of “anarchy,” albeit an “ordered” anarchy. They were, as CLASTRES (1974) put it succinctly, not just societies *without* a state, but societies *against* the state (see also SIGRIST 1968; KRAMER and SIGRIST 1978).

It may be significant that some alternatives to these African-centered schemes of interpretation were offered by anthropologists working not in Africa, but on South and Southeast Asia. LEACH (1970) drew attention to the fact that traditional political systems were not always or necessarily diametrically opposed to one another; instead, they merely represented different developmental stages of one and the same society. To this insight one could add another: the question of whether or not there was a state might also be differently assessed and/or stressed by different members or sections of the society concerned, depending on the social situations, events, or issues they were confronted with at different times. Hence, the distinction between tribe and kingdom reifies what are in essence political identities that shift dynamically according to situation. The dichotomy between states and segmentary lineage societies was also questioned by SOUTHALL (1953) in his study of Alur society, when he coined the term “segmentary state.” This concept was applied to North India by FOX (1977) and to South India by STEIN

(1980). FOX (1971) also stressed that lineage-controlled estates (*tālūks*) could turn into local kingdoms ruled by monarchs, and vice versa, if and when the constellation of power between the lineages of an area changed or the respective position in the “developmental cycle” of a given dominant lineage favored the formation of one or other organizational form. Last but not least, CHATTOPADHYAYA (1976) and THAPAR (1984), among others, have argued from a historical perspective that lineages have often formed the starting point for state-formation in India.

In this article, I shall return to the problem outlined above. However, I shall not be examining the developmental or evolutionary side of the problem (even though I start with a discussion of foundation myths). Instead, I will focus on certain interactional, structural, and ideological implications. There are clearly enough examples, both within and outside India, of situations in which acephalous segmentary lineage societies and kingdoms existed side by side. More than this, they were interconnected in mutually reinforcing ways. Indeed, in some cases these interconnections and interactions were so great and intensive that one should speak rather of a single political organization instead of two. But how can such aggregations of two apparently different forms of political organization, with their concomitant ideologies, be understood as forming a unitary whole? What are the ideological foundations, main elements, and basic characteristics of such dualistic political systems?

In order to provide data to shed some light on these questions, the focus of my attention will be mainly on the former jungle kingdom of Keonjhar in the north of the East Indian state of Orissa. However, initially data relating to the jungle kingdoms of South Orissa will be discussed in order to provide a basis for comparison.<sup>2</sup> Following that, the relationship between the former Keonjhar kings and one of the “tribes” resident in their kingdom, the Bhuiyas, will be discussed. Throughout the article I shall ask how it was possible in this “contact zone”<sup>3</sup> of the hinterland of Orissa that two apparently different concepts of social and political organization, not to mention two different political ideologies and religions, could successfully meet and combine, one being tribal and egalitarian in character, the other Hindu and monarchical. In other words, how was the relationship between royal principles of rule and authority of the Hindu kind on the one hand, and tribal principles of rule and authority on the other, viewed and pursued by the actors themselves? Can we discern an antagonism between two starkly different mentalities and ideals of organization? Or was there rather some mutual understanding, even an elective affinity, between the two sides? My conclusions will wrap up the argument and seek to provide some answers to these questions.

#### ROYAL FOUNDATION STORIES

To start with, let us consider a number of emic points of view regarding the foundation of certain South Orissan jungle kingdoms. The following report refers to the founding of Bissamcuttack, a “little little kingdom” within the little kingdom of Jeypore in the southwest of Orissa:<sup>4</sup>

The original founder ... was one Mallu Mahunty, by caste a Srishti Kurnam (a highly warlike race in those days), who emigrated from Parlakimidi in the early part of the seventeenth century. [...] Mallu Mahunty started his life as a trader in Bissemkatak and a few of its surrounding villages, and in a couple of years or so completely gained the confidence of the Khonds who, being impressed with his assiduity and prepossessing appearance and manners, elected him as their headman. He was therefore no longer a bustling trader going from door to door and from village to village, but a man of some rank and influence, to whom people from all parts of the neighbourhood poured in with petty presents in the shape of grain and other articles of produce, with a view to obtaining good advice and for settlement of disputes among themselves. These presents gradually took the shape of occasional nuzzars [gifts of homage] signifying a silent acknowledgment of the superiority and authority of the recipient.

(*Koraput District Records* [KDR] 2168, para. 3, in the Orissa State Archives)

This report was prepared by the descendants of Mahunty some three hundred years after the events being reported, at a time when the last estate holder had to support his claim against both the little king of Jeypore and the British colonial authorities during a long-running court case. As such, its content is legitimatory in character. In other petitions, similar statements are embellished in various ways, for example, when it is remarked that, before Mahunty's arrival, Bissamcuttack was "inhabited by a mountainous race of Khonds," who had a "notoriously inborn nature of turbulence and lawlessness" (KDR 2168, para. 2).

If we take these statements at their face value (without completely forgetting the contemporary politico-legitimatory texts and contexts in which they are embedded), we are presented with the image of one tribe, the Kondhs, whose life was being disrupted by internal anarchy and strife among the clans, which therefore willingly accepted the rule of an outsider. It does so voluntarily, but only after being "impressed with his assiduity and prepossessing appearance and manners." It is even stated that the Kondhs elected him and that they showered him with presents. Thus, Mahunty's quasi-royal status gradually developed out of the actions of men who would later become his subjects. Initially he was a trader and therefore began by acting mainly in the economic domain. Once elevated to the position of ruler, however, he ceased to trade in commodities and instead began to receive (and redistribute) gifts. In this capacity, his actions acquire a politico-ritual character: they are no longer narrowly economic. The gifts, which are initially given voluntarily, gradually become *nazzars*: that is, they are still gifts, but they are provided regularly and take on more the character of feudal tax payments.<sup>5</sup>

Let us now examine another report of the foundation of a jungle kingdom, Parlakimedi. According to this report or legend, a prince called Bhima Deo went into the hinterland of South Orissa in search of a kingdom of his own. A local man recognized the prince's noble birth and inquired as to the reason for his journey:

Bhima Deo was walking along in his journey towards a second home, when a crow followed him flying around his head, uttering certain auspicious words.

