Divided Loyalties: Citizenship, Regional Identity and Nationalism in Eastern India (1866- 1931)

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For Mama and Papa

Abstract

       This dissertation poses the following question—What does the co-existence of profound linguistic difference and unitary nationalism reveal about the nature of the Indian nation and the relationship between the region and the nation in India. To this end, I focus on the period when a tactical resolution between the demands of the region and the nation occurred in India. My contention is that at the root of this resolution is the need (both at the regional and national level) to imagine a new citizen of emergent India.

       Through detailed studies of cultural and intellectual engagement of regional political, literary and historical organizations in early twentieth century Orissa, this dissertation traces the resolution of regional and national interests. I argue that in the period between 1900 and 1920, the emergence of the idea of a universal and politicized Indian citizen occasioned this resolution of the tension between the region and the nation. As the meanings of politics, statehood, rule and subject-hood changed due the colonial state's efforts to introduce franchise in India, both the Indian National Congress and the major regional political organization in Orissa, the Utkal Sammillani were forced to elaborate a clear relationship between Orissa as a region and the broader Indian nation in order to define the universal Indian citizen.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Figure 1

Distribution of Oriya speaking areas in 1900
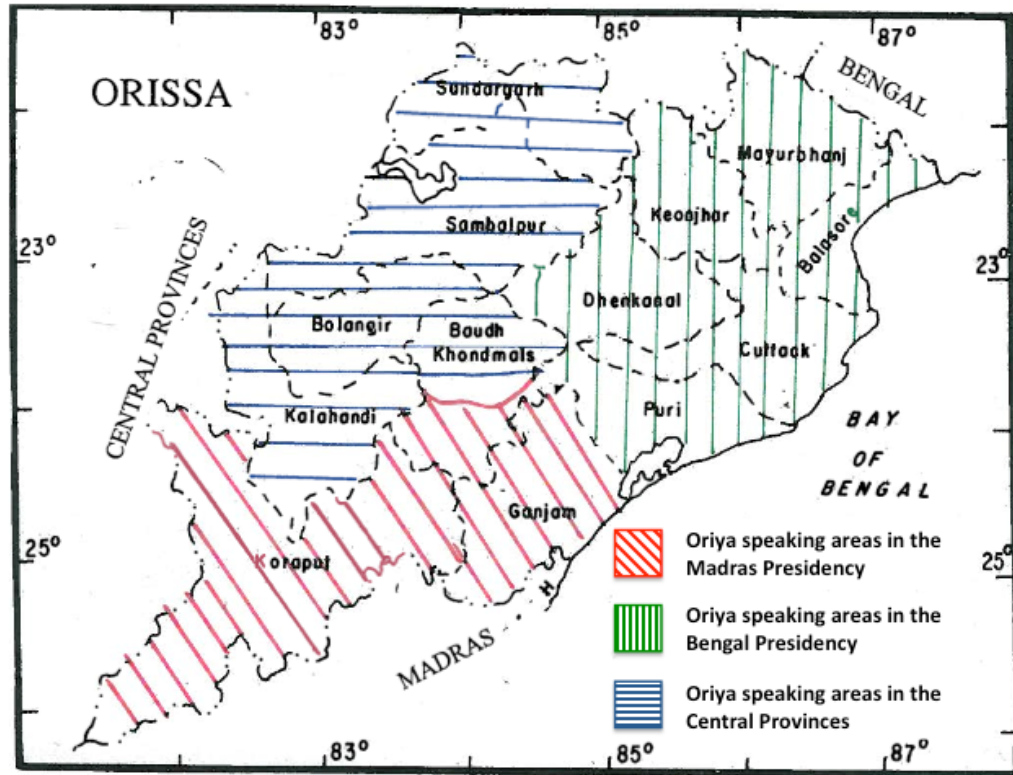
Figure 2

Distribution of Oriya speaking areas in 1912
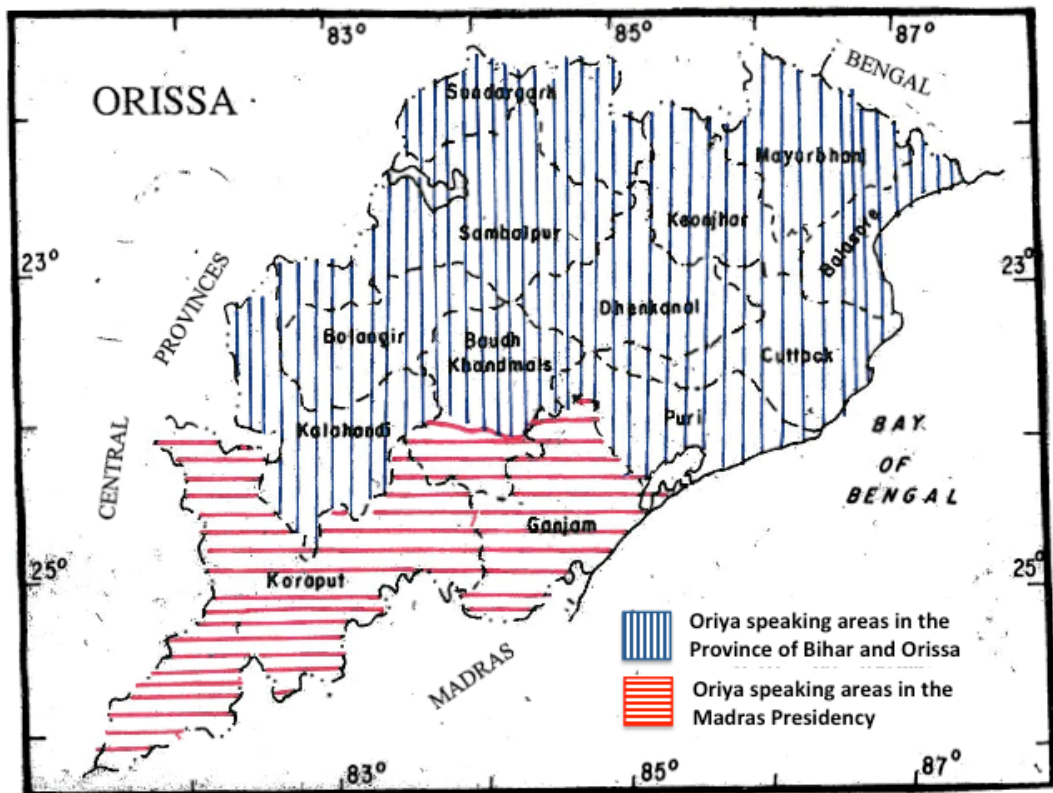
Introduction

Divided Loyalties: Citizenship, Regional Identity and Nationalism

In 1950, the Constituent Assembly set up to draft the Constitution of India chose

Rabindranath Tagore's 1911 song *Jana Gana Mana* as the national anthem of the new

Indian republic. The song, which invokes various regions of India, reads in English as

follows:

> *Thou are the ruler of the minds of all people, dispenser of India's destiny.*
>
> *Thy name rouses the hearts of Punjab, Sind, Gujurat and Maratha. Of the Dravid and Orissa and Bengal.*
>
> *It Echoes in the hills of Vindhyas and Himalayas, mingles in the music of Yamuna and Ganga and is chanted by the waves of the Indian Sea.*
>
> *They pray for your blessing and sing thy praise. The salvation of all people is thy hand, thou dispenser of India's destiny. Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.*

This song defined India as a collective of linguistic regions such as Punjab, Sindh, Orissa,

Gujarat and Bengal. By choosing this song as the national anthem of the Indian republic,

the Constituent Assembly in 1950 acknowledged the constitutive nature of regional

linguistic states in the normative understanding of the Indian Union. However, it was

between when the song was written in 1911 and its adoption as the Indian national

anthem in 1950 that the linguistic regions it mentioned assumed this political and cultural

significance for an independent India. In 1911, when this song was written, the precise

linguistic nature of these areas was not considered their most dominant feature. At the

national level, these areas were seen as merely geographical units not yet marked by the various meanings that the term 'linguistic region' would evoke half a century later during the linguistic reorganization of the Indian provinces.[1] Indeed, for Tagore areas like Punjab, Sindh and Orissa merely served as parts of India. As actual efforts by the colonial government for the linguistic reorganization of British Indian provinces had not yet begun in 1911, Orissa and Sindh would not become separate provinces until a quarter of a century later. Furthermore, the Indian National Congress, the most influential All India nationalist party, had not yet rethought its understanding of India as a federation of linguistic provinces. Therefore, in 1911 when Tagore described India as constituted by these parts he was referencing them simply as locales of the nation.

By 1950, the Constituent Assembly, with its concerns about issues of citizenship, federation, domicile, rights, franchise and electoral constituencies, understood regions like Orissa and Sindh as more than just parts of the Indian nation. With these concerns at the forefront, regions were not merely considered as geographic areas but linguistic units; rather than just being part of the nation, the region and its language came to mark Indian citizenship and democracy. That is, by the 1950s the Indian citizen was imagined not only as Indian but also as a member of a particular region and a speaker of a particular

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[1] The linguistic reorganization of the Indian provinces took place 1956 to 1960. While the linguistic reorganization of the Indian provinces had begun in 1936 with the formation of Sindh and Orissa, the new post-colonial Indian state finally faced the questions of regional linguistic loyalties in 1956 when the new states of Maharastra, Karnataka, Kerela and Andhra Pradesh were formed. This moment in the history of the infant post-colonial state was one of great national anxiety as the Indian leadership saw the pressing need for the creation of linguistic provinces as a devisive move that would eventually jeapordize the basic unity of the Indian republic. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between language and nationalist politics in India see Robert D. King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

language. Hence, by this time both the Indian nation and the universal Indian citizen came to be marked by linguistic difference.

This transformation of the region from simply a geographical category to a linguistic and constitutional category is the focus of this dissertation. I trace this transformation by investigating the formation of Orissa, a province in eastern India, as a linguistic, historical, cultural and geographical region. Through this history of the formation of Orissa I illustrate how the idea of a linguistic region emerged both within the area that would eventually become Orissa and at the national level in the Indian National Congress.[2] In particular, I look at the changing relationship between the Indian National Congress, as a representative of the all-India nationalist attitude towards regional politics, and the Utkal Sammillani, a regional political organization that represented all the Oriya speaking areas established in 1903.

The relationship between regional linguistic politics and nationalism in 1903 was not the same as the comfort with the multi-lingual nature of India reflected in the Constituent Assembly's choice of the Indian national anthem in 1950. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, anti-colonial nationalism (led by the Indian National Congress) was accompanied by movements in various parts of the country for the creation of linguistically homogenous administrative provinces like Orissa, Sindh,

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[2] Orissa, in it present day form came into existence in 1936. Like other provinces in India, it is a linguistically organized province. That is, a majority of the population of Orissa speak the Oriya language and these speakers of the Oriya language are also called Oriya. Prior to 1936, areas where a majority of the people spoke Oriya were scattered in three different British provinces. Hence, when I mention Orissa in a pre-1936 context, I mean the Oriya speaking regions. It is not my intention to naturalize a place that did not exist before 1936.

and Andhra Pradesh.[3] In its early years the Indian National Congress remained

indifferent to such movements and focused on the creating a common national platform

for anti-colonial politics. However, even decades after the Congress officially

acknowledged the demands of these regional linguistic movements and acquiesced to the

reorganization of the Indian provinces on linguistic lines in 1920, the national leadership

remained apprehensive of the divisive potential of the regional linguistic politics.

The early engagement of the Indian National Congress with the question of

linguistic difference and regional politics based on language in the late nineteenth and

early twentieth century was marked by an anxiety about the divisiveness of such regional

politics. [4]This anxiety drew from the Congress need to present to the colonial

government the most representative and 'authoritative statement' of the needs and desires

of the Indian people.[5] That is, the success of the Congress as an all-Indian organization

set up to negotiate political, legal and constitutional reforms with the colonial state was

contingent on its ability to present itself as the sole, most authoritative representative of

all non- European inhabitants of British India. Hence, unity became the most central

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[3] Such movements were particularly lively in the areas which eventually became Sindh, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. For a history of the movement for the creation of Sind and Andhra Pradesh see Sarah F. D. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power : The Pirs of Sind, 1843-1947*, Cambridge South Asian Studies ; 50 (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Allen Keith Jones, *Politics in Sindh, 1907-1940 : Muslim Identity and the Demand for Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Prss, 2002). And G. V. Subba Rao and Movement Andhra Pradesh . Committee of History of Andhra, *History of Andhra Movement* (Hyderabad: Committee of History of Andhra Movement, 1982).

[4] Henceforth, the Indian National Congress will be called simply the Congress.

[5] See Gordon Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism; Bombay and the Indian National Congress, 1880 to 1915* (Cambridge [Eng.]: University Press, 1973). Johnson describes the political expediency of the early Congress claim about its representative status. He notes, "..in order to influence English political parties it was essential to draw up a single all-India programme, There was no point in having several bodies working in London all claiming to represent Indian interests. As an English sympathizer wrote to Pherozeshah Mehta," Nothing would more strengthen the hands of the your friends in this country than to have an authoritative statement which would show to all the world what people of India want…To set the constituencies in motion will not be difficult as soon as we know for certain what the people of Indian wish for." 13

objective of the early Indian National Congress in the nineteenth century. To that end, as

Gordon Johnson put it, "It was no good speaking to England with a babble of tongues."[6]

As national unity and its own status as the most representative Indian organization

became the Congress' primary objective, the early Congress became very selective in its

choice of issues. The deciding factor in the choice of Congress agenda of the nineteenth

century was whether the issue would help unite the people of India or prove divisive.[7]

Furthermore, it was essential at this stage to discuss only those issues that could evoke a

consensus among the various members of the Congress. Hence, in 1888, Ananda Charlu-

one of the early leaders of the Congress—noted in a speech to the delegates at Allahabad,

"If we all agreed on any matter, then we will submit the universal view to government;

but if we cannot come to a substantial agreement among ourselves then we drop the

subject till we can."[8]

This stand precluded the Congress from discussing any issue that could cause

divisions within the organization's ranks. Also excluded from the Congress platform was

any politics that was 'provincial' rather than 'national'—any politics that did not pertain

to the whole of India. In effect, this effort to make the Congress an all India organization

resulted in the marginalization of more provincial and local brands of politics. In

particular, the emerging regional linguistic identity politics in areas like the Orissa

division of the Bengal Presidency or the Telegu speaking area of the Madras Presidency

threatened the effort to produce national unity within the Congress. Hence the question of

politics associated with vernacular languages was studiously avoided in the Congress

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[6] Ibid. 35
[7] Ibid. 36-37
[8] Ibid. 35

meetings. In terms of regional politics, this Congress avoidance of regional issues resulted in the continued influence of regional political organizations that represented regional demands to the colonial government. Even as this effort to avoid any involvement in regional/provincial politics ensured that the Congress remained a purely national entity, the lack of a Congress presence in the provinces severely curtailed the efforts of the Congress to build a popular following.[9]

This avoidance of regional politics was sorely tested during the partition of the Bengal Presidency (1903-1912) and raised serious questions about the representative nature of the organization. The governmental proposal to partition the highly politicized Bengal Presidency into a Hindu majority province of West Bengal and a Muslim majority province of East Bengal occasioned the first direct opposition to the colonial government by the Congress.[10] The Risley Circular that first proposed this partition in 1903 was received with great consternation by the members of Indian National Congress.[11] The Congress opposition used the rhetoric of linguistic affinity to argue against the partition of Bengal on religious lines. Hence, the accusation that the British were separating "Hindu Bengali brothers" from their "Muslim Bengali brothers" came to dominate the rhetoric of the anti-partition movement. Here, the Congress rhetoric posed that the linguistic community centered on the Bengali language trumped the sway of Hindu or Muslim religious community allegiance.

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[9] Ibid. 35-36

[10] For details see Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* ([New Delhi]: People's Pub. House, 1973).