A man was drawing toddy from a tree, and hearing these words, came to the conclusion that a person of rank must be in the neighborhood. Seeing the prince approach he recognized him to be such from his demeanor, saluted him, and inquired the cause of his being alone. The prince replied that he was in distress, and in quest of some country over which he might become ruler. The man carried him on his shoulders until they came to a place where eight chieftains, desirous of a prince to rule over them, were assembled in council. He was gladly received and became the head of a small tract in Kimedi, designated the country of the “Eight Mallikas.” [...] While being carried on the man’s shoulders, *he made an inward vow to sacrifice him to some chosen goddess*, if he obtained his wishes. The votary on being informed of his fate, cheerfully offered himself for immolation. (CARMICHAEL 1869, 88; original emphasis)

The local man and the eight chiefs were undoubtedly *ādivāsīs* or tribals. Thus in this case too, a man—here a prince and not just a trader—was made into a king and equipped with a kingdom in a tribal environment. This happened not only with the consent of the local inhabitants but also in conformity with their express wishes and with their active help; one of them even offered his life. It is notable that the prince did not end his quest after being offered the kingship by the eight tribal chiefs, although this might have been sufficient to establish his kingdom in a purely political sense. Instead, he continued to search for a goddess to whom he could sacrifice and who would be his and the kingdom’s tutelary deity. Only after stealing the image of a goddess—in this case Manikeshvari—and fulfilling his vow to make a human sacrifice was his royal authority fully established.<sup>6</sup>

The report expressly links the foundation of a jungle kingdom with the ritual killing of a tribal chief in front of a goddess. This motif is common all over Orissa and seems to express, indeed legitimate posthumously, the subordination of tribal chiefs to the newly arriving kings. However, certain questions arise if we take seriously the fact that, as reported in this story and in numerous others that could be adduced, the tribal chiefs *voluntarily* submitted to their fate. Were these aggressive acts reinterpreted and depicted as glorious sacrifices only subsequently, in order to transform the subjugated tribes into allies? Or does not the motif of the chief who “cheerfully” offers himself for immolation rather give expression to and explain a complex and fragile juxtaposition of the tribal and royal principles of authority and power? The Parlakimedi legend certainly expresses hierarchy, as is strikingly manifested by the image of the tribal man carrying his future king on his shoulders. But it also expresses consensus, as manifested in the common veneration of a goddess, the motif of the eight chiefs “desirous of a prince to rule over them” and the tribal chief’s consent to being killed. Goddess, king, and tribal chief act as three interdependent actors in a single politico-ritual complex.

Another foundation story refers to Durgi, an estate in Bissamcuttack. Local people told me that one family of Kshatriyas or warriors came from Puri (the abode of the Orissan “state deity,” Jagannath) to Durgi some four to five hundred years ago. They are said to have had tantric knowledge and weapons, like the thunderbolt. After establishing a settlement at Durgi, the brothers spread out in all direc-

tions, managing (I was told) to control the *ādivāsīs* in the area by giving them knowledge and training them in the martial arts. The Durgi rulers are also said to have gained the confidence of the local *ādivāsīs* by giving them sacred food or *mahāprasād* from Puri. Thus they established ritual friendship with the indigenous population, even addressing them as “blood brothers” (*soi-sangho-to*). The Durgi rulers also impressed the *ādivāsīs* through miracles, such as being able to hold glimmering charcoals without getting burnt. When on one occasion the *ādivāsīs* revolted, the Durgi rulers are said to have worn magic charms on their arms which prevented arrows from hitting them.

According to the sources discussed so far, some *intermediate conclusions* can be drawn:

1. Most of the persons who were able to establish kingdoms in the tribal areas of the Orissan hinterland (and there were up to a hundred) came from the outside, that is, they were foreigners.
2. By and large, the new kings and their successors were accepted, if not welcomed, by the *ādivāsīs*. Hence, establishing a kingdom was not (primarily) the result of forceful subjugation; rather, royal authority was regarded as legitimate by the tribals.
3. One reason for this relatively great measure of acceptance of royal authority and of its legitimacy was trade. Some jungle kings obviously started their careers as merchants, trading jungle products for products from the coast and the valleys, or traversing the jungle areas of the macro-region to carry commodities from the Deccan to the East Indian coast.<sup>7</sup>
4. Another reason was the charismatic ability of these outsiders to settle conflicts both within a tribe and between tribes of the same locality, especially if these involved prolonged violent feuds that could not be reconciled by the indigenous leaders alone (on this point, see NAYAK 1989).
5. Pure charisma was not enough. Often it was the outsiders’ prowess, martial skills, physical strength, military power, and a kind of power considered superhuman, or *śakti*, which allowed them to establish their rule firmly.
6. The kings had their share of *śakti*, not only in a military but also in a religious sense. This is emphasized by the fact that most of them established themselves as the patrons of the cult of tribal or other local goddesses (see SCHNEPEL 2002, chapter v).

#### THE *ĀDIVĀSĪS*’ POINT OF VIEW AND THEIR EXPRESSIONS OF LOYALTY TO “THEIR” KINGS

This is the state of our knowledge, according to the sources discussed so far. However, up to now, we have only looked at how the foundation of the jungle kingdoms was conceived by the jungle kings themselves and their scribes. Let us now consider tribal points of view and ways of acting concerning royalty and the

*ādivāsīs'* expressions of loyalty to their kings. Was their acceptance of kings and the principle of Hindu kingship only claimed by the kings, thus making it a mere rhetorical device on the part of the latter with which to legitimate their rule? Or do tribal sources and data also convey a positive evaluation of royal modes of authority and rule? Hence, in what follows I shall continue to examine indigenous points of view, this time with a focus on the tribal side of the king-*ādivāsī* relationship.

My first data in this connection come from a sub-section of the Kondh ethnic group, the Dongria Kondhs, who live in the remote Niam Hills, adjacent to the high plateau occupied by the Bissamcuttack estate. The Dongria Kondhs trace their origin back to a mythical ancestor named Niamraja, or the "King of the Niam Hills." Today, Niamraja is worshipped in a temple situated on the northern edge of Bissamcuttack town. However, this temple is merely an offspring of a more ancient cave temple up in the hills, which is dedicated to Niamraja. I was told that in earlier times the Kondhs living on the plateau of the Bissamcuttack estate were forced to make pilgrimages into the hills at festival time in order to pay homage there to Niamraja, who assumed the form of a footprint. When the pilgrims saw the god one day in his full form, he is said to have called out in anger, "Why do these people keep coming up the mountain to worship me?" whereupon he threw an earthenware water jug into the valley.

The current temple is located where the water jug is believed to have fallen. This temple therefore embodies the movement of a tribal deity into the area of influence of Hindu culture and power. Niamraja's descent into the valley does not simply mean that the plateau Kondhs are now spared the difficult passage into the hills. More important is the fact that, for the Hill Kondhs, the temple in Bissamcuttack represents a point of entry and of integration into the valley whenever they descend into the high plateau with their jungle produce to trade, or for festivals, elections, and other reasons. Through this temple, the Kondhs are also incorporated into a system of ritual relationships with other deities in the town, thereby also entering into ritual, socioeconomic, and political relationships with the devotees of these other deities, and ultimately with the *thatrājā* and the non-*ādivāsī* inhabitants of Bissamcuttack.

The deity who is of the greatest importance for the relationship of Niamraja and his people with Bissamcuttack is Markama, the tutelary deity of Bissamcuttack and its kings. The Kondhs regard this goddess as Niamraja's consort:

In ancient times Niam Raja kidnapped a Dongria girl named Markama from Tanda village in the Niam hills. But at night the girl fled away and later on it was reported that she repented. Hearing the news, the king suddenly realized his fault. He built a temple near Bissamcuttack in the name of Markama. After this the king died. His grandson Gaising came to the throne. One night he dreamt that the apparition of his grandfather, Niam Raja, was telling him something. It told him to tell the Dongria to worship him in the Markama temple.