[11] For Risley's statement about the reorganization of the Bengal Presidency see Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement : Being a Demand for a United Orissa* ([S.l.]: H. H. Panda, 1919). Appendix A

This vocabulary of dissent represents a very crucial paradox in the Congress attitude towards regional linguistic politics. That is, the Congress—as a national organization—was invested in ensuring that this kind of division between Hindus and Muslims should not be validated. Paradoxically, while avoiding such a religious division, the Congress was invoking a different kind of internally differentiated nation—an India constituted by linguistic groups whose unity was a matter of historical, even natural, reality that the Colonial state could not counteract. [12] As a consequence of the anti-partition agitation 1903-1908, the Congress was forced to acknowledge the importance of regional linguistic identity politics at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, even as this recognition marked the politics of the Congress in the early twentieth Century, it was not extended to other regional linguistic politics in India. The Congress ambivalence towards such politics is evident in the coupling of the denunciation of the Partition of Bengal with the criticism of the proposed partition of the Madras Presidency that would have allowed the unification of all Oriya speaking people under a single administration. Hence, even as the Congress acknowledged the significance of the linguistic bond among the Bengali speaking people, it was unable to uphold the broader demand for the creation of linguistic province being raised across British India.

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[12] Criticizing all government efforts to rearrange provincial boundaries the Congress resolved in Madras in 1903, " ..this Congress views with deep concern the present policy of the Government of India in breaking up territorial divisions which have been of long standing and are closely united by ethnological, legislative, social and administrative regulations and deprecates the separation from Bengal of Dacca, Mymensingh, Chittagong Divisions and portions of Chotanagpur Division, and also the separation of the district of Ganjam and the agency tracts of the Ganjam and Vizagapatnam Districts from the Madras Presidency." See A. M. Zaidi, ed., *Inc the Glorious Tradition -Volume One: 1885-1920*, 5 vols., vol. 1, Inc: The Glorious Tradition- Texts of the Resolutions Passed by the Inc, the Aicc and the Cwc (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Applied Political Research, 1987). 238

Historically, while these movements for the creation of linguistic provinces mobilized people around particular languages, the leaders of the Indian National Congress were attempting to inspire people of various provinces to transcend their regional differences and come together as a unified national community. In the minds of the leaders of the Indian National Congress, the project of these regional linguistic identity movements was fundamentally at odds with their own project of producing a common Indian national identity.

Even as late as 1952, five years after the independence of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of Independent India from 1948-1964, argued that

> I have been overburdened with the thought that we must give the topmost priority to the development of a sense of unity in India because these are critical days. Any decision that might come in the way of that unity should be delayed till we have laid a strong foundation for it. The idea of linguistic provinces will intensify provincial feelings and that, undoubtedly, will weaken the concept of a unified India.[13]

Despite these anxieties about divisiveness of the linguistic identity politics in the provinces, India remains, 60 years later, a federation of linguistic regions. Paradoxically, also continuing is the divisive politics that had made Nehru so anxious in 1950. The Cauvery water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the ongoing campaign by the Shiv Sena in Bombay to oust the Bihari 'outsiders' from the city and similar attacks on Tamil speakers in the slums of Bangalore illustrate the continued use of regional

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[13] King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India*. 15

'nationalist' rhetoric to argue local political, economic and infrastructural difference between various Indian provinces. The relationship between the region and the nation remain, as ever, deeply fraught on many different registers.

This project poses the following question-What does this coexistence of profound linguistic difference and unitary nationalism reveal about the nature of Indian nation and the relationship between the region and the nation? Is the region merely a sub-nation? Despite recent efforts by a new generation of scholars to de-center the nation from historical narratives of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century India, the idea of sub-nationalism continues to function as the dominant framework of analysis for studies of regional politics. [14] Studies of regional politics, prominent among them being Sanjib Baruah's *India Against itself* define regional politics as sub-nationalism—a regional iteration of all India nationalism. Baruah defines sub-nationalism as "pattern of politicization and mobilization" at the regional level which, "coexist with and are occasionally in tension with the pan-Indian national community, are best located in the intellectual universe of nations and nationalism."[15] Hence, according to Baruah, the prefix 'sub' in sub-nationalism points to both the subordinate status of regionalism and its

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[14] For a definition of sub-national understanding of regional politics see Sanjib Baruah, *India against Itself : Assam and the Politics of Nationality*, Critical Histories (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). Some recent revisionist histories are Farina Mir, "Imperial Policy, Provincial Practices: Colonial Language Policy in Nineteenth-Century India," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43, no. 4 (2006), Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue : Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891-1970*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture ; 29 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts : Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700-1960*, Cultures of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), Yasmin Saikia, *Fragmented Memories : Struggling to Be Tai-Ahom in India* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), Lisa Mitchell, "Parallel Languages, Parallel Cultures: Language as a New Foundation for Reorganization of Knowledge and Practice in Southern India," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 42, no. 4 (2005), Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects : Islam, Community, and the History of Kashmir* (London: C. Hurst, 2003), Chitralekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging : Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir* (London: C. Hurst, 2004).
[15] Baruah, *India against Itself : Assam and the Politics of Nationality*. 5

co-existence with all-India nationalism. However, he notes that, "…while the qualifier helps to make a distinction between regional and pan-Indian national projects, the distinction should only be seen as provisional"[16] In this study on Assamese 'sub-nationalism' Baruah argues for the recuperation of the initial utopian thrust in the formulation of the Indian Federation; that India is a egalitarian union of various identities. [17]He demands that the Indian Federation create institutional space for the articulation of and engagement with sub-national dissent; thus resolving the separatist crisis in the North Eastern province of Assam.

Such arguments are often invested in the federal nature of the Indian nation-state and use the term sub-nationalism to provide for both regional political particularity and the inherent integrity of the Indian union, despite regional difference. That is, the concept of the sub-national presumes that the nation is reproduced on a smaller scale in the sub-nation/ region, and that the sub-nation is structurally similar to the nation. The limitations of such a definition lie in the absence of clear argument about why such sub-national politics does not eventually overwhelm the Indian national efforts at maintaining unity and secede from the Indian nation.

In recent years studies of regional history have branched out into the cultural history of 19th and 20th centuries of various regions in India. While there is increasing attention given to the particularity of regional cultural politics, such histories remain within the problematic of sub-nationalism. Recent scholars of regional history like Sumathi Ramaswamy, Lisa Mitchell, Yasmeen Saikia, Mridu Rai, Chitralekha Zutshi,

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[16] Ibid. 5
[17] Assamese is the name for both the language spoken in the North East Indian province of Assam and the people of Assam.

Prachi Deshpande and Farina Mir have illustrated that cultural history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Kashmir and Maharastra are integrally linked with the creation of a regional political identity that was used to negotiate with the Colonial State on issues of local concern. [18]These studies use the history of regional language, literature, print culture, religious institutions, Princely states to point out that identity politics in the various provinces of India emerged in response to Colonialism and the administrative structures of the colonial state. Ultimately, these studies have attempted to prove through detailed cultural histories that not all politics in modern India was national. That is, cultural movements of Indian provinces were fundamentally political. And that the histories of politics of Indian nationalism have to take into account these particular regional political movements that were not always animated by the need to create and sustain a homogenous Indian national community. As a result these studies have drawn attention to the relationship between regional cultural and political movements and all India nationalism.

For instance, Prachi Deshpande shows through a reading of history writing in the province of Maharastra how particular narratives of the Maharastrian past were used to

[18] These studies vary in their methodological and thematic focus. Sumathi Ramaswamy and Lisa Mitchell investigate the relationship between cultural politics focused on mother-tongues, Tamil and Telegu respectively, and the social movements in 19th and twentieth century Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. SeeRamaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue : Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891-1970*, Mitchell, "Parallel Languages, Parallel Cultures: Language as a New Foundation for Reorganization of Knowledge and Practice in Southern India." Saikai and Deshpande investigate how the formation of historical memory of the region, Assam and Maharastra enabled and informed the emerging relationship between the regional and the pan-Indian nation. SeeSaikia, *Fragmented Memories : Struggling to Be Tai-Ahom in India*, Deshpande, *Creative Pasts : Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700-1960*.Chitralekha Zutshi and Mridu Rai investigate the relationship between religious politics in Kashmir and the situation of Kashmir within the Indian nation. Both argue that Kashmiriyat, is a term coined to think religious secularism that enables Kashmir to fit into the normative idea of the Indian nation. Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging : Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir*, Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects : Islam, Community, and the History of Kashmir.*

justify the separate identity of the Maharastrian people while illustrating the significance of Maharastra in the broader Indian community of linguistic provinces. Ultimately she argues that the region cannot be seen as a 'subset of nationalism with differing local flavors'. Rather, it region as a category developed in conjunction with nationalism. However, this formulation of the region as something that develops in conjunction with nationalism remains bound within the problematic of sub-nationalism. That is, even as her discussion of Maratha historiography points beyond it, her explicit formulation of the region and the nation remains within the problematic of sub-nationalism. Studies like Deshpande's reading of history in Maharastra argue that regional is separate but subsumed within nationalism. What remains unclear is how such a relationship is sustained over time.

Hence, even as the new scholarship on regional history has illustrated the particularity of regional politics and it simultaneity with nationalism, what remains relatively unstudied is the nature of the relationship between regional politics and nationalism. How do particular regional identity politics and the nationalist project for the creation of a united India come to be resolved even as the distinction between them remains fundamental to political discourse in India? This relationship can be best understood by tracing the formulation of region as a category in nationalist thought in the early twentieth century. To this end I focus on the period when a tactical resolution between the demands of the region and the nation occurs in India. My contention is that at the root of this resolution is the need (both at the regional and national level) to think a new citizen of emergent India.

Through detailed studies of cultural and intellectual engagement of regional political, literary and historical organizations in early twentieth century Orissa, this dissertation traces the resolution of regional and national interests. I argue here that in the period between 1900 and 1920, the emergence of the idea of a universal and politicized Indian citizen occasioned this resolution of the tension between the region and the nation. As the meanings of politics, statehood, rule and subject-hood changed due the colonial state's efforts to introduce franchise in India, both the Indian National Congress and the major regional political organization in Orissa, the Utkal Sammillani were forced to elaborate a clear relationship between Orissa as a region and the broader Indian nation in order to define the universal Indian citizen.

The case of Orissa is particularly instructive in this investigation of the relationship between the region and the nation because of the simultaneous development of both Orissa as a region and India as a nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This simultaneous emergence of Orissa and India as modern political and cultural categories marked Oriya political life in the early twentieth century with conflicts between regional and national objectives. Hence, in this period, reflections on the engagement of regional political interests with the homogenizing tendencies of emergent Indian nationalism provide a very productive site for the investigation of the emerging political thought about the relationship between linguistic regions and Indian nationalism.

The relationship between regional politics and nationalism in Orissa has not yet been clearly theorized. Historians of Orissa have read the early twentieth century, particularly the period between 1900 and 1920, as a period marked by a shift from insular

Oriya parochialism to a more politically 'legitimate' participation in cosmopolitan Indian nationalism. A new strand of historians like Bisnu Mohapatra and Pritish Acharya have argued that even as the Oriya political leadership was invested in regional interests, they did not necessarily oppose the gradual establishment of all-India nationalism—that the region and nation co-existed peacefully in the minds of early Oriya politicians.[19] Both these readings of early twentieth century Oriya politics are invested in the primary legitimacy of Indian nationalism and serve as explanations for regional difference that effectively efface regional specificity. I argue that regional politics in early twentieth century Orissa should not be read as a mere preparatory phase in the emergence of unitary Indian nationalism. Rather, regional definitions of culture, heritage, history and political life enable the formation of the Indian nation and are fundamentally constitutive of it.

In the following section, I will trace some of the particular features of Oriya regional life that make the Oriya engagement with Indian nationalism especially charged: the piecemeal acquisition of Oriya speaking areas by the East India Company in the early nineteenth century, the introduction of the Bengali colonial official as the agent of British colonialism which gradually dispossessed both the elite and non-elite Oriya speaking people and the emergence of a Oriya public sphere instigated by the 1866 Famine and colonial efforts to replace Oriya with Bengali as the language of education in the Oriya speaking areas.

Orissa in the nineteenth century

[19] Bishnu Narayan Mohapatra, "The Politics of Oriya Nationalism, 1903-1936" (Oxford University, 1990). Pritish Acharya, *National Movement and Politics in Orissa, 1920-29*, Sage Series in Modern Indian History ; 11 (New Delhi, India ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2008).

16

The roots of the Oriya regional political movement for the formation of the separate state of Orissa lies in the manner in which eastern Indian territories were acquired by the East India Company in the late 18th and early 19th century. The British acquired Oriya speaking areas over a period of forty six years through a series of military campaigns against various Indian pre-colonial states. A political history of pre-colonial Orissa reveals the reasons for the dispersal of the Oriya speaking areas in the pre-colonial as well as the colonial period.

Through a history of pre-colonial and early colonial Orissa I would like to provide a pre-history of the category Orissa. In 1936 the province of Orissa was created in eastern India. It was the first province in India to be organized on linguistic grounds. Hence, a majority of the population of Orissa speaks the Oriya language. Furthermore, the inhabitants of Orissa are called Oriya after the most dominant language in the province. Even though the official name of the state is Orissa, it also has a cultural name—Utkal. This cultural name will appear many times in this dissertation. Even as early as the mid nineteenth century, long before the actual formation of the province, the name Utkal was used to denote the areas where a majority spoke the Oriya language. Some of the most influential newspapers, journals and organization featured Utkal in their names.[20] Both the name Orissa and Utkal were commonly used long before the official province was established. In this dissertation I often use the term Orissa even though the actual province is formed after the period under review in the dissertation (1866-1920). This is to ensure brevity and simplicity of language and not to naturalize a category that is yet to

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[20] For instance, the most widely read Oriya newspaper of the nineteenth century was named *Utkal Dipika(estb. 1866).* The first pan-Oriya public organization was called Utkal Sammillani (estb. 1903) and the most influential Oriya literary journal was called *Utkal Sahitya* (estb. 1897)

come. Hence, when Orissa is mentioned in this dissertation, I only mean the Oriya speaking areas in British India.

In the period immediately preceding the British take over of the Oriya speaking areas, the areas which would later be named the Orissa division of the Bengal Presidency in British India enjoyed a peculiar constitutional status. Due to a complex political struggle between the Marathas who controlled significant portions of the Northern India, Alivardi Khan—Nawab of Bengal and his subsidiary in Orissa –Mir Habib, the area later known as Orissa had three concurrent overlords. According to a treaty signed in 1751, Mir Habib the person immediately in charge of Orissa became a subsidiary of both the Marathas who charged the surplus revenue from Orissa in exchange for a guarantee that they would not raid the Nawab's provinces and the Nawab of Bengal who remained the official ruler of Orissa. For all practical purposes Orissa came to be controlled by the Marathas. They had direct control over all areas to the south of the river Suvarnarekha which divides Orissa into a northern and southern half. As official recipients of surplus revenue from the northern half they controlled the administration of that area as well. In 1757 when the Nawab of Bengal was defeated by the East India company in the Battle of Plassey, the troops of the company were stationed in different parts of northern Orissa. However, the official Maratha claim to surplus revenue of Orissa was not resolved till 1803 when company forces took over southern half of Orissa by defeating the Marathas.

The company's new acquisitions in Orissa were divided into two political zones- the 'garjat' and the 'Mughal bandi'. The Mughal bandhi consisted of the coastal plains of the Orissa division and came be under the direct rule of the East India Company. These

areas paid a regular assessment to the crown. The Garjat areas were the hilly regions of western and southern Orissa which consisted of 30 princely states. By 1804 all but 16 of these states had been assimilated with the Mughal bandhi. The remaining were constituted into the tributary states of Orissa and were ruled by native princes who were supervised by representatives of the Company.

However, the British acquisition of Oriya speaking areas did not end here. The Marathas still controlled eighteen other princely states which came under British supervision after the final defeat of the Marathas in 1818. These eighteen states were not placed under the Bengal Presidency as the other Oriya speaking areas had been in the past. They were transferred to the Central Provinces. Some Oriya speaking areas in the south including the Ganjam District were added to the Madras Presidency.

Thus by the mid nineteenth century the Oriya speaking areas were under three different British provinces—the Bengal Presidency, the Madras Presidency and the Central Provinces. The last time a sizable portion of these areas had been under a single administration was in 1560 under Mukundadeva of the Bhoi Dynasty. Since then these areas had been ruled, either directly or indirectly, by major external powers such as the Mughals, Marathas and the Nawabs of Bengal.

The introduction of Company rule in Orissa was accompanied by major changes that precipitated the emergence of an organized public articulation of Oriya interests in the nineteenth century. Chief among these changes was the establishment of colonial administration manned by Bengali speaking officials imported from neighbouring province of Bengal. The subsequent economic and social upheaval caused by the

introduction of colonial rule came to be identified with the alien Bengali colonial official who served as the immediate agent of change in Orissa. In 1805 the Colonial government declared that the regulations of land revenue in effect in Company territories of Bengal and Bihar would be extended to the Cuttack or the Orissa division as it was a part of the Bengal Presidency. This change was accompanied by the extension of judicial and police administration from Bengal. As the Oriya speaking population was unschooled in the workings of the new administration, the Company employed people from Bengal to execute its revenue, judicial and police administration. Traditional Oriya revenue officials such as *amlas* (official of the judicial court of the revenue office) and the *sheristadars* (record-keepers) were replaced by Bengali officials. Hence, the actual face of British colonialism in Orissa was the Bengali revenue or judicial official.

The introduction of the new revenue administration produced a massive change in the demography of the landed estate owners who constituted a large part of the Oriya speaking elite. Strict revenue payment rules coupled with a general ignorance of revenue regulations in Orissa resulted in many larger landed estates of Orissa defaulting revenue payments. These estates were auctioned in Calcutta and bought by the landed aristocracy of Bengal. In a decade, between 1806 and 1816, almost half of the large estates slipped out of the possession of the Oriya landed elite. While this change was particularly debilitating for the Oriya landed elites who were being systematically dispossessed, it also adversely affected the common people of this area. The familiar Oriya landlord, whatever his faults, was replaced by absentee landlords. Absentee landlordism was often accompanied by indiscriminate exploitation of the tenant farmers.

While the Oriya elite were being systematically dispossessed, British interference in the local economy proved catastrophic for the livelihood of the poorer sections of the Oriya population. One of the most notable of these changes was the monopolization of the salt industry in the coastal districts of Orissa. The salt industry in coastal Orissa supported a large number of people. When the colonial government established a monopoly on salt manufacture in Orissa, many lost their independent means of livelihood. However, as employees of the colonial government, the former independent makers of salt were able to eke out a living till the Government abandoned the salt industry entirely in the 1850s. Faced with competition from cheaper Lancaster salt, the colonial Government decided to cease its salt making endeavors in Orissa. The result was a sudden and devastating loss of livelihood for the salt making employees of the colonial government.

The loss of livelihood through the loss of lower level administrative jobs to Bengalis, the institution of absentee landlordism, the collapse of the salt industry coupled with floods and crop failure in 1865 resulted in the devastating famine of 1866. Extending along the eastern coast of India from Madras to Bengal, the famine affected 12,000 square miles populated by around forty million people. By the end of the famine in late 1866 a fourth of the population of this area, around ten million people, had perished. Many more had lost everything they owned. [21]

The Orissa famine of 1866 forced the colonial government and the elite of the Oriya speaking areas to question the administrative organization in these areas. The

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[21] Nivedita Mohanty, *Oriya Nationalism : Quest for a United Orissa, 1866-1956*, Rev. & enl. ed., Indian Historical Studies Series (Jagatsinghpur: Prafulla, 2005). 47-50

Orissa Famine Commission in 1867 noted that the famine was caused in part due to the sheer distance between Orissa and the central government in Bengal that was responsible for the administration of Orissa. Hence, the report recommended that the administration of the Presidency of Bengal be partitioned and that the Orissa division have its own Commissioner who would be directly responsible for the governance of Orissa.[22]

The famine occasioned the earliest efforts in Cuttack among the Oriya language elite to discuss the needs of the Oriya speaking people. In 1866, Gaurisankar Rai established the *Utkal Dipika,* one of the longest running newspapers in Orissa, to encourage public discussions of problems faced by the people of the Orissa division. A recurring theme in the articles of the *Utkal Dipika* and its contemporary papers was the question of why Orissa was not as 'developed' as neighboring Bengal. This anxiety about the backwardness of Orissa as opposed to Bengal endured throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and often featured in political, social and cultural discussions in Orissa.[23]

If the famine of 1866 had occasioned the emergence of public discussions about the interests of the Oriya speaking people, then the Oriya Language Agitation of the 1860s and 1870s organized the discussion of Oriya interests around language. [24]The proposal to replace Oriya with Bengali as the language of instruction in the elementary schools of the Oriya speaking areas introduced by some colonial officials and prominent

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[22] For details see Bidyut Mohanty, "Orissa Famine of 1866: Demographic and Economic Consequences," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 28, no. 1-2 (1993).
[23] For details on early newspaper publishing in Orissa see Natabara Samantaraya, *Odia Sahityara Itihasa, 1803-1920* (Bhubanesvara: Praphulla kumara dhala o hrdananda bhala, 1964), Sudhakar Patnaik, *Sambadapatraru Odisara Katha*, vol. 1 (1856-1881) (Cuttack: Grantha Mandir, 1971).
[24] Language politics of the nineteenth century will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1.

Bengali intellectuals such as Rajendralal Mitra, sparked a debate on the status and development of Oriya language and literature. This debate became a site for the emergence of identity politics rooted in the Oriya language.[25] The most significant element of this politics was the emergence of an argument for the amalgamation of all Oriya speaking tracts under a single administration. This demand was to dominate politics in Orissa throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

On the heels of the language agitation of late nineteenth century came the proposal that the official language of the Oriya speaking Sambalpur district of the Central Provinces should be changed from Oriya to Hindi.[26] This proposal galvanized the Oriya press both in Sambalpur and in the Orissa division to pose arguments against such a move in front of the colonial government. Despite popular opposition, Hindi was made the official language of the Sambalpur district in 1896. Over the next six years repeated appeals to the Government to reverse its decision were made by members of the Oriya intelligentsia. These six years saw the rise of Oriya language press in Sambalpur and increased references to the problems faced by the Oriya people due to their status as linguistic minorities in various British provinces appeared in Oriya popular culture. Similar agitation began in the Oriya speaking Ganjam district of the Madras Presidency. Demands for the amalgamation of all the Oriya speaking tracts under a single

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[25] For details see S. C. Patra, "Formation of the Province of Orissa : The Success of the First Linguistic Movement in India" (Punthi Pustak,, 1979), Bamsidhara Mahanti, *Odia Bhasha Andolana* (Kataka: Phrendas Pablisarsa, 1989).

[26] For further details see Mohanty, *Oriya Nationalism : Quest for a United Orissa, 1866-1956*. 63-80

administration were voiced in the Oriya language press in Sambalpur, Ganjam and Cuttack.[27]

After the transfer of Sambalpur to the Bengal Presidency, the colonial government gave increasing attention to the question of the amalgamation of Oriya speaking tracts. In 1903, the Risley Circular drafted by H.H. Risley, Secretary to the Government of India suggested the territorial redistribution of the Bengal Presidency. He recommended the separation of Assam and the Orissa division from the Bengal Presidency to decrease the burden of the Bengal administrative system. In the years between 1903 and 1936 a number of government committees were set up to deliberate on the reorganization of the Oriya speaking areas. The question became particularly important after the publication of the Report on the Constitutional Reform in 1918 that investigated the introduction of greater popular franchise and the responsible provincial government constituted of a greater number of Indian members. The Report argued that the introduction of responsible government required the redistribution of British Indian territory on linguistic lines. This would ensure that all major linguistic communities in India were able to elect to their provincial government representatives who belonged to their own community. Hence the concept of the British Indian province came to be conflated with the linguistic regions of India.

Meanwhile, in 1903, an Oriya social organization named Utkal Sammillani or Utkal Union Conference was established. Constituted of members from most Oriya speaking areas, of Bengal, Madras and the Central Provinces, the primary objective of this organization was to bring about the amalgamation of all Oriya speaking tracts of land

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[27] See Figure 1

under a single administration. After the partition of Bengal and the resultant formation of the province of Bihar and Orissa in 1912, the Utkal Sammillani lobbied for the formation of a separate province of Orissa consisting of Oriya speaking areas of the Bengal Presidency, Madras Presidency and the province of Bihar and Orissa. The Sammillani's politics was marked by the nature of its members. Its membership consisted primarily of middle class educated Oriya elite, college students and the native princes of the Princely state. Due to their ties with the colonial government the members of the Utkal Sammillani avoided confrontation with the government and maintained that the Utkal Sammillani was not a political organization. By the late 1910s there was increasing disaffection within the ranks of the organization towards this apolitical stance. Finally in 1920 the organization split and it was decided that the Sammillani would participate in political opposition to the colonial government, and in particular ally with the Indian National Congress in the Non-Cooperation movement. After 1920 the politics of Indian nationalism came to dominate the Oriya public sphere. However, the Oriya campaign for the formation of a separate province of Orissa did not cease in 1920. Eventually, in 1936, a separate province of Orissa was formed.

This dissertation studies the period before the 1920 shift towards an alliance with the Indian National Congress. Through a reading of the political rhetoric within the Utkal Sammillani, I trace Oriya political negotiation with the colonial state as well as the Indian National Congress. I argue that this history reveals how Oriya debates about political activity and Oriya relationship with nationalist politics serve as a site for the formulation of the region as a political category in Indian nationalist thought.

<u>Chapter outline</u>

This dissertation is divided into two thematic sections. The first traces the cultural history of Orissa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chapters in this section (chapters 1 and 2) illustrate how Orissa is produced as a region, paying particular attention to language, literature, geography and historical memory. The second thematic section (chapters 3 and 4) analyses Oriya political rhetoric between 1900 and 1920, looking at Oriya interpretations of the relationship between the Oriya region and the Indian nation. Particularly, I look at the way the Oriya politicians negotiated the interrelationships between themselves and the Colonial state and between themselves as the all India nationalism. Taken together these two sections demonstrate how region as a category emerged in Indian political thought of the period.

Chapter 1: "In defense of Oriya: Language, Literature and Community in Nineteenth century Orissa (1866-1898)" traces the emergence of a publicly articulated Oriya linguistic identity. Even though use of vernacular languages may have marked self identification among various communities in the pre-colonial times, the institution of colonial language policy, particularly in the field of primary education, instigated a clear collective articulation of linguistic identity by enumerated regional communities. As a result of the colonial linguistic classification of India and its people, engagement between communities and the colonial state came to be predicated on self-identification as a discrete linguistic community bounded by common interests. Hence, the conflation of language, population and bounded geographical areas was a product of systematic

linguistic classification of the people and geography of India by the Colonial state. It is in this early colonial conflation that the roots of the modern Indian linguistic region lie.

In late nineteenth century Orissa, the articulation of regional linguistic identity was occasioned by the governmental effort to substitute Oriya with Bengali as the language of instruction in the schools of the Oriya speaking areas. The Oriya response to this governmental move in the 1860s and the associated debate on the ability of Oriya language and literature to sustain a holistic program of primary education became a site for the articulation of regional linguistic identity. I focus on the ways that linguistic politics developed to contain anxieties about the survival of the Oriya language, specifically through debates about the availability of Oriya text books for schools. I highlight the emergence of the region as a linguistic category by centering the ways that activism around Oriya language and literature gave rise to regional linguistic politics in the form of demands for the unification of all Oriya speaking tracts under a single administration.

I argue in this chapter that the discussions about the origins, development and modern status of the Oriya language and literature featured certain anxieties. In these discussions emerged anxieties about the hybridity of the Oriya linguistic community due to claims by some historians that the Oriya language has sprung from tribal origins. This anxiety determined later reflections on history writing in Orissa and ultimately played a significant role in the emerging definitions of the Oriya community. These new definitions of the Oriya community both underlined the historical and quotidian unity of

27

the life experience of all members of the Oriya community—be they tribal or upper caste, and an absolute racial difference between these two groups.

In Chapter 2: "Naturalizing Orissa: History and the Problem of the Tribal (1872-1931)", my attention turns to the production of an ancient Oriya historical past as a way to delineate the geographical scope of the proposed province and to define the community that would inhabit the province as a historically unified whole. Through a reading of histories of 'ancient Orissa' written in this period, I argue that the Oriya elite anxiety about the aboriginal heritage of the modern Oriya speaking people was resolved through historical narratives that underlined shared quotidian experience rather than shared racial heritage between the ancestors of the modern day caste Oriyas and their contemporary tribal populations of the Oriya speaking area. By using a language of side-by-side the early twentieth century Oriya historians made a case for the inclusion of the tribal populations of the area without undermining existing caste and social hierarchies. I argue that this socially conservative historiography of the early twentieth century had two major political objectives at stake. One was the more immediate need to convince the colonial policy makers that all the inhabitants of the Oriya speaking areas belonged to a common linguistic, social and cultural community. The other objective was the Oriya political need to define the universal Oriya self. At stake in this effort to think an egalitarian Oriya community was the elite effort to delineate a universal Oriya self who while remaining marked by caste or class difference is considered fundamentally allied with his other Oriya brothers via a shared everyday life. I argue that in this definition of an Oriya self we can read the prehistory of the Indian citizen.

While the first two chapters analyze nineteenth and early twentieth century rhetoric on language, literature and history to reveal the emergence of Orissa as a linguistic, cultural, historical and geographical category, the later half of the dissertation studies the political rhetoric in Orissa to expose how the region Orissa emerged as a political category between 1900-1921. Hence the last two chapters will analyze speeches within and contemporary comments about the Utkal Sammillani or the Utkal Union Conference to reveal changing Oriya articulations of the shifting relationship of Orissa with both the colonial state and the Indian nation. Ultimately, I illustrate how cultural and political discussions in Orissa produce a particular relationship between the region Orissa and the Indian nation.

Chapter 3- "Towards a Politics of the Colonized: Utkal Sammillani and the Emergence of a Vocabulary of Nationalism in Colonial Orissa. (1900-1920)" illustrates how regional political elite imagine the relationship between themselves and the sovereign British state in Orissa. I argue that this relationship is understood as a monarchical relationship between the sovereign British raja (king) and the subject Indian praja (subject). Understood in this way, the relationship between the Raja and praja is limited to that of regal paternalistic management of the subject population. This definition of the relationship between the British and the Indians accompanied a very limited understanding of politics—politics as the sphere of activity of the Raja. Such an understanding of politics and the relationship between raja and praja was the foundation of regional cultural politics that predated Indian nationalism in Orissa. Thus this chapter traces cultural nationalist phase of Indian politics and argues that even though at this

29

stage the Sammillani's efforts are focused on a conciliatory relationship with the colonial state to satiate regional interests the formation of a public platform enables the production of a language of anti-colonial nationalism that will subsequently allow nationalism to take root in Orissa. In order to do this I trace two terms rajaniti (politics) and praja(subject) to illustrate how a language of nationalism was surreptitiously emerging in this period. By tracing the changing meanings of the term praja, I shall map out a prehistory of Indian political citizenship.

The Oriya political context for the changing meaning of rajaniti and praja was the emerging debate with in the Utkal Sammillani about the need to practice anti-colonial politics. Chapter 3 also attempts to trace this debate through a reading of the changing meanings of politics and subjecthood. I illustrate how by defining *praja* as something more that a subject to colonial rule the Oriya politicians were carving out a political sphere of activity for the colonized Oriyas. At stake in this thinking of a politics for the colonized was the growing support for anti-colonial politics emerging in the Utkal Sammillani which could be justified by broadening the understanding of the subject to approach something akin to a citizen who could legitimately claim a stake in politics.