From the tribal point of view, therefore, the origin of Markama's cult, the central cult of the kings and inhabitants of Bissamcuttack town and its surroundings, is traced directly back to the actions of Niam Raja, the royal ancestor of all Donghria Kondh, and the royally patronized Markama herself is also of tribal origin. Even though nowadays the Donghria Kondhs are divided into numerous clans and do not have a head, they acknowledge a common ancestor. Moreover, they see this ancestor in the guise of a king, a *rājā*. It is this Niam Raja who allows the Donghria Kondhs to envisage, and in practice establish, links with Bissamcuttack's tutelary deity Markama, a partially Hinduized local goddess, and thus also establish links with the king and subjects of this estate.<sup>8</sup>

Let us now consider one further example, which refers to another section of the Kondhs, those who live near Narayanapatna. This town, located in the center of the former Jeypore little kingdom, served as the royal capital of several Jeypore kings, of whom Viswambhara Deo II (1713–1752) was the most prominent. Viswambhara is said to have been a great follower of the teachings of Chaitanya, the founder of a Vaishnava bhakti sect that continues to be very popular in Orissa and beyond. Singh Deo, the son-in-law of a later Jeypore king and panegyrist of this dynasty, reports:

The said cult was preached to the people of Jeypore Agency without any distinction of caste or creed through the native dances here. [...] Viswambhara retired from the worldly affairs and entered into a cave in a neighbouring hill called Atmaparvata. The cave in the said hill is still pointed out to the spectators by the Khonds of the locality who believe that Raja Viswambhara is still alive in the said cave and meditating on the almighty. (SINGH DEO 1939, 80–81)

These pieces of information reveal another point of contact and mutual attraction between kings and *ādivāsīs* in addition to the tantric cults of local goddesses. This was a shared adherence to bhakti forms of religion, where it is less Brahmanic ritualism than sheer devotion that promises rewards and blessings for the adherents of a deity. In bhaktism, deities can be approached without Brahmanical mediation and regardless of one's standing in the caste hierarchy. Even being outside the caste system is no bar to being the devotee of a god. Bhaktism thus offers scope for the integration of a tribal strata of society into the Hindu fold, as well as providing a platform for *ādivāsīs* to identify themselves with Hindu modes of worship and forms of authority. Tantrism, in the form of the worship of local goddesses who were revered and feared on account of their *śakti*, and bhakti, an egalitarian path to salvation, were thus two religious domains in which royal and tribal modes of ideology and worship could and did meet. Both evince a certain tribal sympathy with royal claims to authority.

However, it was not just within the "misty" domain of religious beliefs, mythology, and ritual that kings and tribals shared common ideals and found a platform to meet, nor was it simply a matter of the latter's rather passive consent to, and acceptance of, royal principles. Rather, this consent stretched into the realm of everyday action and realpolitik. It could even go so far as the *ādivāsīs* actively and

forcefully defending their king, and even installing a king when one was absent or changing him if he were “wrong.” The *Koraput District Gazetteer* reported the following events in the quasi-royal estate of Kalyansingpur, an estate or “little little kingdom,” which, like Bissamcuttack, was located within the little kingdom of Jeypore:

Krishna Deo, king of Kalyansingpur, died in 1884 leaving behind his widow Neela Devi: she had been authorised by her husband to adopt an illegitimate son of 12 years, named Gopinath Deo. But the Ranee [queen] disputed his right of succession and put forward her own claim with the support of the manager Sripati Dalapati. The Maharaja [king of Jeypore] also sent his men to take possession of the property as Krishna Deo had no legitimate heir. The zamindar was, however, warmly supported by the subjects, the local Khonds. Thus a triangular struggle ensued for the possession of Kalyansingpur. On the next Dashara celebration, the Khonds congregated at Singpur and declared Gopinath Deo as the Raja. The widow queen refused to recognize this demand whereupon the Khonds entered into the palace and carried off Gopinath Deo to Jeypore with an escort of 300 men. A temporary settlement was subsequently made according to which the minor received an allowance and was sent to prosecute his studies in the College at Vizianagram [on the coast]. (SENAPATI 1966, 416)

The struggle continued, with agents of the Jeypore king finally taking charge of the estate. However, in 1823, two sons of Gopinath Deo returned to Kalyansingpur and settled there:

The faithful Khonds, once again, supported them and the elder brother, resuming the title of zamindar began to collect rents and issue receipts. The Deo brothers gained the ready support of the people everywhere which caused great apprehension in the Royal court of Jeypore. (SENAPATI 1966)

In brief, the Kondhs of Kalyansingpur wanted a king. Certainly, they might have settled for the Jeypore king, but they wanted a local king, one from a dynasty living close by, whose members could be approached through face-to-face contact rather than through their representatives alone. Kings? Yes! But not a far-away king who was merely interested in creaming off the agricultural surplus without establishing a personal relationship with his local subjects or attending personally to their needs and petitions.

Another historical incident of a similar nature occurred in the South Orissan little kingdom of Golgondah. During the mid-nineteenth century the reigning king, Ananta Bhupati, was deposed by the British after he had repeatedly failed to pay the annual tax of 1000 INR. The widow of one of his predecessors was installed instead:

This election was highly distasteful to the hill sirdars [local chiefs]: firstly, because they were not consulted; and secondly, because the succession in former times was always through male heirs. Troubles of all kinds thickened around the

unfortunate Ranee, and it was not long that she was carried off to the jungles by a party of hill peons and there barbarously murdered. (CARMICHAEL 1869, 236)

As a consequence, the deposed king, whom the British believed was behind these events, was put in jail, where he subsequently died. His estate was then placed under government control:

The hill sirdars were not disturbed in their tenures by the officers of government, but they were not long in discovering that the extinction of their ancient chiefs had seriously lowered their own status. They were now directly subject to the surveillance of the collectors's native Amin: and some slight show of inconsideration to one of their party brought about a hostile confederation. They united to raise an insurrection against the government for the restoration of the Bhupati family. [...] Chinna Bhupati, a lad of nineteen, ... was set up by the insurgents as their "Rajah," and for three years, or from 1845 to 1848, they successfully held their jungles against the military force employed against them.

(CARMICHAEL 1869, 237)

Chinna Bhupati was finally accepted by the British as estate holder. Thus again these tribals and local chiefs (the "hill sirdars") wanted a king nearby, a *rājā* with whom face-to-face interaction could be established. But three further observations can be deduced from these examples. First, and apparently paradoxically, the *ādivāsīs* regarded their own dignity and sovereignty as being enhanced by their deference to the dignity and sovereignty of their king. Having a relationship with a royal official or government representative was not the same as partaking in royalty; indeed, it made it impossible. Moreover, this participation in the sovereignty of one's own king concerned both power (the hill chiefs were angered at not being consulted when a new king was appointed) and status ("the extinction of their ancient chiefs had seriously lowered their own status"). Second, the *ādivāsīs* and their chiefs wanted a male ruler, not a woman or widowed queen. Third, they wanted a king with an established dynastic link ("the succession in former times was always through male heirs"). These two latter preferences clearly relate to the important tribal principles of agnation and male political supremacy. In other words, the *ādivāsīs* only accepted men, not women, as players in the public political domain, and the status of those men was largely defined and legitimized by the hereditary charisma of the male line.

There are other examples of the tribes' active support for their kings. One is what came to be known as the "Ghumsur Wars." In 1836, the Raja of Ghumsur, of the ancient royal house of the Bhanjas, refused to pay his tribute. When other forms of "insurrection" followed, the British sent an army into his kingdom. But before it could reach the royal capital of Bhanjanagar, the Raja fled into the so-called Maliahs or hill regions, where the local Kondhs were extremely loyal to him and supported him in all ways, even sacrificing numerous lives for his military cause. The king evaded capture for many years. There were heavy losses on both sides before he was killed, together with a great number of tribal chiefs and foot soldiers. In the neighboring kingdom of Mohuri, similar events occurred at

the end of the eighteenth century. The then Mohuri king, Gana Deo, refused to pay tribute, and government soldiers were killed when they came to punish him. Like the Raja of Ghumsar, he too disappeared into the nearby jungles, where he obtained the support of a branch of the Kondhs who lived in the Kerandi Hills. The royal dynasty of the Kingdom of Jeypore also repeatedly obtained military support from tribal warriors. As Shakti Vikram Deo, the eldest son of the last king, told me, “Our enemies knew that the next battle will be in the jungle.” He also explained that, in case of war, the king sent a messenger into the tribal regions. As symbols of an ensuing or ongoing war for which the king needed tribal support, the messenger threw a red pepper in the air and drums were beaten. The *ādivāsīs* then prepared for war and came down to Jeypore. If the battle was successful, they were allowed to keep a part of the war booty. Among the ethnic groups living in Jeypore kingdom, the Bonda, whose abode is in the rather inaccessible Bonda Hills, are said to have been especially loyal soldiers, even forming a sort of suicide squad for the Jeypore king. The close association between the Bonda and the King of Jeypore was also manifested in the fact that the Bonda regarded the king as their elder brother. Something similar is reported with regard to another tribe, the Paroja, literally “common people” or “subjects” (Skt: *prajā*). One legend of this tribe states that the kings of Jeypore and the Parojas formerly lived together like brothers. But the kings adopted luxurious habits, like riding horses, while the latter accepted the hardship of carrying burdens.<sup>9</sup> We thus may arrive at a second set of intermediate conclusions:

1. The concept of royal authority was and is not alien to the tribes. Even though their social and political organization consists of a number of clans without a common head, they may imagine a mythical ancestor in the form of a king as common to all clans.
2. Besides the tantric and shaktic cults of local goddesses, another religious ground on which kings and tribals met was *bhakti* (devotion).
3. The acceptance of royal principles by the *ādivāsīs* was not just a matter of the realm of religion and mythology; it can also be found in the realm of everyday action and realpolitik, such as when *ādivāsīs* actively and forcefully defended their king as proud warriors, even against overwhelmingly mighty foes such as the British, and occasionally sacrificed their lives in battle.
4. *Ādivāsīs* took an active interest in the question of succession to the royal office, sometimes even installing a king when one was absent, or abducting and killing an incumbent of the office whom they considered unworthy.
5. The tribal populations of South Orissa wanted a local king, one from a dynasty living close by, whose members could be approached in face-to-face contact rather than through their representatives alone.
6. Having a king of one’s own nearby was seen as enhancing status and as a way of sharing in the royal dignity. A relationship with a royal official or government representative alone did not provide this.
7. *Ādivāsīs* wanted a king, not a queen, from an established patrilineal dynasty.

8. The close relationship felt to exist with a king is often phrased in terms of kinship, as when the king is regarded as a brother, that is, as stemming from a collateral line that managed to achieve greater things.

#### KEONJHAR *RĀJĀS* AND BHUIYA CHIEFS

All the various features we have assembled so far, mainly from the south of Orissa, can be found again—albeit strikingly combined and, one may say, even epitomized—in the north of this region, namely in the jungle kingdom of Keonjhar. Here, it is especially the relationship between the *rājās* of this kingdom and the Bhuiya tribe that provide us with additional information and lead us to confirm, but in some aspects also to reformulate and/or freshly accentuate, the intermediate conclusions made so far.

Let us first examine some of the more general features of Bhuiya society. According to the census of 1901, there were, all in all, 92,000 Bhuiyas in Orissa, of which 32,000 lived in Mayurbhanj, 23,000 in Gangpur, and about 20,000 in the former kingdom of Keonjhar. Within Keonjhar (and partly beyond it), one can distinguish two broad divisions of the Bhuiya tribe: the Hill Bhuiyas and the Plains (*Mal*) Bhuiyas. The latter represented a Hinduized branch of the tribe whose members often formed the feudal militia of the kings (the so-called *pāiks* or *khandāyits*), who held lands as remuneration for their obligation to raise arms for the king. Sometimes a distinction is made by calling the Hill Bhuiyas “Desh Bhuiyas,” or “Bhuiyas of the Country.”<sup>10</sup> The name “Bhuiya” is often translated as “Lords of the Earth” or, alternatively, “Children of the Earth” (*bhuī*). Even though the various arguments put forward in favor of this etymology are not (and hardly ever can be) fully convincing (see ROY 1935, 1–18), it is noteworthy that Bhuiyas themselves claim to be the first settlers of the land and that they therefore possess certain proprietary rights over the soil they till. This claim was usually acknowledged by other social sections of the kingdom, even by Kshatriyas and Brahmans—albeit only with regard to the Bhuiya country proper on the high plateau, west of Keonjhar, with its six *pīrs* or districts. This “first-settler” claim gave the Bhuiyas a considerable amount of prestige and authority among their neighbors. However, the Bhuiyas were a force to be reckoned with in terms of realpolitik too. This is stressed in most colonial sources; for example, COBDEN-RAMSAY’s statement that “in Keonjhar the Hill Bhuiyas wield an extraordinary power and are capable at any moment of setting the country in a blaze of insurrection and revolt” (1982, 43). The power of “setting the country ablaze” is not solely based on the first-settler status of the Bhuiyas, nor does it derive from their numerical strength alone, for in this regard they are outnumbered by other sections of the Keonjhar population. Rather, in addition to these two criteria, two further circumstances must be taken into account. First, the land that the Hill Bhuiyas controlled was not easily accessible or subduable by outsiders, but hilly, jungly, and demanding to them in many other respects (wild animals, difficulty of movement, malaria, and so on). Secondly, the Hill Bhuiyas seemed to have reached a high degree and rapidity of mobilization,

so that their relative numerical weakness could easily be compensated for because they were more mobile in assembling for battle.