Chapter 4. "Regionalizing Nationalism: Constitutional Reforms and the Emerging Oriya Imagination of the Indian Nation (1918-1920)" addresses the broader causes that led to the Oriya re-imagining of politics in the 1910s: the institution of Provincial franchise and the attendant Oriya response to it and the change in Indian National Congresses' attitude towards linguistic politics and the institution of provincial Congress Committees on linguistic lines. Through a discussion of these two causes I illustrate how

both the idea of an emergent Indian national citizen and the Indian National Congress's definition of the Indian nation indicate a regionalization of Indian nationalism and citizenship. Against this backdrop of the regionalization of Indian nationalism I discuss the rhetoric within the Utkal Sammillani about the relationship between Orissa as a region and the Indian Nation. Such discussions were often based on an appeal to humanism and the exceptional nature of the Oriya community as one that was particularly adept at co-existing with difference. I argue that this use of liberal humanism to explain away contradictions between the interests of the region and that of the nation was implicated in the process of thinking a universal Indian citizen. Taken together, the colonial government's institution of territorial franchise, the Congress recognition of the constitutive role played by vernacular languages in the making of the Indian community and the Utkal Sammillani's definition of the Oriya community and the Indian nation based on humanism points to a conclusion that the re-negotiation of the region and the nation in the 1910s came about due to a pressing need to imagine a universal Indian citizen.

Chapter 1

In Defense of Oriya: Language, Literature and Community in Nineteenth century Orissa

One of the most extensive debates in the historiography of colonial India is focused on the question of whether modern Indian political, social and cultural realities are a continuance of pre-modern structures or a product of the profound rupture wrought by the introduction of western modernity through British colonialism in the nineteenth century. That is, is the relationship between pre-modern Indian tradition and post-colonial Indian modernity one of continuity or change? Nowhere is this debate more intense and sustained as in the historiography of identity in India. Whether it is a matter of caste, religious or linguistic identity, scholars have differed in their assessment of the accurate point of origin of such identities. [28] Are such identities primordial remnants of a divided Indian past or are they the product of new caste, religious and linguistic categories spawned by the social upheaval caused by the advent of colonialism? The assumption in this search for origins is that identities such as Muslim, Oriya or Shudra have an essential core of truth that can be traced back to a particular moment of emergence.

However, if identity is understood differently -- as a contingent and constantly changing product of the interaction of successive discursive paradigms over a long period of time then the search for origins is no longer as fruitful. A different approach is needed

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[28] The debate about continuity and change ranges over many themes in Indian history, such as politics, nationalism and secularism. On the question of whether nationality in India is a modern phenomena, see C. A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia : Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998). A similar concern informs scholarly discussions about Secularism and Communalism in India. For details on various perspectives on Secularism and communalism see Rajeev Bhargava, *Secularism and Its Critics*, Themes in Politics Series (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

to apprehend the ways in which identities come about in India. Questions need to be rephrased. And answers can only be garnered through a study of snap shots of time when paradigm shifts occur. Therefore, in this chapter, rather than asking how Oriya identity as a linguistic marker of community is produced (such a question has no single answer), I shall investigate the discursive shifts in the way language was understood in nineteenth century India which eventually enabled the self conscious, public and collective articulation of a sense of community based on a shared language—Oriya. Simply put, this chapter will present a genealogical vignette of the conflation of language and community in colonial Orissa by tracing debates about language, literature and community in the late nineteenth century. At stake in this history is the history of the cultural nationalism that prepared the ground for both regional linguistic identity politics as well as anti-colonial nationalism of the twentieth century. The history of linguistic politics is also the prehistory of the politicization of Indian public sphere.

A few qualifications should be made before proceeding further. First, by focusing on the changing notions of language in the nineteenth century, I am not arguing that linguistic identities were primarily colonial phenomena. Vernacular languages and the association of particular communities with these languages have a long history in India. Languages like Tamil, Telegu, Kannada, Oriya, Marathi and Bengali emerged as literary languages in the 14th and 15th centuries as regional kingdoms extended state patronage to regional languages. Consequently, this period saw the formalization of the grammar and scripts of vernacular languages in India.[29] The subsequent emergence of religious reform

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[29] The Oriya script of the present day was first seen in this period and has remained practically the same since then. The history of the 'vernacular millenium' as Sheldon Pollock names it is discussed in Sheldon I.

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movements across India, led by non-traditional, lower caste religious leaders who used

vernacular languages instead of Sanskrit to propagate their message, enabled the spread

and popularization of a new kind of vernacular literary tradition.

For instance in sixteenth century Orissa, under the influence of devotional

Vaisnavism, the earliest Oriya translations of the Mahabharata, Bhagbata Gita and

Ramayana were produced. The term 'translation' can only be used loosely in relation to

these texts because even though the broad plot of these texts were based on the Sanskrit

originals, their content departed sharply from the actual stories in the original texts. The

Oriya Mahabharata written by a peasant poet Sarala Das located the epic entirely in

Orissa. These localized religious texts became extremely popular in rural Orissa.

Instrumental in this process was the Bhagabat Ghara, a communally held hut present

within most villages in Orissa, where these texts were read aloud to a devotional

audience. Reports of the presence of such Bhagabat Gharas can be obtained as late as the

last decade of the nineteenth century.[30] It could be argued that this auditory literacy in

medieval Oriya religious texts shared by people across Oriya speaking areas, greater use

of Oriya in court proceedings and royal inscriptions and a significant increase in the

production of literature in Oriya could have already created a sense of regional identity

based on language as early as the sixteenth century. Furthermore, the subsequent growth

of Oriya literature and folk traditions could only have added to this sense of belonging to

Pollock, *Literary Cultures in History : Reconstructions from South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[30] A discussion of Bhagabat Ghara is found in the 1893 travel memoir *Orisara Chitra.* For an Oriya translation of this Bengali text see,Yatindramohana Simha and H. S. Sarkar, *Sketches of Orissa* (Bhubaneswar: Rupantar, 2006).. Also see Bana Bihari Shukla, *Bhagabata Ghara and Village Panchayat in Mediaeval Orissa, 1510-1803 A.D*, 1st ed. (Cuttack: Bharati Publications, 1986).

one community. However, the capitulation of the last centralized Oriya empire to the

Mughal empire in the late sixteenth century, the emergence of smaller states all over

Orissa, and Mughal and Maratha influence on Oriya language, literature and cultural life

must have impacted the ways in which definitions of Oriya-ness changed over time. It is

evident that the provenance of Oriya identity can be traced to a much earlier time. But it

is also clear that a straightforward linear history of Oriya identity from its point of origin

in the medieval period to its modern articulation in the nineteenth century could

potentially simplify and distort a remarkably complex and internally differentiated

process. Hence, even as I concede that the origins of Oriya linguistic identity do lie in the

pre-colonial period, in this chapter, I do not wish to identify some line of descent from

pre-colonial times. My effort here is to treat particular moments in colonial history of the

Oriya language in their complexity rather than produce a linear narrative of the

development of Oriya identity politics. This politics is neither simply pre-colonial nor

simply colonial. Furthermore, the danger of such a history is also that it would present

Oriya identity as a concept with a singular normative meaning commonly held by all

Oriya speaking people.

This leads to my second qualification. In this chapter, identity is understood

essentially as an object of construction. This does not imply that it has no social or

cultural relevance. Rather, it means that the definition of self-hood has often been an

arena of contestation within as well as outside the ranks of the community. That is,

linguistic identity needs to be seen as a product of competing discourses about the status

of language in the everyday life of the people as well as the State. Therefore, in this

chapter, I will trace how discussions about education related to colonial language policy and colonial philological privileging of textual language over spoken language impact the manner in which the educated Oriya elite conflated language and community by policing the production of a modern Oriya textual tradition.

To this end, I will focus on nineteenth century debates surrounding proposals to replace Oriya with Bengali as the language of instruction in the schools of the Orissa division of the Bengal Presidency. Involving the Oriya elite, government officials and the Bengali speaking elite, this debate illustrates how the understanding of language itself was changing through the nineteenth century. An important consequence of the debate was the organization of the Oriya public sphere, especially the vernacular newspapers, around the need to protect the Oriya language. This in turn led to a full scale literary movement to excavate classical Oriya texts and produce new Oriya literature that would not only serve as appropriate school textbooks but also illustrate the viability of Oriya as a modern vernacular language.

In this chapter, I advance my argument in three sections. The first section treats the debate on the use of Oriya as a language of instruction in the schools of the Orissa division during the 1860s. Through a reading of statements from various sides of the debate and the final official stand taken in 1868, I illustrate the changes in the perspectives on language in policy discourse as well as the Oriya vernacular newspaper media. As the debate progressed the understanding of language as an object of affect that binds people together as a linguistic community came to dominate, displacing the official instrumental idea of language as a mode of communication. This was the first step in the

modern conflation of language and community in Orissa. The modernity of this conflation draws from the new relationship, between a popularly defined vernacular community and the pan-Indian colonial state, which was served by this idea of an Oriya linguistic identity.

The second section illustrates how the Oriya elite anxiety-- resulting from the debate of the 1860s-- about the lack of 'appropriate' Oriya texts that could be used as textbooks was further accentuated by the publication of a Bengali text *Oriya Swatantra Bhasha Nahe (*Oriya is not an independent language). The text's argument about the derivative nature of the Oriya language was based mainly on linguistic evidence taken from Oriya and Bengali school text books to prove that they are the same language. This sort of argument based on philological research privileged the written word over the spoken word. This privileging underlined the need for a new Oriya literary tradition that could illustrate that Oriya was an independent language.

The third section traces the Oriya response to this growing anxiety about lack of adequate Oriya texts, through a history of the emergence of literary criticism. Literary criticism in Oriya emerged as an effort to police the production of Oriya literature. This policing of literary production drew from western traditions of literary criticism and exhorted writers to produce literature aimed at the development of the Oriya community. The political connection between literature and community will be further explicated by tracing the career of critical studies on work of the 18th century Oriya poet Upendra Bhanja.

Tower of Babel: Colonial Language policy and the emergence of Oriya language as an object of affect.

In Orissa, language and community came to be coupled in a public debate in the 1860s when the Oriya speaking elite organized a campaign against proposals for the removal of Oriya as a language of instruction in schools of the Orissa division of the Bengal Presidency. This drew the colonial government and the Oriya elite into a debate about the viability of Oriya as an official language as questions were raised about the scope of existing Oriya literature, the ability of the impoverished Oriya speaking people to finance the production of new literature in Oriya and the efficacy of granting state patronage to a language that was not equipped to serve as an official language due to the paucity of educated Oriya speaking people. This section will trace the shift in the understanding of language as an instrumental medium of communication to an object of affect - a mother tongue--as the Oriya language press engaged with the proposal to replace Oriya with Bengali. This engagement, I will argue, is marked not only by the avowal of Oriya as a mother tongue but also by an effort to question the hierarchical relationship between Oriya and Bengali—where Bengali is understood as a more developed language. By lobbying for the continued use of Oriya as a language of instruction in the schools of the Orissa division of the Bengal Presidency, the Oriya elite effectively convinced the colonial state that the Oriya language had a separate, inviolable geographical domain of its own.

Therefore, I do not argue that Oriya as a language of affect emerged in this period. Surely, an affective relationship with language is not a modern phenomena and a history of this affect may involve a much more complex reading of nineteenth century texts as well as those from earlier times. Such a reading is outside the scope of this project. Rather, I argue here that the transformation lay in the public, collective articulation of the Oriya language as a 'mother-tongue' which could not be replaced by another more developed language. This articulation and the ultimate acknowledgement by the colonial state of the Oriya right to 'learn in their own language' gestured at the transformation of the colonial state's linguistic understanding of India. In future, the colonial state understood India as a collection of discrete linguistic areas. The eventual product of this new understanding of this vernacular geography of India was Grierson's mutli-volume magnum opus—the Linguistic Survey of India that was published between 1903 and 1927. [31]The survey mapped the linguistic geography of India and effectively granted each major language its own geographical domain. The Oriya Bengali debate of the 1860s represents the moment when this transformation of British understanding of India was in process. Concomitant to this process was the emergence of identity politics focused on languages as the boundaries of linguistic domains came to be contested.

Successive government initiatives such as the establishment of the 101 Hardinge vernacular schools in the Bengal Presidency and the Wood's Dispatch on education of 1854 which advocated the use of vernacular languages as the language of instruction in primary educational institutions through out India made the question of language in the

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[31] George Abraham Grierson and India Linguistic Survey of, *Linguistic Survey of India* (Calcutta: Govt. of India, Central Publication Branch, 1903).

Oriya speaking areas an important policy issue for the government.[32] What should be the language of instruction in the schools of the Oriya speaking areas? Is there an adequate supply of appropriate Oriya literature and trained Oriya teachers to cater to the needs of these schools and their students?

The problem with ascertaining the language of instruction in the Oriya speaking areas arose from the minority linguistic status of Oriya speakers in the larger provinces of British India. In the case of areas where a majority of the population spoke Oriya, the use of the vernacular was only partial. Oriya was officially designated the language of instruction in the Orissa division of the Bengal Presidency. However, in Oriya speaking areas in the Central Provinces and Madras Presidency the language of instruction remained Hindi and Telugu respectively. Hence, the subsequent Oriya language movement of the 1860s which was organized to oppose proposals to substitute Bengali for Oriya developed only in the Orissa division of the Bengal Presidency. [33]

By the late 1860s Cuttack, the capital of the Orissa division could boast of a fairly vocal though limited public sphere comprising of discussion clubs like the Cuttack

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[32] In 1844 Lord Hardinge, decreed the establishment of 101 vernacular schools in the Bengal Presidency. Eight of these 101 were establish in the Orissa division. For details see Bharati Mohapatra, *Going to School in the Raj: Primary Education in India(1803-1903) with Focus on Orissa* (Bhubaneswar: V.B. Shastry, 2003). 63-72. For more details on the Woods Despatch see Mir, "Imperial Policy, Provincial Practices: Colonial Language Policy in Nineteenth-Century India."

[33] This however does not mean that similar debate did not occur in other Oriya speaking areas in the Central Provinces and the Madras Presidency in the subsequent period. Infact the first political movement for the separation of an Oriya speaking areas occurred in the Sambalpur district of the Central Provinces. In Sambalpur, where a majority spoke Oriya, the government of the Central provinces was attempting to substitute Hindi for Oriya as the language of instruction. This lead to a rather public debate in both Orissa division and Sambalpur. After much debate the Central Provinces government rescinded the order and transferred the Sambalpur district and its associated Princely states to the Bengal Presidency. For more details see Mohanty, *Oriya Nationalism : Quest for a United Orissa, 1866-1956*. 63-81

Debating Society and newspapers like *Utkal Dipika*.[34] As a response to the

mismanagement of the Famine relief efforts by the government in 1866, Utkal Dipika a

weekly newspaper was floated to apprise the government of the needs of the people of

Orissa division. A secondary object of the newspaper was to work for the development of

the Oriya language. The Utkal Dipika provided the site where the notion of the economic,

social and cultural interests of a community came to be conflated with the Oriya

language. The newspaper edited by Gourishankar Rai frequently carried articles and

received letters about the economic condition of the people of Orissa, famine relief

efforts by the government and other governmental policies pertaining to Orissa.[35] In the

late 1860s the newspaper spearheaded the campaign against the proposal to replace Oriya

with Bengali in the Orissa division.