It still needs to be determined exactly how the Bhuiya could achieve this “massing effect” in the absence of a central authority and modern means of communication. Our sources give some hints in speaking of an “oligarchy of sixty chiefs” who controlled the Bhuiya country in times of distress and whose words were strictly obeyed. It seems that messages could be rapidly conveyed to all Bhuiyas by way of a knotted string that was passed from village to village (the village being the principal social and political unit in Bhuiya society). Cobden-Ramsay writes:

The gathering of the clans for war or any other purposes resembles in its rapidity the fiery cross of the Scottish clans. A meeting of the tribal chiefs is held, the priest blesses the meeting; a thin rope is then made of the Bauhinia creeper and three knots are tied in it, the first in the name of their god, the second in that of their Raja, and the third in the name of the Mahadesh (Mahathakurani, Maharaja, Mahadesh). Below the three knots a number of small knots are tied indicating the number of days within which the gathering is to take place. The sacred emblem is then dispatched by a runner to the nearest village, which at once forwards it to the next village. (COBDEN-RAMSAY 1982, 53–54)

These assessments of the Bhuiyas as strong and powerful players in the politics of Keonjhar are also based to no insignificant extent on the historical experience of two Bhuiya rebellions that upset the kingdom (and the colonial authorities) in the 1860s and 1890s. Let me summarize the events surrounding the first insurrection.<sup>11</sup> The thirty-fifth king, Gadadhar Bhanja, died on 22 March 1861 without leaving a son from his first and principal wife, Bishnupriya. However, he had a son, called Dhanurjay Bhanja, from a second wife or, as his first wife and her supporters saw it, an illegitimate concubine, even a *phūlbihāī* or “slave-girl.” Despite this less prestigious and even doubtful heritage, this second son was the favorite as successor on the part of the *divān* and the colonial authorities, and initially there were no obstacles in his way. At the beginning of April 1861, however, the Raja of the neighboring (and quite significant) kingdom of Mayurbhanj, in agreement with the widowed *rānī* of Keonjhar, presented a grandson of his, Brundaban, as having been adopted by the Raja before his death and as thus representing the legitimate heir. The colonial government at various levels, from the superintendent of the Tributary Mahals, a man named Ravenshaw, to the High Court in Calcutta and even the Privy Council in London, backed Dhanurjay and recognized him, not least because the claim of adoption was soon found to be a fraud. However, as Dhanurjay was still a minor in 1861, the question of formally installing him was postponed and the management of the estate left in the hands of the *divān*, while the king-to-be attended a school on the coast at Cuttack in the years that followed.

In September 1867 Dhanurjay attained his majority. At that time the superintendent had no reason to expect trouble from the *rānī*. In the meantime, however, she had evidently appealed successfully to several tribal chiefs of Keonjhar to recognize and support Brundaban, the scion of Mayurbhanj, instead of Dhanurjay.

Hence, in autumn 1867, large numbers of Bhuiyas and Juangs (another local tribe) assembled in the mountains and forests next to the royal capital. In December of the same year, a group of tribal chiefs even proceeded to Calcutta to see the lieutenant governor of the Bengal presidency and discuss the matter with him. He told them in no uncertain terms that the government wanted Dhanurjay as king. The chiefs accepted this decision, but demanded from the government that henceforth the *rānī* should receive her allowance through the superintendent and not through the *diwān*, and that the latter should abstain from taking any retaliatory measures against them. As a consequence, strict orders were sent to Dhanurjay and his *diwān* to avoid giving any cause of complaint.

Things might have gone smoothly from there on, but the *rānī* proved difficult. So when the colonial forces attempted to install Dhanurjay in December 1867, this was boycotted by the Bhuiyas and the *rānī*, though Juangs attended his installation. In the middle of January the *rānī* left Keonjhar, but she stopped at the village of Basantpur, where she stayed for several days, calling on the Bhuiyas to rally to her cause. In response Ravenshaw captured a great number of Bhuiyas who had assembled in the nearby jungle armed with axes and bows. He brought them into the presence of the *rānī* and forced the queen to tell the Bhuiyas to stop preparing for war. The captives were released and sent with conciliatory messages to all Bhuiya villages. The *rānī* returned to Keonjhar and once again took up her residence in the palace. On 13 February 1868, she and the Bhuiyas were present at and actively participated in the second installation of Dhanurjay.<sup>12</sup> However, shortly afterwards, in April 1868, the Bhuiyas revolted again under the leadership of two men, Ratna Naik and Nanda Naik. They plundered and burned houses in the region, and on 1 May even plundered Keonjhar bazaar, marched into the palace, disarmed the twenty constables stationed there, and took hold of the Raja's *diwān* as well as other officials. They were taken into the hills, where the *diwān* was eventually killed. By August 1868, the rebellion had been suppressed by Colonel Dalton, whose forces could build on the alliance of neighboring *rājās*. The leaders of the rebellion suffered the death penalty, and others who had taken part were imprisoned.

#### THE BHUIYAS' ROLE IN THE INSTALLATION OF A NEW KEONJHAR KING

One of the most spectacular elements in the ethnohistory of Keonjhar is the important role the Bhuiyas played in the installation of a new king.<sup>13</sup> Even though this ceremonial function should not be interpreted as meaning that the Bhuiyas *made* or *selected* the kings of Keonjhar, it nevertheless gave them some say in their ritual legitimation. For, as Dhanurjay's case showed, no installation is complete without the Bhuiyas' active participation in it. Hence, when they do not consent to a successor and refuse to carry out their ceremonial functions, a king cannot be properly installed and will lack legitimacy.

But where does this right of the Bhuiyas to install the kings of Keonjhar, or at least to play an important part in their investiture, derive from? One answer often

given to this question is aetiological in character: it is said that the very origin of the Keonjhar kingdom is due to the actions of the Bhuiyas. At a time when there was only the kingdom of Hariharpur (in the vicinity of today's Mayurbhanj)—which, for the Bhuiyas was dangerous and troublesome to reach—some Bhuiyas decided to have their own king near by. They started to put this aim into practice by abducting the son of the then reigning Hariharpur king. A royal child, called Jyoti Bhanja, was carried into the mountainous retreat of the Bhuiyas, where, during the years that followed, he was tenderly nursed and raised until he was grown-up. In order to alleviate his hardships and enable him to retain his royal dignity in a tribal surrounding, the Bhuiyas went to quite a lot of trouble. They prepared special meals for him and broke the earthen vessels in which his food had been served after he had eaten. They even “imported” the services of the milkmen caste and of other Hindu castes from the neighboring plains in order to raise him well and treat him according to his high status. As a young man, the prince was also allowed to have sexual intercourse with Bhuiya girls, which is said to have resulted in a special, mixed section of the Bhuiya tribe called Rajkuli.<sup>14</sup>

What exactly did the installation rites of the Keonjhar kings consist of, and what, especially, was the Bhuiyas' role in it? According to DALTON (1973, 143–44), who personally witnessed the installation of Dhanurjay Naryan Bhanja in 1868,<sup>15</sup> the ceremony took place not in the palace, but in a hut next to it, which otherwise served as a limber and storage room. Brahmans were in attendance, sitting amidst an assortment of sacred vessels, implements, and articles commonly used for offerings in Vedic consecrations of Hindi *rājās* (the so-called *tika* ceremony). Brahmans and Vedic rites therefore provided the framework for the following ritual events:<sup>16</sup>

1. The new Raja enters the hall solemnly to distribute *pan*, sweets, garlands, spices, and so on. Then he goes out again.
2. He reenters, mounted spectacularly on the back of a Bhuiya chief, who acts as if he were a fiery steed, snorting, plunging, pawing, neighing, and the like.
3. Opposite the Brahmans is a group of Bhuiyas. One of them is seated on a platform covered with red cloth as if he were a throne. The Raja dismounts from his steed and sits down on this human Bhuiya throne, that is, he seats himself in the Bhuiya's lap.
4. Thirty-six Bhuiya chiefs standing close to this scene receive from one of the Raja's servants imitations of insignia of royalty: banners, standards, an umbrella, the sword of office, and so on; they then arrange themselves in a semi-circle around the Raja.<sup>17</sup>
5. One of the principal Bhuiya chiefs binds a jungle creeper around the Raja's turban as a *sirōpā* or honorary headdress, while music is played, hymns of praise sung, and Vedic verses recited by the Brahmans. Another leading Bhuiya chief then dips his finger into a saucer of sandalwood essence and makes the *ṭikā* mark, the decisive emblem of investiture in Vedic rites, on the Raja's forehead.



6. Afterwards, the chief Brahman, the *diwān*, the *rānī*, and other dignitaries repeat this.
7. The hereditary sword is placed in the Raja's hands, while one Bhuiya kneels before him. The Raja slightly touches him on the neck with the weapon.<sup>18</sup> The "victim" then rushes off and disappears for three days before presenting himself to the Raja as miraculously restored to life.
8. Next, some of the Bhuiya chiefs make offerings to the Raja of rice, pulses, pots of ghee, milk, honey, and other articles, each of which is touched by all the sirdars or hill chiefs before it is presented. The chief sirdars then address the king in long speeches, reminding him that, since ancient times, their ancestors have made over the realm and the people in it to the king, and that he should rule with justice and mercy.<sup>19</sup>
9. Following this, there are gun salutes, and the Raja leaves the ceremonial hall on his Bhuiya "steed," followed in procession by the Bhuiya office-bearers.
10. One day later, the Bhuiya chiefs again assemble in the palace and do homage to the king, bringing gourds and other jungle products as gifts and placing them at the Raja's feet. They inquire about his and his family's health, as well as about the state of his horses, elephants, and other royal possessions. In return, the Raja asks the Bhuiyas about their crops, cows, fowls, and children. Each chief prostates himself in front of the Raja, placing the latter's foot first on his right and then his left shoulder, and finally on his forehead.

There are a number of other reports of the installation of a Keonjhar king, which by and large confirm the pattern presented above. However, some differences, both in the event itself and in the emphases of different narrators, should be pointed out. COBDEN-RAMSAY (1982, 45–46), for example, stresses that the installation is an occasion for the Bhuiyas to muster their strength. According to his report, the Bhuiyas march into the Raja's court to the sound of drums in a wild and fantastic mood. Furthermore, while sequences 1 to 9 in his report are similar to how Dalton depicted them, in sequence 10 the Bhuiyas appear in an even more submissive role, asking for forgiveness and conversing not with the king directly, but only with his royal scribe (*karan*), who, in answering, reads a formula from a palm-leaf document.

While the Bhuiyas' role as described above was certainly significant in installing a king, it should not be forgotten that the event was "framed" by Brahmanical participation and actions. The whole ritual was devised according to *śāstrīk* rules about how to install a king, and the *ṭīkā* ceremony itself was carried out not only by Bhuiyas but, following them, also by Brahmans and other officials, including British colonial officers. Other Brahmanical ceremonies were also held *before* the events described here. Thus Dalton reports, for example, that a Brahman consecrated the king with clarified butter before the Bhuiyas held their *ṭīkā* ceremony, and he suggests that it was only through this and other Brahmanical additions to the "wild ceremonies of the Bhuiyas" that the installation was sanctified and made valid. We should also remember that the events described here were followed by

other rites of installation and that it was not just the Bhuiyas' actions alone that were important, but other elements as well. Thus, MISHRA (1974, 9, 16, 17, 86-88) reports that installation rites took place at the temple of Balabhadra,<sup>20</sup> where the chief priest tied a silken sari (worn beforehand by the god himself) around the head of the king, thus conferring the new royal status on the king. On the day of installation, the white umbrella of "Lord Baladebjee" was brought to the palace in procession, accompanied by drums and other musical instruments that were held to the head of the new king sitting on the royal throne. The Keonjhar Raja was also recognized by the tutelary deity of his kingdom, Thakurani, who had to receive gold ornaments and silken saris as presents from the king before he could ascend the throne. Furthermore, in Mishra's account, the *ṭikā* ceremony is made first by the *rānī*, then by the Brahmans, and only then by Bhuiyas. And the sitting *on* the lap of a Bhuiya becomes in Mishra's account a sitting *in front* of the lap. Finally, in his description of the event there are no prolonged speeches, as in sequence 8 of the list given above.

We have to assume that Mishra, a scion of the former *rājāguru* family of the Keonjhar royal house, is likely to downplay the Bhuiyas' role and to upgrade the Brahmans' role in the making of a king. He wants to present "his" kingdom as a civilized, heavily Vedicized kingdom. Nonetheless, following Mishra, it is necessary to place the unquestioned importance of the Bhuiyas' ceremonial role in a wider perspective. In other accounts their functions appear less central and dominant, perhaps having been reduced in scope over the decades. It might be suggested that, while their ritual role is important with regard to the populations of the hills, Thakurani's role is significant to people living in the plains. On top of this dimension of "internal legitimation," to use Kulke's phrase (KULKE 1979, 26), we have Balabhadra or Jagannath providing external legitimation to the kings of Keonjhar—that is, legitimation vis-à-vis other kings in the region and vis-à-vis the Gajapati and/or other superordinate rulers, like the Marathas or the British.

In yet another account of the ceremony, provided by ROY (1935, 119-22), we are also made aware of the fact that the investiture ritual involved an internal ritual division. The Bhuiya functionaries traditionally came from different villages and clans and bore different ritual titles like *mahānāyak*. While these Bhuiya leaders were secular chiefs in their lives outside the investiture, the *kathei* on whose lap the king sits came from a priestly Bhuiya clan. According to Roy, there was also a division of (ritual) labor among the tribes of Keonjhar as a whole. Besides the Bhuiyas, we hear of the Kondhs and Saonti, who were hierarchically subordinate to the Bhuiya. This is most clearly expressed in the fact that, in this description as opposed to the others, the sacrificial victim was a Kondh and that a Bhuiya also touched his neck with a sword.