The debate about Oriya and Bengali had been brewing for some time among

colonial officials. As early as 1841 the Commissioner of Orissa was petitioned by the

Sudder Board of Revenue that Oriya be replaced by Bengali as language of governmental

activity. [36]Reasons given by these early proposals were two fold; one, that there was very

little difference between the two languages and the use of Bengali in the Orissa division

would be in the interest of administrative economy and two, the lack of properly educated

Oriya speaking officials made it difficult to find appropriate personnel. Thus, these

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[34] For a detailed list of other newspapers and the general state of newspaper media in the late nineteenth century see Ibid. 55-60

[35] For a cross-section of articles published it the Utkal Dipika see Patnaik, *Sambadapatraru Odisara Katha*.

[36] Patra, "Formation of the Province of Orissa : The Success of the First Linguistic Movement in India". P 101 The events preceding this report are noted in Panchanan Mohanty, "British Language Policy in Nineteenth Century India and the Oriya Language Movement," *Language Policy* 1 (2002).

proposals argued that using Bengali in the Orissa division made sound administrative sense.

Similar proposals were being made for the changes in the language of instruction in schools of the Orissa division. [37] The lack of qualified Oriya school teachers and proper text books in Oriya often formed the grounds for such proposals. Even as late as 1860, there were only 7 Oriya teachers in the entire Orissa Division. As a result, most of the teaching posts in urban as well as remote rural areas were manned by Bengali speaking teachers who, owing to their inability to teach in Oriya, failed to enforce the provisions of the Woods Dispatch on education. Education in these areas could not be conducted in the officially recognized vernacular language—Oriya. In 1864-65, both the Inspector and Deputy Inspector of schools in Orissa recommended that Bengali be made the only language of instruction in the schools of Orissa Division.[38] This sparked the Oriya Language Movement in earnest.

As a response to such proposals the Utkal Bhasha Uddhipani Sabha (Association for the development of Oriya language) was organized in 1867. Headed by both domiciled Bengalis and Oriya members, this organization aimed at the development of the Oriya language, encouragement of the involvement of common people (sarbasadharana) in this project, the replacement of the mixed languages used in Government offices with pure Oriya and to ensure that only qualified officials be able to

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[37] The fact that such proposals were being made in the Officials circles is evidenced in the rebuttal issued by the E.Roer, the first Inspector of Schools for Orissa, who said " Ooriah language cannot be considered as a dialect of Bengalee, though nearly related to it; but it is a language of its own which has its own grammatical forms, idioms and signs for the letters and mostly translations from Puranas, the Hitopadeshas, Baratrishasinghasana etc." Quoted in Patra, "Formation of the Province of Orissa : The Success of the First Linguistic Movement in India". p 102.

[38] Mohanty, "British Language Policy in Nineteenth Century India and the Oriya Language Movement." 62

work as revenue officials in Orissa.[39] The last of these aims perhaps points to the need for a larger number of educated Oriya speaking government officials to man the junior positions in the revenue department which had a major impact on the lives of the Oriya populace.[40]

However, even as this organization was striving towards strengthening the position of Oriya in governmental and educational institutions, the leaders used the development of Bengali as a template for future efforts to achieve their goals. The career of Bengali under colonial rule was seen as an exemplar of the manner in which a native population had been able to preserve, modernize and develop an Indian vernacular. The influence of the Bengali model is apparent from the proceedings of the first meeting of the Sabha. Rangalal Bandopadhyay, the president of the session noted that, "If we investigate the rise to favor of our Bengali language in such a short time then we will find that printing presses and organizations for religious propaganda are responsible."[41] Hence Bandhopadyay argued that as religious texts have been so successful in the spread and development of Bengali, old Oriya religious texts should be reprinted. It was to be the responsibility of the Sabha to unearth the background of the authors of these classical texts and enable the dissemination of the texts through publication.

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[39] "Utkala Bhasha Uddhipani Sabha" In *Utkal Dipika of* 26th May 1867, reprinted in Appendix 2 of Mahanti, *Odia Bhasha Andolana*. 211

[40] In his report on education in 1867-68, the Inspector of schools noted that there was a need for surveyor school in Cuttack as there was a lack of Oriya speaking amins. See Instruction Bengal . Dept. of Public, "General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency " in *General report on public instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency* (Calcutta: Printed [for Government] at the Alipore Jail Press., 1867-68). 58-59

[41] "Atirikta", *Utkal Dipika* of 26th May 1867, reprinted in Appendix 2 of Mahanti, *Odia Bhasha Andolana*. 213

Paradoxically, even as the Sabha was established for the development of the Oriya language in a climate where Oriya was being displaced by Bengali based on claims that Oriya was merely a dialect of Bengali, Bandhopadhyay reiterated such claims rather than questioning them. He argued that the difference between Oriya and Bengali was not vastly different from the distinction between regional variations of Bengali. This inability to break away from the foundational claim against the establishment of Oriya reveals how entrenched this idea was among the educated elite.

However, the argument against Oriya was not always based on the similarity between Oriya and Bengali. The most influential statement in favor of Bengali was a speech made by Rajendralala Mitra at the Cuttack Debating Society in 1868 where he argued for the removal of Oriya from the schools of the Orissa division on the grounds that the Oriya speaking population was numerically too small to support the production of new Oriya school text-books. [42] Mitra was well known both in the Orissa Division as well as Calcutta. An active member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Mitra had strong links in Orissa due to his research on Orissa antiquities. In 1875 he published *Ántiquities of Orissa*.[43] He was also a very vocal voice on the debate about vernacular education in Calcutta.[44]

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[42] The Cuttack Debating society was an organization of students and teachers on the Cuttack High School. It was held in the building of the printing press of the Oriya weekly Utkal Dipika. In its early years it remained one of the more forums for public discussion in Orissa where Oriya intellectuals, Government Officials and visiting scholars discussed a variety of issues. For details see Samantaraya, *Odia Sahityara Itihasa, 1803-1920*.

[43] Rajendralala Mitra, *The Antiquities of Orissa. By Rajendralala Mitra, .. These Are Some of the Relics of the Past, Weeping over a Lost Civilisation and an Extinguished Grandeur. .. Published under Orders of the Government of India* (Calcutta: published by Wyman & Co., 10, Hare Street, and 5, Council House Street. Printed at the Baptist Mission Press, 1875), Rajendralala Mitra and Jogeshur Mitter, *Speeches by Raja Rajendralala Mitra* (Calcutta: S.K. Lahiri, 1892).

[44] Mitra and Mitter, *Speeches by Raja Rajendralala Mitra*.

In his speech Mitra argued that the lack of adequate number of people who speak the Oriya language could make the survival of Oriya as an independent language impossible. He noted,

> Any well wisher of Utkal will first introduce Bengali and replace Oriya. As per the Famine Commissioner the total population of Utkal is twenty lakhs now. If we discount the women and the children, it is possible that only ten to twelve lakh people know how to read and write. But can this small number of people maintain a language? Nobody can be successful in writing new books here. Bengal is a vast country and has progressed so much because its population is large. If Bengali is introduced in Utkal then Bengali books will be read here. And the Oriya people will get good books easily.[45]

Thus for Mitra, not unlike the Colonial Government, the lack of text books was the central problem that informed the deliberations about the status of Oriya in the schools of the Orissa division. However, Mitra introduced a revealing dimension to the debate by raising the question of population and the economics of text book production. In this remarkably practical allusion to liberal economic practice, Mitra argued that a language could only be supported if there was a market for its consumption. The number of the Oriya speaking people was an important concern as they constituted the market for Oriya texts. Unfortunately, argued Mitra, the famine of 1866 had severely depleted the Oriya population. Else where, Mitra elaborated this claim by arguing that it would be unreasonable to expect support from any other linguistic group (like the Bengalis).

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[45] Quoted in Mohanty, "British Language Policy in Nineteenth Century India and the Oriya Language Movement." 66-67.

Furthermore, he contended that it would be unfair for the Government to devote its own resources to the development of texts in the Oriya language. This, he warned, would mean that the government would be supporting a project that would separate the Oriyas from the Bengali's, effectively implying that in so doing the Government would be practicing a policy of divide and rule.[46] Such a policy, Mitra cautioned, would complicate governance as it will mean raising " a tower of Babel to disunite and disperse the native races".[47] In the absence of state support, the development of Oriya language would be ultimately the concern of the Oriya speaking people alone. However, Mitra pointed out, a majority of the Oriyas were desperately poor. Could they possibly afford to sponsor the production of new Oriya texts?

Mitra had another argument against the use of Oriya in the schools of the Orissa division. He noted that the new governmental desire to promote the use of vernacular languages in primary as well as higher education would be very difficult to execute in the case of Oriya. In a language which did not have adequate textbooks for primary education, text books for college level education would require huge investment of time and money. Mitra argued "To suppose that such a thing is possible for a poor community of 2 ½ millions of Uriyas to accomplish, is to suppose an impossibility."[48] Consequently, the Oriya speaking people would be reduced to primary and secondary level education and left unprepared for college education which is conducted in English and Bengali. In such a circumstance, there will not be a quantum body of highly educated Oriya people.

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[46] The Honourary Secretaries, "Remarks on Mr Beames 'Notes on the Relation of the Uriya to the Other Modern Aryan Languages.'
" *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1870). 211
[47] Ibid. 211
[48] Ibid. 211

The result, Mitra warned, would be the creation of a generation of unimaginative clerks—"bad substitutes of Babbage's calculating machines!"[49] This definitely would not serve the long term interests of the Oriya people.

Mitra's arguments had two major implications for the future articulations of Oriya linguistic politics. First by connecting the fortunes of the Oriya language with the numerical strength of the Oriya speaking population, Mitra unwittingly sparked the earliest Oriya discussions on the need to lobby for the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tracts in the Bengal Presidency, Madras Presidency and the Central Provinces under a single administration. The response in the Oriya press to Mitra's claims focused on refuting his argument about the lack of adequate number of Oriya speaking people and establishing that Bengali was textually rich because of a long history of patronage from the Colonial State. In a two part article titled "Odia Bhasha Unnati Prati Byaghat" (Obstacles to the development of the Oriya language) published in *Utkal Dipika,* the author argued that primary obstacle to the development of Oriya language was the territorial dispersal of Oriya speaking people which had led to a lack of State support and patronage as Oriya was a language spoken by a minority in different British provinces. [50]As a language spoken by a small minority in various British provinces, Oriya did not have access to patronage from the Colonial State in the form of grants for schools, textbook publication and college level classes conducted in the vernacular. Such a situation, the author argued, was responsible for the present state of the Oriya language. The author countered Mitra's claim about the more advanced state of the Bengali

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[49] Ibid. 214
[50] Utkal Dipika 10-03-1871 quoted in Patnaik, *Sambadapatraru Odisara Katha*. 531

language by pointing out that as the dominant language of the huge Bengal Presidency, Bengali had been benefiting from state patronage for many years. If Oriya were to have access to such help from the colonial state then over time Oriya too would be able to support a vernacular educational system. The article writer argued that Mitra's accounting of the Oriya population was wrong because he had not counted the Oriya speaking people in provinces other than the Bengal Presidency. If all Oriya speakers in different British provinces were counted then it would be evident that Oriya was a language spoken by a large number of people and the colonial government would definitely support the development of the Oriya language. The article ended with a proposal to organize the Oriya people to agitate for the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tracts.

Interestingly, the other implication of Mitra's arguments against the use of Oriya, particularly his contention that governmental support to the Oriya claim would create divisions among the "native peoples of India" raised the question of divisive-ness of such regional claims. The specter of divisive-ness of regional politics would mark both discussions about regional identity politics within Orissa and non-Oriya attitudes towards such politics as Oriya regional linguistic politics came to dominate the Oriya public sphere over the following decades. Even emphatic calls to the Oriya-speaking people to protect and maintain the particularity and identity of the Oriya community often punctuated their argument with qualifications about how such a move would not threaten

the intrinsic unity of India. Infact such qualifications often ended with the claim that such regional efforts actually strengthened the unity of the Indian community.[51]

We return for a moment to the article 'Obstacles to the development of the Oriya language' and its argument with Mitra's thesis about the future status of the Oriya language. It appears that the author of the article and Mitra were speaking at cross purposes. Mitra's concern was to speed up the development of the education of the Oriya people and to ensure that they catch up with the more advanced regions of British India. Fundamental to his argument is the assumption that Bengali and Oriya languages are interchangeable because they are merely languages of instruction or means of communication. The author of the article on the other hand while refuting only the super structure of Mitra's argument by taking up the question of population did not bother to address this idea of interchangeability. On the contrary, the article begins with the question of the development of the Oriya language and the possible obstacles to it. This reveals an investment in the Oriya language that Mitra did not have. It is evident from this that unlike Mitra, the question of replacing Oriya does not even arise for the article writer. The fundamental disagreement between Mitra and the author of the article draws from the difference in their attitude towards language.

In the Oriya press during this period the question of language came to stand for the question of the development of the Oriya speaking community. If Oriya did not survive and thrive then the Oriya community would gradually melt away. Reference to

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[51] I will discuss this point further in the last section of this chapter.

Oriya as mother tongue or mother abounded in newspaper articles addressing the debate.[52]

Finally, in 1869-1870, the office of the Governor of Bengal Presidency addressed this issue by requesting statements from the Inspector of Schools in Orissa, Commissioner of Orissa and the Director of Public Instruction for the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency about their views on the matter of replacing Oriya with Bengali. Both the Inspector of Schools and the Commissioner advised against such a move even though the Commissioner pointed out that it was difficult to obtain qualified Oriya speaking teachers for the schools of Orissa division. [53] The Director of Public Instruction differed from the Inspector of Schools and the Commissioner by advocating a policy of non-interference. He suggested, "…in the main it must be left to settle itself, and the policy of Government should be to wait"[54] Instead of taking a "decisive step" in either

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[52] A number of articles appeared in Uktal Dipika in 1870 and 1871 addressing these issues. For details see Patnaik, *Sambadapatraru Odisara Katha.*

[53] Instruction Bengal . Dept. of Public, "General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency " *General report on public instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency* (1869-1870).. Furthermore, the Inspector of Schools Martin who took over in 1868-69 wrote in his first report that " In Orissa there are but sixty four schools attended by 3787 students, and in Chotanagpore but thirty-four schools with 1599 students. I do not think either of these Provinces has had fair play, for an inspector has nearly sufficient work in Bengal without either of them, and is naturally more inclined to push on work where he sees immediate results than to set about new work, where, as a matter of necessity, must take years before a harvest can be reaped. I do not myself see any reason why the province of Orissa should not be in ten years as far advanced as the Bengal districts under me *now* are, but at first it will be an uphill and discouraging work; I think, however, I see my way before me. I have been working with a fixed plan for the last few months and I mean to go on pushing, provided I am supported, as I expect to be, by the higher authorities." P 9Instruction Bengal . Dept. of Public, "General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency," *General report on public instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency* (1868-1869).. To this end he made the following proposals, " a normal School, in which both Pandits and Gurus may be trained, should be opened in Cuttack. The study of surveying should be taught in Orissa. There are no amins there.. The study of Oriya should as speedily as possible supersede the study of Bengali in what are called the *vernacular schools of Orissa".*

[54] Instruction Bengal . Dept. of Public, "General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency," *General report on public instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency* (1869-1870). 60

direction, he recommended that Oriya be used in elementary education because there were adequate text books for lower levels of education. On the subject of higher education, he maintained that the government should "… leave it to the people themselves to develop a higher literature in Oriya if they really desire it." [55] Furthermore, in order to ensure a steady supply of text books in Oriya, he advised that a committee be set up for "supervising the preparation of any Oriya school books that are *really required*." [56](emphasis mine) However, the actual production of these textbooks should be the responsibility of the Oriya people.