## CONCLUSIONS

To what extent does the Bhuiya material allow us to confirm or, alternatively, compel us to rethink our provisional conclusions set out in earlier sec-

tions of this article? Let me summarize these here again. In South Orissa, most jungle kings are said to have come from the outside. Moreover, they arrived with at least the passive consent and more often with the warm welcome of the tribes who came formally under their rule henceforth. In several cases, the *ādivāsīs* of Orissa even helped certain individuals to found a kingdom, sometimes going as far as abducting a king when there was none. On the one hand, the practice of the tribes placing a king on top of their acephalous segmentary lineage systems was guided by practical interests, such as furthering the trade of jungle products with the outside world or finding someone to settle disputes and ensure internal peace and welfare. On the other hand, it was also motivated by a desire to enhance their status and to obtain a share in royal sovereignty, and it was backed by a belief that *śakti*-bearing charismatic outsiders could help in pleasing the much revered but also feared “Goddesses of the Earth.” Furthermore, while it was not insignificant that kings were outsiders, the concept of royal authority was not alien to the tribes. Even where kingdoms as a form of political organization did not exist, royal forms of authority and dignity as well as royal themes in mythology and ritual did genuinely exist among the tribes. All in all, although *ādivāsīs* might want a king, they did not want one at any cost. They wanted a king of their own choice and for their direct benefit; they wanted a king who could be contacted easily for minor, everyday affairs and problems; and yet they wanted a king with dynastic prestige and charisma. If these basic requirements were in any doubt, they were prepared to fight and even risk their lives in order to defend a “good” king or, alternatively, to get rid of a “bad” one. The issue of having or obtaining a good king periodically became relevant after the death of an incumbent of the royal throne. The *ādivāsīs* of Orissa often took an active interest in the question of the succession, even making it their prerogative, if not sole right, to make and/or install a new king.

The Bhuiya data confirm most of these intermediate conclusions in their own impressive way. Take the Parlakimedi story narrated above, in which the young aspiring prince is carried through his new kingdom on the shoulders of a tribal chief, who, having helped establish the kingdom, is sacrificed to the newly found tutelary deity of the king. Among the Bhuiya, we encounter these two motifs once again, not in a legend, but in the form of a ritual of investiture. In sequence 2 of the ceremony described above the king is brought into the *darbār* hall mounted on a human steed, while in sequence 7 a (mock) human sacrifice takes place. Our assessment that the tribals wanted an outsider as king (and not one of themselves), but that they wanted this outsider near at hand, is nicely corroborated and embellished by the Bhuiyas’ story of their stealing a royal child from a neighboring kingdom.

One point of divergence in the Bhuiya data is that the Bhuiyas strongly supported the *rānī* during the rebellion of 1867–1868. This conflicts partly with our data from Kalyansingpur and Golgondah where, as we have seen, the local tribe, the Kondhs, were opposed to the *rānī*’s choice of a successor, and in one case even killed her. Why did the Bhuiya support the *rānī*? This, it may be suggested, was closely related to their conception of the *rānī* as the mother of their land and its inhabitants (COBDEN-RAMSAY 1982, 45–46). In particular, if we follow NANDA

(2003, 214), we are led to see connections between the Bhuiyas' support for the *rānī* on the one hand and their reverence for Thakurani, the most powerful deity in their own pantheon, on the other. Nanda even goes so far as to suggest that the slaying of the *divān* was a kind of human sacrifice to the goddess. Thus, in acknowledgement of this strong *tāntrik* and *śāktik* element in the indigenous religion of the tribes of Orissa, one should acknowledge that, although the *ādivāsīs* of Orissa indeed wanted a king and not a queen, the latter was not insignificant either on account of her role as some sort of living and moving Thakurani or (at least) because the Bhuiyas ascribed certain *śāktik* qualities to her.

One further factor in the Bhuiyas siding with the queen in this matter was not so much that they were *for* the queen and/or *against* Dhanurjay. Rather, it seems they were against the *divān*, the person who was directly responsible for imposing unpopular measures upon them, such as compulsory labor and taxes. This *divān* was strongly in favor of Dhanurjay. Perhaps the Bhuiyas hoped for a better *divān* if they accepted the Mayurbhanj scion as king.<sup>21</sup> In that case, it must be stressed that the Bhuiyas' rebellions were "rebellions" and not "revolutions," to adopt Gluckman's distinction between the two (see GLUCKMAN 1963, especially chapter III). That is, the Bhuiyas' insurgencies were directed not against kingship as such and in favor of another kind of political system, but against apparently unfit pretenders to the throne or their unwanted supporters, and even against already installed incumbents whom they considered unworthy. These were actions in support of supposedly better officeholders in the name of kingship and in support of the values connected with it in the view of the Bhuiyas themselves.

Adopting this line of interpretation, let us examine the installation ceremony once again. The investitures of kings of Keonjhar, at least those that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century, were marked by two apparently contradictory attitudes on the part of the Bhuiyas. On the one hand, there was the Bhuiyas' right to bear the insignia of the royal office; then there was their function of binding a jungle turban or *siropā* around the new king's head and putting a *ṭikā* mark on his forehead; and finally there were the speeches they made to the king, full of admonitions to be just and fair. All these ritual elements are expressions of the Bhuiyas' significant status and role as the makers and installers of the kings of Keonjhar and the guardians of the proper values attached to "their" kingship. On the other hand, there are clear symbolic and ritual expressions of submission: the king is carried on the back of a Bhuiya, who acts like a war horse; the Bhuiya chiefs are the bearers rather than the owners of the royal insignia, which are merely sylvan imitations of the real ones; the exchanges of gifts and pleasantries with the king are hierarchical, not reciprocal; a Bhuiya kneels down to be sacrificed with a sword by the king; and the king's foot is placed on the heads of some of the Bhuiya chiefs. All these ritual elements clearly express the Bhuiyas' inferior status, if not their willing submission, to the king. Again, it might be argued that the Bhuiyas feel responsible for kingship in Keonjhar and for installing the individual incumbents of this kingship. They show superiority to individual officeholders as bodies natural as long as these have not been fully installed, but bow to them once body

natural and body politic have been conjoined, as well as to the office of king in itself.

This complex dialectical relationship between kings and tribals in eastern India was well captured during our last visit to the area by the sirdar of Bhanspal, when he said, “The Bhuiyas had to obey the king, and the king had to obey the Bhuiyas.” But the “entangled tension” (CLIFFORD 1997) and “hierarchical solidarity” (DIRKS 1987) that were embedded in this relationship are most strikingly expressed in the rite in which the king sits on the lap of a Bhuiya elder. Clearly, this rite symbolizes, even constructs, a father–child relationship. The empathy, even consubstantiality, that was felt to exist between this tribe and the king was thus again framed in terms of kinship. But, by contrast to the Bondas mentioned in the first part of this article, who acknowledged a *fraternal* bond between themselves and the royals, here we find the notion of filiation. And what is most astonishing in the Bhuiya case is the fact that the king is seen not as the father, but as the child of the Bhuiyas.

This rite poses some problems of understanding, and as far as I am aware, up to now there has been no convincing interpretation of it in the literature. During my field visits with my Orissan colleagues Nayak and Mohanty, one solution to the enigma gradually dawned on us. More by chance than by deliberate effort, we discovered that during Bhuiya marriages the bridegroom must sit on his father’s lap for a while. From their own experiences of Hindu marriages in coastal Orissa, my colleagues also told me that the groom is carried to the bride’s house on the shoulders or in the arms of a relative. Hence, in the coronation of a Keonjhar king (as, incidentally, in many other royal installation ceremonies throughout the world), there are strong elements of a marriage ceremony. But whom does the king marry? I would like to suggest here that the bride can be none other than Thakurani, the personified and deified earth of the Bhuiya country. During the rite of installation, as is stressed in Roy’s account, Thakurani was represented by an earthen vessel filled with water which was placed next to the king-to-be and object of *pūjā* veneration. Some of the Bhuiyas’ most important roles in this installation ceremony thus symbolically express the king’s status as the husband of the (Bhuiya) earth.<sup>22</sup> The subsequent (symbolic) human sacrifice of a chief to the earth sealed, sanctified, and celebrated this connubial relationship. This, then, appears to be a final reason (besides the various political, religious, social, and economic ones which have already been mentioned) why the *ādivāsīs* of Orissa (sometimes) wanted a king: they needed husbands and patrons for their earth goddesses in order to tame their wild and terrible sides (when unmarried) and to ensure the fertility and well-being of kings and subjects alike.<sup>23</sup>

There is then some evidence that, as far as their indigeneity and autochthoneity are concerned, tribal societies do not stand on their own. Even in their own imaginations, politics and rituals, tribals themselves feel that the close relationship to *their* earth needs to be mediated through a king—especially a foreign or even a “stolen” king—to whom to marry their earth goddess in order to make the land, as well as its animals and human beings, fertile and prosperous.

## NOTES

1. This article is an extended and rewritten version of SCHNEPEL 2005.
2. The jungle kingdoms of South Orissa have been the focus of a number of publications of mine (especially SCHNEPEL 2002). The jungle kingdom of Keonjhar was at the center of a research project sponsored by the German Research Council (DFG) and ran from 2003 to 2005, in which Hermann Kulke, Chandī Prasad Nanda, Prasanna K. Nayak, Devdas Mohanty, and myself participated.
3. For a discussion of the concept of a “contact zone,” see PRATT (1996, 6–7).
4. From the Jeypore kings’ point of view, Bissamcuttack was a tributary estate, while the “estate-holders,” the Bissamcuttack *thatrājās*, considered themselves royal, as did their immediate subjects.
5. On the *thatrājās* of Bissamcuttack, see also SCHNEPEL 2002, chapter IV.
6. On the theme of stealing goddesses, see SCHNEPEL 2003.
7. For example, the Jeypore kings most probably originated from traders traversing the area from central India to the East Indian coast, as argued in SCHNEPEL 2002, chapter III.
8. See NAYAK (1989, 123). Markama and the role of the Dongria Kondh in the Dasara festival in Bissamcuttack are discussed in SCHNEPEL (2002, chapter VI, section 4).
9. See ELWIN (1950) and HARIJAN AND TRIBAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT 1990, 221.
10. See COBDEN-RAMSAY (1982, 42–56); DALTON (1973, 142–43); and ROY (1935, 28–30). It shows the dynamically shifting relativity of such identity constructions that, during a tour to the region, all Bhuiyas, however remote their homesteads, considered themselves Plains Bhuiyas, while acknowledging that Hill Bhuiyas existed, if only a little further down the road.
11. I am here referring mainly to COBDEN-RAMSAY’s account (1982, 215–23), which in itself relies heavily on HUNTER (1875–1877). A recent discussion of these rebellions can be found in NANDA (2003, 216–19).
12. The colonial authorities had a great interest in securing this second installation. This is shown by the fact that also present on that occasion were Colonel Dalton, the Commissioner of Chotanagpur District (who later described this ceremony), and Superintendent Ravenshaw. After this ceremony, the *rānī* was granted a pension and retired to Puri.
13. Other examples of this right are rare, though in the neighboring kingdom of Bonai, Bhuiyas seem to have had a similar privilege and obligation, while in the kingdom of Pal Lahera the Savaras played an important part in the king’s installation. See ROY (1935, 127–32).
14. A discussion of this legend can be found, among other places, in COBDEN-RAMSAY (1982, 44–45, 214). Stories of the stolen prince were narrated to us all over the hill country by many informants with only minor variations. According to another, somewhat more official version, the origin of the Keonjhar kingdom was connected with the central Gajapati rulers, the kingdom originally having been the gift of a Gajapati to a Mayurbhanj prince who had visited Puri and Jagannath. This prince was given a Gajapati daughter as a wife. See COBDEN-RAMSAY (1982, 213–14). For a discussion of other legends concerning the origin of Keonjhar, see NANDA (2003, 208–210).
15. This installation, which took place during the troublesome period of rebellion discussed above, was the second for Dhanurjay, the first being enacted without the *rānī*’s or Bhuiyas’ participation. Thus the case was somewhat exceptional, and the colonial officer, Dalton (who actively participated in crushing this rebellion), was not a neutral observer. Nonetheless, he was a skilled eyewitness whose report of an event that was at least meant to be traditional offers a good starting point for analysis.
16. The numbering of sequences, provided in order to structure the event and my discussion, are mine, not Dalton’s.
17. Admittedly not everything went well during this particular ceremony. For example,

the hereditary sword-bearer was not there, and despite the Bhuiyas' protests, a deputy was found.

18. It is said that in former times this was a real human sacrifice. There is one particular family that holds the right to provide the sacrificial victim and which is entitled to hold some tax-free lands as remuneration for this.

19. According to COBDEN-RAMSAY (1982, 46), this phase, which one may call a "rite of admonition," is repeated annually in the month of May.

20. Interestingly enough, the "Jagannath-temple" in this little kingdom is dedicated to this god's brother.

21. During the second rebellion in 1890 (which cannot be discussed fully here), the Bhuiyas strongly resisted a form of tax known as *bethi*, which consisted of the obligation to provide unpaid labor for communal work, such as building roads, water tanks, canals, or schools.

22. This is an old idea in India. See, for example, HARA 1973.

23. In this context, the mutual inquiries concerning the well-being of the king and the Bhuiyas respectively in sequence 10 of the ceremony represents more than just pleasantries and acts of formal politeness.

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