The director based his comments on the principle that diversity of language caused impediments to the spread of enlightenment in India. He argued,

> Diversity of speech is a great evil; it obstructs intercourse and offers a serious obstacle to the advance of civilization. Whenever possible , it must clearly be desirable to remove this barrier between neighboring populations; and till it is proved that the barrier is of sufficient strength to with stand the pressure which the progress of enlightenment may naturally bring to bear upon it, the expediency would seem at least doubtful of adopting any measures that would make it less easy of removal hereafter, and tend to give permanence to the mischievous separation which it causes. The immediate difficulty is to decide whether it is hopeless to look for the removal of this separating barrier between Bengal and Orissa. [57]

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[55] Ibid. 62
[56] Ibid. 60
[57] Ibid. 61

This statement echoes Rajendralala Mitra's anxiety about the erection of a tower of Babel that could lead to discord among the population of British India. However, the Director departs from Mitra's stand by pointing to the danger posed by linguistic diversity to the colonial civilizational mission. The Director's argument functioned at a practical as well as abstract level. On a practical level he was referring to the obstacles posed by the use of different languages of instruction in the education of the masses. Such diversity of language, he argued, was not conducive to economic or administrative expediency in the management of public instruction. Hence, it would hamper the spread of mass education in Orissa. On a more abstract level, both Mitra and the Director were arguing on behalf of a universality of human life which was the foundation of community allegiance for Mitra and essential to the progress of enlightenment for the Director. As both these positions spoke to the civilizing mission of British colonialism, they were very powerful arguments against the acknowledgment of diversity between Oriya and Bengali.

Despite such arguments, the colonial government ultimately upheld the claims of the Oriya speaking people for the use of Oriya in the schools of the Orissa division. In a response to the director of the Department of Public Instruction, a memo from the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal decreed that "… all schools in the province of Orissa upto the Zillah schools(of which there are only two) the Uriya language should be the language of instruction and in the Zillah and high school it should be optional."[58] In order to promote the publication of textbooks in Oriya, the memo declared that "a committee for the purpose of considering and reporting on original works and translations

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[58] Ibid. 65. The option in this case would be between taking classes in Bengali or Oriya at the Zilla and High school level.

in the Uriya language, with a view to assist the committee of the School Book Society in deciding on the application made to them for publication of Uriya school books, has been recently appointed."[59]

Countering the Director's proposal for the policy of non- intervention, the memo noted

> Your proposal, therefore, to continue the study of Uriya in elementary schools, and not beyond, is, in the Lieutenant-Governor's opinion, not only against the wishes of the natives of Orissa, but is opposed to the policy which he considers the Government is bound on every consideration to follow, viz. that our chief care should be to give to the Uriyas an opportunity of *learning their own language*, and that the means for this end should be extensively supplied.[60](Emphasis mine)

The Lieutenant Governor's comments reveal that economic and administrative expediency was overshadowed by the Government's ideological commitment to provide access to education in the people's own language. In addition, this decision was influenced by concern about public opinion. This was despite the consensus among all parties involved in this decision that the introduction of Oriya at the level of higher education and the extension of the use of Oriya in lower level schools was a rather expensive and long winded process. Such an ideological stand probably drew from the

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[59] Ibid.65. Textbooks in vernacular languages of the Bengal Presidencies were produced under the auspices of the School Book Society. Long before this memo, the Calcutta School Book Society was responsible for the publication of vernacular textbooks. For a history of the School book Society see Mohanty, "British Language Policy in Nineteenth Century India and the Oriya Language Movement."
[60] Bengal . Dept. of Public, "General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency." 64

earlier concerns about 'just' and 'liberal' governance through popularly intelligible languages. In her study of the paradoxical nature of the colonial language policy in Punjab, Farina Mir has illustrated how the earliest efforts to enforce the use of vernacular languages in government processes, particularly in judicial and revenue matters, were justified on grounds that justice was ensured only when the people 'understood' the laws. [61] To this end, the Act No. 29 of 1837 decreed that in the Bengal Presidency Bengali, Oriya and Hindustani would replace Persian as the language of the law courts.

Similar to this concern about just and intelligible governance, the attention to public opinion while deciding matters of government policy indicated in the reference to the ' wishes of the natives of Orissa' drew partly from the colonial government's professed desire to establish liberal governance in India. The reference to 'learning their own language' signaled a departure from this earlier more limited concern about just governance. To state that the government was prepared to go to great lengths to ensure that the people had an opportunity to learn their own language was to acknowledge that Indian vernaculars were not interchangeable. Bengali could not replace Oriya because the Oriya language was not simply a medium of communication: it was a mother- tongue particular to the speakers of the Oriya language. Also, inherent in this statement is the idea of a community or people who 'own' a particular language. Without over determining the productive force of colonial rule, it should be noted here that a new idea of language was emerging in India. The right of the people to learn their own language, to *have* their own language, trumped administrative as well as economic imperatives of rule.

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[61] Mir, "Imperial Policy, Provincial Practices: Colonial Language Policy in Nineteenth-Century India." 395-427

While it can be argued that this concern with language for its own sake rather than as a means of communication as in the case of Mitra, the Director of Public Instruction or even the Act no 29 of 1837, drew from ongoing research and interest in Indian languages among Orientalists and philologists, its emergence in policy discussions marks a dramatically new approach to vernacular languages in the government circles. Vernacular language was now seen as something that rallied public opinion. To put it differently, this statement reveals the colonial government's acknowledgement of linguistic identity politics.

Thus by the end of the decade of the 1860s, a new understanding of language as a unique object of affect rather than simply a means of communication was emerging among colonial officials and the Oriya speaking elite. The increasing investment in the future of the language and the identification of this future with the possibilities of development of the speakers of Oriya laid the foundation for Oriya cultural politics of the subsequent years. In the years to come, forums for the discussion of Oriya language and literature came to house the earliest articulations of the political demand for the creation of a separate administrative state of Orissa and broader discussions of anti-colonialism and all- India nationalism.

A more immediate consequence of the 1860s debate was the growing anxiety among the Oriya elite about the lack of appropriate Oriya texts that could be used a text books in the schools of the Orissa division. This anxiety organized early Oriya efforts to mobilize the educated elite in the interests of the Oriya language. In the years after the government decision to retain the use of Oriya in schools, essayists and newspaper

editors called for a greater production of new Oriya literature and recuperation of older

Oriya texts that could serve as text books for young children. The emergence of modern

Oriya literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century can be traced back to

this question of text-books.

On boundaries between languages : Colonial Philology and the question of linguistic differentiation in *Oriya Swatantra Bhasa Nahe*

> The Ooriah of this district, whether it may originally have been, is not but a
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> dialect of Bengalee, from which it differs chiefly in pronunciations and in its
>
> written character…I would submit as a measure of general policy, it is desirable
>
> that the Ooriah should cease to exist as a separate language within the British
>
> territories.[62]

  -Collector of Cuttack, the capital of the Orissa Division of the Bengal Presidency, 1854

Another factor that precipitated a change in the understanding of language in

Orissa was the establishment of clear boundaries between Indian languages as a result of

colonial philological efforts to map the linguistic geography of India.[63] As the boundaries

between languages came to be defined through philological study of grammatical

structure and origins of words, the question of actual geographical domains of these

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[62] Quoted in Patra, "Formation of the Province of Orissa : The Success of the First Linguistic Movement in India". P 101. The term "Ooriah" is a corrupted form of Oriya and was often used in official correspondence.

[63] In his essay titled " The Two Histories of Literary Culture in Bengal" discussed the porous boundaries between pre-colonial Oriya and Bengali in Pollock, *Literary Cultures in History : Reconstructions from South Asia*. He argues that the the notion of bounded territorial domains of sovereignty was in itself a new concept in the colonial India. In pre-colonial India sovereignity, be it of rulers or of their sponsored language was marked by porous and indeterminate boundaries. Hence the domains of neighbouring languages like Oriya and Bengali often bled into each other. The idea of mapping India introduced by the colonial state effected the formation of discrete spheres of influence of languages like Oriya and Bengali.

languages came to be raised. In a time where this increased academic and governmental attention to language was accompanied by discussion among vernacular language speaking elites about the status and function of their language in community life, this question of differentiation between languages and the demarcation of their geographical domains came to be the site of contestation between groups engaged in debates on language.

In Orissa too, apart from the an increased attention the ability of Oriya language and literature to sustain primary and higher level vernacular education, the most important feature of the Oriya Bengali debate of the 1860s was the question of the relationship between Oriya and Bengali. Advocates for the use of Bengali in Orissa argued that Oriya was merely a dialect of Bengali and need not be used separately in Orissa schools and State institutions. Proponents of the independence of Oriya as a language argued that the similarities between Oriya and Bengali were due to the common origin of the two languages. A highlight of this debate was the publication of a Bengali monograph titled *Uriya Swadheen Bhasha Naye* (Oriya is not an independent language) written by Kantichandra Bhattacharya, a Bengali school teacher from the Oriya speaking district of Balasore.[64]

Through a reading of this text published in 1870, this section illustrates how an academic question about linguistic difference between Oriya and Bengali came to be put in service of proposals to remove Oriya from schools. Often such arguments invoked the social, religious, political and migratory history of the Oriya speaking people to make the

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[64] Kantichandra Bhattacharya, "Odiya Swatantra Bhasa Nuhe," in *Odiya Bhasa Andolana*, ed. Bansidhar Mohanty (Cuttack: Friends Publishers, 1989). This is an Oriya translation of the original Bengali text. I regret that I was unable to locate the Bengali original.

case for derivative and subordinate nature of the Oriya language. That is, by historicizing the development of the Oriya language against the backdrop of social, cultural and political changes in Oriya speaking areas in the longue duree, these arguments produced a cultural life-history of the Oriya language and established a link between the fortunes of a language and its speakers.

Hence, in this section I will argue that another element in the emergent understanding of language in Orissa was the conflation of the history of the Oriya language with the history of the Oriya speaking people. Hence, arguments about the lowly origins (read aboriginal) of the Oriya language caused great anxiety within the Oriya speaking elite about the nature of the Oriya population. In particular, I will reveal in this section how discussions about the history and development of the Oriya language came to be embedded in a colonial history of race in India. [65]

Furthermore, a reading of Bhattacharya's text also reveals an additional reason for Oriya elite anxiety about the lack of texts in Oriya. The need for an Oriya textual tradition that would illustrate the unique-ness of Oriya was dearly felt as philological arguments in this debate on linguistic difference were based on evidence from Oriya and Bengali texts. Oriya texts that provided such evidence were often translations of Bengali or English texts in the first place. In these translations the similarity of content often extended to a similarity of style, idiom and Sanskrit derived vocabulary as the translators

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[65] I will discuss later in the section how colonial philology and colonial understanding of race were very closely allied in discussions about languages and the peoples of India. For details see Thomas R. Trautmann, *The Aryan Debate*, Oxford in India Readings. Debates in Indian History and Society (New Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

strove to stay true to the Bengali and English originals. [66] Consequently, critics like
Kantichandra could argue that the few recently published Oriya texts contained language
that was very similar to their Bengali originals.

The context for Bhattacharya's discussion was the ongoing discussion among
colonial philologists about the origins, classification and inter-relationships between
various vernacular languages. In the nineteenth century the problem of differentiating
between major Indian languages had become a very vexed question for colonial
philologists and linguists. Ever since William Carey of the Serampore mission began
philological research on Indian languages in the second decade of the nineteenth century,
colonial philologists had been attempting to map the diversity, development and identity
of various north Indian languages.[67] The facts that most of these languages came from the
same root language (Sanskrit or its colloquial form, Prakrit) and often shared a significant
number of words made the differentiation between languages a rather tricky problem for
philologists.

While these discussions among colonial philologists formed the broad context for
Bhattacharya's arguments, his chief interlocutor among colonial philologists was John
Beames. Beames, a noted linguist and long time senior colonial official in Orissa, wrote
extensively about the philology of the Oriya language and its relationship with other

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[66] Such arguments about the need to develop an original modern Oriya textual tradition by avoiding
translations from Bengali and Oriya appeared repeatedly in the Oriya language press till as late as the
1890s.
[67] A short history of colonial philology can be found in the preface to the 1971 reprint of the *Outlines of
Indian Philology,* written by Suniti Kumar Chatterjee. See John Beames, Suniti Kumar Chatterji, and
George Abraham Sir Grierson, *Outlines of Indian Philology, and Other Philological Papers* (Calcutta:
Indian Studies: Past & Present, 1971). p- iii-vi.

North Indian languages. [68] In some ways Bhattacharya's arguments were based on Beames' discussions about Indian vernaculars and the idea of dialects. However, by putting the arguments about the derivative nature of the Oriya language in the service of the move for the substitution of Oriya with Bengali in Oriya schools, Bhattacharya departed from Beames' philological ideas in crucial ways. Hence, we should make a brief foray into Beames' discussions about North Indian languages in order to understand the politics of Bhattacharya's discussion of Oriya as a dialect.

John Beames addressed the problem of classification of Indian languages in his 1867 text *Outlines of Indian Philology.* Beames wrote the *Outlines* as a preliminary statement about the norms of philological study of the North Indian languages. [69] These norms formed the basis of his subsequent three volume work titled *Comparative Grammars of the modern Aryan languages of India.* In his chapter titled "On dialects" in the *Outlines*, Beames attempted to treat the commonly held standards that were used to determine whether a language was dialect of another language or an independent language in its own rights. Here Beames attacked the commonly held test to ascertain whether a language was dialect or an independent language based in the rule of 'mutual intelligibility'. According to this rule if the speakers of two different languages could understand each other then the two tongues were dialects of the same language. Beames

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[68] Among the most notable of his work is are the following books John Beames, *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India* (Delhi,: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1966), Beames, Chatterji, and Grierson, *Outlines of Indian Philology, and Other Philological Papers*.

[69] In his introduction Beames maintained that "The following pages are a compilation from the best and the most accessible books on the science of language, supplemented by facts derived from personal observations. They donot pretend to be anything more that the outline for the use of those who having no knowledge of linguistic science, wich to record and preserve dialects of obscure and uncivilized tribes with whom they may come into contact; or any of the countless peculiarities of leading Indian languages which may be spoken in their neighbourhood." See the preface of Beames, Chatterji, and Grierson, *Outlines of Indian Philology, and Other Philological Papers*.

argued that such a test was unsuitable for Indian languages because many languages either shared similar words (like Hindi and Bengali) or the same grammatical structure (like Hindi and Punjabi). Beames warned that these pitfalls could result in misclassification of Indian languages. These pitfalls, he argued, could be counteracted by supplementing the rule of 'mutual intelligibility' with another set of parameters. To this end he noted that

> 1 . The test of mutual intelligibility is a very unsafe one, as it depends on the intelligence of individuals, the savage and the peasant will exaggerate it; and the man of education will make too light of it.
>
> 2. By taking into consideration certain influences which have operated on the people, the mutual intelligibility test may however be brought to bear to this extent that, that it may be fairly said of two forms of speech that if they are not mutually intelligible, they ought to be, and infact they may often be so much alike, that the student who is master of one would almost, if not altogether, understand the other, though two natives could not.
>
> 3. These influences are, geographical position, civilization, political and physical accidents, religion, difference of pronunciation, education.[70]

Hence, Beames called for a juxtaposition of observations of contemporary speech patterns, vocabulary and socio-cultural contexts along with the study of the historical context for the development of languages in India. Interestingly, despite his efforts to propose a multi pronged approach the study of language differentiation, the over all

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[70]Ibid. 53-54

consequence of such efforts was an increased attention to the search for material that would serve as evidence in the linguistic study of languages. Invariably, apart from ethnographic observation of common speech, the primary source of evidence for linguistic analysis came to be textual. This is evidenced by the subsequent efforts by Kantichandra Bhattacharya's efforts to illustrate the similarity of Oriya and Bengali through the use of evidence from school texts in both languages. This privileging of textual language as evidence might explain the Oriya anxiety about the lack of a modern Oriya textual tradition.

Eventually, Beames observed that even though a system of classification of Indian languages would be useful, a much more detailed and comprehensive study of all Indian languages had to be done before any binding set of criteria for classification could be set forth. A proper systematic classification was essential, Beames argued, because it would make learning Indian languages much easier for non-native students. If it were established that several tongues were merely dialects of one major language then the student of Indian languages would have only one language to master. This would make apprehending the complex linguistic variety of India far easier because "it is less difficult to learn one language than twenty."[71] However, Beames warned "the conciousness that proving these forms of speech to be dialects rather than languages, be an advantage ought not to lead any one to enter in the study of them with even the wish to obtain this

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[71] Ibid. 52

result."[72] Instead, he suggested that such classification be deferred till most Indian languages have been systematically and intensively studied.[73]

It is this uncertainty about the actual boundaries between Indian languages that opened the door for Kantichandra Bhattacharya stipulation that Oriya is a dialect of Bengali in the *Uriya Swatantra Bhasha Naye* (Oriya is not an independent language). However, Bhattacharya's arguments did not betray any such uncertainty. His argument was simply this-- given the geographical contiguity between Oriya and Bengali speaking areas, it could be inferred that Oriya was actually a dialect of Bengali that had been corrupted by influences from non Indo-European languages spoken in the Oriya speaking areas.[74] He based his argument on a set of parameters for "language differentiation" which he borrowed from contemporary research on Indian philology. Hence, in his introduction he noted that

> Linguistic experts have said that large seas, very tall mountain ranges, impenetrable forests, colonization by a powerful and intellectually evolved community, development of daily practices, religious knowledge and education can cause the differentiation between one regional language and another.[75]

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[72] Ibid.53

[73] Ibid. 53

[74] It should be noted here that colonial philologists believed that the languages spoken in India could be divided into three major categories—Indo-European, Turanian and Semetic. Major Indian languages such as Hindi, Marathi, Bengali and Oriya were derived from Sanskrit or its more popularly spoken form Prakrit. These languages were part of the Indo-European group. The Turanian languages were spoken by communities such as the Hos and Santhals of Orissa. By the end of the nineteenth century colonial linguists had come to a consensus about the mixed roots of Oriya which derived mostly from Prakrit but also from the various Turanian languages spoken in the Oriya speaking areas. For a more detailed discussion see Ibid. 1-15

[75] Bhattacharya, "Odiya Swatantra Bhasa Nuhe." This is a Oriya translation of the original Bengali text published in 1870. The author regrets to note that she has been unable to obtain the original Bengali edition and is forced to depend on the translated version.

This set of parameters, almost identical to Beames' supplementary parameters, seems to be an effort to make a scientific and systematic argument about the derivative nature of the Oriya language. Nowhere in his text does Bhattacharya mention the concept of "mutual intelligibility". Instead, he makes a conscious effort to base his observation on concrete textual and historical evidence. Hence, it can be safely said that he was making an effort to move away from such commonsensical distinctions between languages and establish his argument on what contemporary philologists like John Beames considered more firm evidentiary footing. However, Bhattacharya went beyond the Beames' scheme by classifying these factors of language differentiation into natural (rivers, mountain ranges and forests) and artificial (colonization, migration, education, etc).

His argument is an interesting play on the role of natural and artificial factors for language differentiation where the natural is ultimately privileged. He argued that it has been historically impossible for man to re-orient natural boundaries. In the matter of Oriya and Bengali, he noted "…according to natural divisions (this entire area covering Orissa and Bengal) should be a place (*stana*) with one language" [76] Also, he noted that the case for the existence of a single language is strengthened because people in both areas have similar religious and daily lives.

His subsequent argument reveals that he did not consider other more historically contingent factors such as migration and colonization as having as much credence in the creation of separate languages as natural boundaries and religion. In his effort to explain why Oriya sounded so different from Bengali even though it was a dialect, Bhattacharya gave a historical account of the progressive bastardization of Bengali in the Oriya areas

[76] Ibid.158

over a long period of time. He claimed that as one moves away from the site where Bengali in its purest form is spoken—Calcutta—it becomes increasingly distorted due to assimilation with other tongues. By using the tropes of purity/pollution, Bhattacharya argued that " As faults arising from contact with undesirables results in a deterioration of character, so does such contact in the case of language lead to the deterioration of language."[77]

In the case of Oriya and Bengali, he noted, the undesirable element was the tribal population of the Oriya speaking areas. In Bhattacharya's scenario, the Aryan advent into India was accompanied by the introduction of Sanskrit into India. Gradually, a number of spoken languages sprung from Sanskrit. Bengali was one of these languages. According to him, the Aryan advent ultimately produced Bengali as a root language or *Mula Bhasha.* This root language, in its migration away from its site of origin interacted with languages spoken by tribal populations of various areas and produced a number of dialects. In the case of Orissa this mixing produced what was commonly known as Oriya. This mixing, he pointed out, resulted in the transformation of Bengali into " a rude, harsh, impure ,colloquial and lowly dialect." In his later chapters he analyzed the language used in school textbooks and popular works of literature to establish that in its refined, written form the Oriya language almost the same as Bengali.

Bhattacharya's narrative reveals that he understood the influence of tribal language only as the introduction of easily removable extraneous impurities rather than fundamentally constitutive of the Oriya language. This attitude was at odds with the prevailing understanding of the role of tribal language in the emergence of Indian

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[77] Ibid. 159

vernaculars. In colonial philology the study of the antecedents of Indian vernaculars was closely tied to the theory that the population of Northern India was the product of the assimilation of invading Indo-European Aryans and pre-existing aboriginal peoples of India. This racial assimilation led to the mingling of languages spoken by the two groups and spawned the earliest versions of a majority of the languages spoken in northern India. As John Beames statements in the *Outlines of Indian Philology* reveal, colonial philologists agreed that even though eventually the aboriginal peoples were enslaved and colonized by the invading Aryans, they left their mark on the resultant Aryan dominated culture of India.[78] In terms of language, this meant that many aspects of modern Indian languages could be traced back to the various languages spoken by the aboriginal people, collectively called the Turanian family of languages. Hence, the original aboriginal languages were fundamentally constitutive of the modern Indian vernaculars.   In both his books, the *Outlines of Indian Philology* as well as *Comparative Grammars of Modern Indian languages*, Beames painstakingly proved that Oriya drew heavily from tribal languages.[79]

Bhattacharya, however, dedicated the second half of his text to prove that this influence of tribal language was a colloquial, easily removable impurity that only slightly mars the purer, more refined textual language in Oriya school text books. To this end he analyzed the words used in Oriya school textbooks, biographies, dictionaries and folk songs in order to establish that the language used in these texts was the same as Bengali, baring slight difference in diction. He argued, with the increasing development of

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[78] See John Beames, "On the distribution of Indian Languages" in Beames, Chatterji, and Grierson, *Outlines of Indian Philology, and Other Philological Papers*. P 24-25.
[79] For more details see Ibid, Beames, *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India*.

education in the whole of Bengal the 'dailects' that had resulted due to the distorting influence of 'uncivilized races' would gradually be straightened out. Therefore, it would be a fallacy to think that Oriya is a separate language when through education the distortion of language can be removed. In conclusion, Bhattacharya called for concerted efforts to "purify the lowly corrupted language of the southern region (Southern region of the Bengal Presidency, namely Orissa Division)."[80]

Bhattacharya's claims about the derivative origins of the Oriya language excited strong responses from various quarters. Professional philologists such as John Beames and Richard Temple, attacked his lack of methodological rigor and claimed that the text was based on an inadequate knowledge of the Oriya language.[81] Both Beames in his speech at the Asiatic society 1871 and Richard Temple in his review in the *Calcutta Review* wondered why the author had chosen only words of Sanskrit origin used in Bengali and Oriya to make his case. Beames questioned Bhattacharya's methodology by asking why he did not account for spoken language in his thesis.

In plain English, such Sanskrit words , as were used by the Uriyas and Bengalis twenty-five centuries ago, have since then undergone the usual fate of works, and have been corrupted, abraded and distorted, till they often bear no resemblance at all to the original word. As it is these corrupted, or as they are called *Tadbhava* words, that are the real living words of the language, the words that have worn into their present shape by long use in the mouth of the people. These words our

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[80] Bhattacharya, "Odiya Swatantra Bhasa Nuhe." 207
[81] See John Beames, "On the Relation of the Uriyas to Other Modern Aryan Languages," *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.* (1870). 192-201 and Richard Temple, "Review" reprinted in Appendix 2 of Mahanti, *Odia Bhasha Andolana*. P 215.

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fastidious writers reject, and when by going back to the Sanskrit for their words,

they have composed a work to their taste, lo! They say Uriya and Bengali are one

language; for proof read such and such works, I would suggest rather, let them

take a *chása* of Dacca and a *chása* of Gumsar, and then see how much they

understand of one another's talk.[82]

However, despite such critiques, Bhattacharya's thesis found supporters among those

who had been arguing for the removal of Oriya from the schools of the Orissa division.

Most notably, Rajendralala Mitra in the same meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal

responded to John Beames's critique of Bhattacharya's failure to realize that spoken

language is the true language rather than the language of written text—by arguing that"

local peculiarities of pronunciation do not constitute language and therefore no notice

should be taken of them in deciding the questions of linguistic classification."

Furthermore, proponents of the use of Bengali in Orissa drew on the arguments made by

Bhattacharya to draft a petition to remove Oriya from the schools of the Orissa division.

The 'secret' petition was circulated all over Orissa and Bengal and attracted a number of

signatories. Even though the petition did not result in any change in government policy, it

drew the attention of the Oriya language press back to the Oriya/ Bengali debate.[83]

Articles appeared in the Oriya press that criticized Bhattacharya's argument about

the derivative nature of the Oriya language. For instance, in a review article published in

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[82] The term chasa in both instances denotes the cultivator caste of Orissa and Bengal. Ghumsar is an Oriya speaking area.
[83] For contemporary news paper articles that discussed the secret petition see Mahanti, *Odia Bhasha Andolana*. Appendix 2 155-220

Utkal Dipika built on the point made by Beames and Temple and queried Bhattacharya on his methods of proving the similarity between Bengali and Oriya by drawing on words with Sanskrit roots. The article inquired why Bengali should be considered an independent language if the occurrence of common Sanskrit words in Oriya and Bengali makes Oriya a dialect of Bengali. Then would not Bengali be considered a dialect of Hindi on the same grounds? The article introduced a new dimension to the critique of Bhattacharya's thesis by raising the question of independent tribal languages in the area where he argued only Bengali was spoken due to the absence of any geographical barriers.

> In the area where the author argues that only one language—the Bengali language—is spoken; why do aboriginal groups such as Garo, Santhal, Khond, Suanga, Sabara etc speak different languages? Perhaps, in order to respond to this question, the author with take assistance from Hunter and argue that all these languages have a singular root but he will not be able to deny that these languages are separate.[84]

In this oblique reference to the existing research on the tribal provenance of the Oriya language, the article questioned the basic premise of the Bhattacharya's argument that the Orissa-Bengal area could not possibly have more that one language. By the raising the question of tribal languages in the Oriya speaking areas, the article was making a case for the particularity of this area. More significantly, it should be noted that it is the tribal presence in the Oriya speaking areas that enables the author to counter

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[84] Unknown, " Uriya swatantra bhasha nahi" in Ibid. 200. This was a review of Bhattacharya's book.

Bhattacharya's argument about the derivative nature of the Oriya language. In other discussions of the Oriya language, including Beames' reading of the language, it is the tribal provenance of the Oriya language that distinguished Oriya from other languages of Sanskrit origin. Thus in a context where the distinction of Oriya from other languages was in question, it became necessary for the proponents of the independence of the Oriya language to draw attention to the tribal roots of Oriya. At the same time, this avowal of the tribal provenance of the Oriya language which suggested a deeper racial and historical relationship between the upper-class and upper-class Oriya elite and the tribal population of the Oriya speaking areas led to anxieties about the possibility of a 'lowly' ancestry of the Oriya speaking elite.

In the future such use of the tribal population to make arguments about regional particularity would necessitate new definitions of the Oriya community that would including the tribal element through recourse to the origin myths of the dominant Oriya Hindu deity Jaganath. Through the use of these myths the Oriya elite would eventually portray the tribal population as actors in the history of the formation of the mainstream Oriya community. Hence, due this presence of the tribal element within the Oriya population, Oriya community had to be defined as more that just a linguistic community. Rather, it was also a religious community held together by a common allegiance to the Jaganath Cult. Thus the category Oriya could never be a purely linguistic identity. It was always marked by an idea of religious brotherhood based on allegiance to the Jaganath cult.

There were two major consequences of Bhattacharya's argument and the accompanying debate about the roots of the Oriya language, on the development of Oriya cultural politics over the next few decades. The long-term result of Bhattacharya's argument was the foregrounding of what could be called the 'tribal specter' in Oriya cultural politics. Colonial philology in the nineteenth century had established both the tribal provenance of the north Indian vernaculars and –by the very nature of their retrograde study of languages in India which traced particular languages spoken by modern communities to their earliest antecedents—the dominant mode of historicizing linguistic communities through the histories of the emergence of languages spoken by them. That is, histories of linguistic communities like the Oriya community came to be located in the complex history of the emergence of the Oriya language which was understood as a product of the interaction between aboriginal tribes and the invading Aryans in the first millennium AD. Hence the ancient history of the Oriya speaking community became the history of the Oriya language and the speakers of the antecedents of ancient Oriya.

Kantichandra Bhattacharya brought this mode of historicizing the Oriya community to the attention of the Oriya public sphere by basing his argument on this primal linguistic history of the interaction of aboriginal speech with Aryan Prakrit. The Oriya vernacular press had to argue for the constitutive role played by aboriginal languages in the emergence of the Oriya language in order to counter Bhattacharya's claims about the derivative nature of Oriya, which was based on an understanding that these tribal influences were merely superficial impurities that made Oriya appear

different from Bengali. While this avowal of tribal influence re-enforced the uniqueness

of Oriya culture, it also laid the history of Orissa open to comments like that made by

W.W. Hunter in his *History of Orissa* where he described Orissa as a primal, uncivilized

land which still has evidence of primevial life extinct elsewhere. [85] This led to the

persistent Oriya dilemma centered on how to represent the tribal legacy in the Oriya

social, religious and cultural life. The 'tribal specter' haunted both the descriptions of

Orissa history and the definitions of the Oriya community. Interestingly, this very anxiety

produced the dominant understanding of the Oriya community as a community of equals

based on a religious affinity to the Hindu deity Jaganath who was said to have roots in

tribal religious practices. In the next chapter I will trace this relationship between racial

and linguistic history, demarcation of a historical geography of Orissa and use of

religious myths in the making of a modern Oriya history.

The more immediate consequence of Bhattacharya's text was the re-enforcement

of the prevailing Oriya anxiety about the lack of appropriate Oriya texts that could be

used as school text books. Bhattacharya's text argued that none of the existing literature

in Oriya—whether it was school text book or folk tales—was unique to Orissa and

uniquely Oriya. Whether or not his claims were true, the publication of his text drew

media attention to the fact that there was very little modern Oriya literature being

produced in Orissa at that time. In the subsequent period that anxiety about the lack of

text which emerged from the seemingly innocuous question of text books impelled of the

most productive, contested and influential debates on Oriya literature.

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[85] A detailed account of Hunter's argument will appear in the next chapter which deals with the question of
historical memory and community building in Orissa.

Fashioning Readers: The emergence of literary criticism in Orissa and the rise of populist literary production in Orissa 1890-1900

> Owing to the early decay of Sanskrit learning in Orissa, the religious ritual of the Brahmans, which in Bengal and Upper India is almost exclusively in Sanskrit, has here been used for ages in the language of the people. Concurrently with this usage there sprung a considerable body of such literature as is comprised in translations and abstracts from the Puranas and other similar works, written upon palm leaves; and in this kind of literature it is probable that Uriya is a richer language than Bengali. Its riches are, however exclusively confined , I believe to, this particular vein, and however interesting and even valuable in some respects, they are absolutely worthless for all educational purposes, and will certainly not assist our efforts to promote the advance of modern civilization.

Director of Public Instruction of the Bengal Presidency 1969[86]

The director's doubts about the appropriateness of existing traditional Oriya literature for modern educational purposes resonated with the anxieties of the Oriya elite about the lack of literature that would be appropriate for use as school textbooks. The initial development of modern Oriya literature in the nineteenth and twentieth century has its roots in this anxiety. This section illustrates how governmental skepticism about the ability of existing Oriya literature to serve as school textbooks and the concomitant Oriya elite anxiety about the lack of 'useful' Oriya texts led to debates among the Oriya elite

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[86] Bengal . Dept. of Public, "General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency." 62

about the *merits* of traditional Oriya literature. It is out of these debates, commonly called *sahitya charcha* (discussions of literature), that questions about the ideals of modern Oriya literature emerged as the focus of public discussions on literature shifted from criterions of *usefulness/utility* to literary *merit* based on modern standards of literary criticism.

I argue that these discussions eventually pose the usefulness of literature as the primary standard for judging the literary merit of modern Oriya literature. This privileging of usefulness of literature was enacted in debates about the function of literature—Is literature supposed to educate its readers or is it supposed to entertain them? This opposition of education versus entertainment was enacted in a rather acrimonious debate on the literary merit of early modern Oriya texts, particularly on the works of Upendra Bhanja(c.1670- c.1740)[87]. Eventually, the question of the function of literature was taken up by Viswanath Kar, the founding editor of the most important Oriya literary journal of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—*Utkal Sahitya* (1897-1942), in his writings on literary criticism. This section is about how education came to be the central function of modern Oriya literature as the need to imagine a bounded Oriya community emerged as the central problematic of literary criticism of the period.

Through a reading of essays on sahitya charcha written by Viswanath Kar I will illustrate how concerns about literary production in general, a self-conscious effort to modernize Oriya literature and the move to emphasize the social role of literature culminated in a further deepening of the conflation of language and community in Orissa.

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[87] Opinions differ on his actual date of birth and death.

That is, Viswanath Kar's work reveals how these concerns were translated into calls for action in the interest of the mother-tongue. These calls for action (read-participation in the production of literature in Oriya) were based on an understanding that advancement in literature was integrally linked with the social, cultural and civilizational advancement of the community in general. Ultimately, the growing concerns about the social role of literature led to the establishment of the Utkal Sahitya Samaj (Oriya Literary Association) in 1897 which for the next forty years served as a site for literary production of a wide variety of genres.

After the government decision of 1869 to retain Oriya in schools, the government and the Oriya elite turned their attention to fashioning readers in Oriya for school instruction. As mentioned in the first section, the memo from the Lieutenant Governor recommended the establishment of a School Book Committee to manage the production of text books in Orissa. The committee was set up in 1869 and was funded by both the colonial government as well as the Raja of Dhenkanal, a princely state in Orissa.[88] The funds were used to finance publication of new texts, as royalty to authors of text-books and as prize money to encourage greater production of school text books. One of the most notable products of this move was the publication of Pyarimohan Acharya's Odisara Itihas (History of Orissa) in 1878, the first history of Orissa written by an Oriya. Over the next few years the number of Oriya textbooks grew as new textbooks were written by prominent participants of the pro-Oriya agitation of the 1860s; Biswanath Kara, the editor of *Utkal Dipika* wrote a two volume work on geography titled *Bhugoltattva* and other

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[88] Mentioned in an article in *Utkal Dipika (20-7-1869)* quoted in Patnaik, *Sambadapatraru Odisara Katha*. P 545. Also for greater detail about the establishment of the committee and its funding see Mohanty, "British Language Policy in Nineteenth Century India and the Oriya Language Movement."

major writers of the period such as Madhusudan Rao, Radhanath Ray and Fakir Mohan Senapathi also wrote a number of school textbooks.[89] Interestingly, these three men were later named the makers of modern Oriya literature in Oriya literary canon.[90] This canonization of the early oriya textbook writers points to a connection between efforts to produce Oriya text books in the late nineteenth century and the development of new Oriya literature of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

The connection was not merely based on the pioneering contribution of the earliest writers of Oriya texts, rather the very process of producing Oriya text books involved an anxious reappraisal of traditional Oriya literary canon which focused on rethinking the practical parameters of ascertaining the value of literary texts. That is, as the Oriya elite investigated the suitability of existing Oriya literature for use as school textbooks, the emergence of the emphasis of the investigation shifted from the utility of traditional Oriya literature to the actual literary merit of these texts. It is from this process of rethinking, that new ideas about literature and language emerged in the late nineteenth century which in turn informed the subsequent production of Oriya literature. At the root of this reappraisal was the question of whether older Oriya texts could be used as school textbooks. Contemporary Oriya press repeatedly argued that the traditional poetry written by 17th and 18th century poets such as Dinakrishna, Upendra Bhanja and Brajanath Badajena should be reprinted and used as school text books. In an article published in 1868 in *Utkal Dipika* the author argued that the recuperation and reprinting

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[89] For details see Mohanty, "British Language Policy in Nineteenth Century India and the Oriya Language Movement."

[90] This view is a dominant one in the history of Oriya literature. Even the official history of Oriya literature sponsored by the Sahitya Academy names these three as the makers of modern oriya literature. See Mayadhar Mansinha, *History of Oriya Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1962).

of older Oriya literature should have greater priority than the writing of new texts.[91] In this instance the author was analyzing the merits of a new book of poems that was written in emulation of the literary style used in early modern Oriya literature. The author felt that such books should be used in schools to prepare the students for further study in ancient Oriya literature. In keeping with this enthusiasm for older literature, the Odiya Talapatra Sahitya Udharana Compani (Company for the retrieval of Oriya literature preserved in palm leaf manuscripts) was set up to reprint and distribute old Oriya texts in 1871.[92]

Even as such arguments favoring the use of early modern texts were being floated there was a growing concern that these texts may not be appropriate for school children. The matter became the focus of public debate when the issue was raised at the 1878 meeting of the Utkal Sabha, an organization that sprung from the Utkal Bhashauddipani Sabha mentioned earlier. The keynote speaker at the Sabha, Pyarimohan Acharya, pointed out " there are no assets in Oriya language from the ancient age that can be useful to us in our efforts to advance the Oriya language".[93] Elsewhere, Acharya noted in his 1873 article "Ganjam Sambalpur O Utkal Pustak" published in *Utkal Putra* that

> We have no expectations from the ancient Oriya texts. The glitter of Upendra, the
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> antics of Dinakrushna and the love-play of Abhimanyu are not appropriate to our

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[91] See "Bhrama Bhanjana", Utkal Dipika (13-2-1868) in Patnaik, *Sambadapatraru Odisara Katha*.p529-530.
[92] An article in the Utkal Dipika (16-5-1871) mentions the establishment of this institution in Balasore under the guidance of John Beames. See Ibid. p 606
[93] Purnachandra Mishra, ed., *Utkala Dipikare Bhanja Prasanga* (Berhampur: Royal Book House, 1996). 6

interests. Therefore, we are ashamed of presenting such obscene texts as school textbooks into the hands of innocent little boys.[94]

Acharya's opinion was especially crucial because he was in the process of establishing a residential school for boys in Cuttack. Therefore, his opinion about the suitability of these texts for school children directly influenced instruction in the school and stood out as an example to the textbooks commission in Cuttack. The 1878 speech at Utkal Sabha drew these apprehensions into the pubic debate as many of the attendees at the Sabha opposed Acharya's critique of ancient Oriya literature.

Thus began the debate about the merits of Upendra Bhanja's literary legacy which continued to be a bone of contention till as late as the 1920s when B.C.Majumdar, a Bengali intellectual from Calcutta, wrote a scathing critique of Bhanja's work in his three volume *Typical Selections from Oriya literature*. As a result of Majumdar's critique Patna University removed Bhanja's texts from its curriculum. This event renewed the debate in the late nineteen twenties as intellectuals like Brajasundar Das, the editor of the Oriya nationalist journal *Mukura,* dubbed Majumdar's critique as an attack on the national pride of the Oriya people.

Even though the nineteenth century debate focused on the writings of Upendra Bhanja alone, the critique of Bhanja had much more than just his work and legacy at stake. This was because of the position that Upendra Bhanja occupied in the Oriya literary canon. A scion of the royal family of the princely state of Ghumsar, Bhanja marked a significant moment of departure in the history of pre-modern Oriya literature.

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[94] Pyarimohan Acharjya"Ganjam, Sambalpur O Utkal Pustak" (16-7-1873) in Patnaik, *Sambadapatraru Odisara Katha*. 677-680

His work deviated from an earlier emphasis on literature geared towards religious instruction and focused on more secular matters of romance and beauty. With Bhanja's work began the *Riti Yuga* in Oriya literature. Poets who came after Bhanja were deeply influenced by his style. Hence the *riti yuga* was also called the Bhanja Yuga. Therefore, by attacking the literary legacy of Upendra Bhanja, the nineteenth century critics were implicitly questioning the quality of most of the secular literature produced in pre-modern Orissa.

The debate on Bhanja became especially acrimonious in the late nineteenth century with the publication of two Oriya literary journals *Utkal Prabha* and *Utkal Madhupa* in 1878 and 1891 respectively. Articles published in both these journals challenged the literary merit of Bhanja's poems, some going so far as to claim that his writing did not qualify as literature. For instance, in a 1878 article in the *Utkal Madhupa* analyzing Bhanja's epic *Labanyabati,* the author argued that such literature "was not actual poetry"[95]. This theme was further elaborated by B.C.Majumdar in his 1891 article titled "Sahitya Charcha" in *Utkal Prabha* where he concluded his critique of Bhanja'a work by arguing that " In this matter one can conclude that just because a text is old it is not required of us to be fond of it." Rather he argued that poetry should deserve affective attachment from its readers by performing critical explicatory functions. He said

> In that which has new-ness of description; that is, it has a clear description of the complexity of human nature, an efflorescence of profound joy as well as despair and an inviting explication of psychology,only that deserves to be called poetry. The unnecessary effort to describe the beauty of a beautiful woman through

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[95] Mishra, ed., *Utkala Dipikare Bhanja Prasanga*. P 6

sentences filled with words like sakachanchunasi, Indibaranayan or Maralagamana is simply disingenuous.[96]

Implicit in Majumdar's description of actual poetry and his charge against Bhanja that he was deceiving his readers-- is the question- "What does Bhanja's poetry do?" For Majumdar, the poet had to present to his reader the complex mechanisms of human interiority through explanations of psychology and the presentation of the deepest human emotions of joy and despair. In his reading, Bhanja merely described the outward beauty of a woman by using uncommon and difficult words.[97] He held that, by focusing on superficial things, Bhanja was simply providing an entertaining smoke-screen for his readers to enjoy. Therefore it appears that fundamental to Majumdar's critique is the understanding that poetry should perform a function that goes beyond mere entertainment.

Critiques of this kind divided the Oriya intelligentsia into two clearly defined camps; those who thought Bhanja's poetry was not actual poetry due to its overwhelming emphasis on sensual matters and those who argued that the sensual underpinnings of Bhanja's poems was a product of his own contemporary context and that the strength of his poetry lay in the abiding, popular quality of his lyrics. It should be noted that Oriya historical pride was at stake in this debate, especially for the second group. The debate moved from occasionally published literary journals to weekly newspapers after Ramnarayan Rai wrote a detailed serialized critique of the two most well known of

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[96] Ibid. p 10
[97] See a further account of his argument about the drawbacks of the uneconomical verbosity of Bhanja's poetry in Ibid. p10

Bhanja's poems, *Labanyabati* and *Kotibramhandasundari.* The articles published in

Utkal Prabha in 1891 attempted to judge the merit of these poems based on standards of

rhyming, rhetoric, sentiment, taste, imagination, poetics and sentence structure. Based on

these criteria Rai found Bhanja's poems to be difficult to understand, lyrically harsh,

grammatically incorrect and obscene.[98]

     As a response to Majumdar and Rai, an article published under a pseudonym in

the Utkal Dipika said of Bhanja and other poets like him,

> In their writing there is hidden an eternal, indescribable, wonderful and
>
> unparelelled captivating force and it is precisely this force that attracts the human
>
> heart like a glittering jewel. It is in them that there is the actual essence of poetry
>
> or even a tiny speck of this essence; they are actual poets.[99]

At issue in this response is a disagreement about the nature of true poetry. While

Majumdar asserts that poetry should have explicatory function, our author of the article

here bases his claims about the nature of actual poetry in something far more nebulous, in

its ability to captivate the human heart. To reiterate a point already made, this

disagreement in based on a broader disparity in the way that Majumdar and this defender

of Bhanja see the function of poetry. To the article writer's claim that true poetry is

characterized by an ability to eternally enthrall the reader, Majumdar would respond by

saying that this is a disingenuous move on the part of the poet to deceive his readers. In

the words of Majumdar quoted above, he used the word *bidambana* to describe such

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[98] Ibid. p 11
[99] Hitabadi (Pseudonym), "Recieved Letter," *Utkal Dipika*, 28-5-1891 1891. reprinted in Mishra, ed.,
Utkala Dipikare Bhanja Prasanga. P 14-20

poetry. Literally the word means 'to fail to reveal the truth' , in common usage it is used to denote deception. If the function of poetry was to reveal some hidden human truths then Bhanja's poems that have captivated common people over the centuries fail in their primary function. Two very different notion of literature and its function in human life emerge here. It is this fundamental disagreement that spawned the debate on Bhanja and informed later discussions of literary production.

In the subsequent years the debate on Bhanja came to dominate the Oriya public sphere in Cuttack. The pro- Bhanja group published numerous articles and received letters in the Oriya weekly *Utkal Dipika* and the anti-Bhanja camp published their opinions in another Oriya weekly newspaper *Sambalpur Hiteisini.* Eventually, as the sheer volume of the writing on the debate came to overwhelm the two newspapers two separate journals were floated to carry on the debate. Utkal Dipika sponsored a new journal *Indradhanu* and Sambalpur Hiteisini supported the publication of *Bijuli.* Indradhanu was published for almost four years from 1893 to 1897 and carried articles from a steady group of writers who wrote under various pseudonyms. Bijuli became defunct in two short years. However, in this short period many essential questions about the nature and function of literature were raised in these journals.

Foremost among them was the question of reading literature in its own historical context. As the critics of Bhanja attacked ancient Oriya Kavyas on the grounds that they did not serve any social purpose in the present day, the defenders of Bhanja called for

greater attention to the ethics of reading and judging the value of literature with its own historical context in mind. [100]

This new emphasis on the timeliness of literature had another important repercussion in the way literature as a category came to be imagined in the subsequent period. As has been discussed, the debate had been about whether the peculiarities of Bhanja's literature and early modern Oriya literature in general could be judged based on present day standards and requirements. However, this emphasis on timeliness of literature gave rise to a question that was to justify, direct and regulate the production of Oriya literature over the next three decades—what sort of literature would serve the interests of the Oriya community in the present day?

Thinking literature as a means for the development of Oriya community marks another important transformation in the understanding of language in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Oriya language and literature in this formulation are more that merely objects of affect that bind the community through an emotional allegiance to a mother-tongue. By distancing themselves from the early modern literature that could have served as nostalgic reminders of a shared history, the Oriya elite was attempting to reconfigure the ways in which the Oriya community and individual allegiance to the community could be imagined. Rather than placing the rationale for allegiance in the past they were hoping to produce a new allegiance by using literature as an educational tool. Through the fashioning of a functional literature, language becomes a developmental tool rather than simply a icon to bind the Oriya community together.

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[100] For details see essays in Sudershan Acharya ed., "Indradhanu: Unabinsa Satabdira Eka Bismruta Patrika," (Berhampur: Berhampur Biswabidyalaya, 1991).

Biswanath Kara, a figure who was to become one of the most important influences on the development of Oriya literature in his capacity as the editor of *Utkal Sahitya*— the premier Oriya language literary journal of the early twentieth century— wrote a series of essays highlighting the question of timeliness of literature in Orissa. In these essays, published in a collection titled *Vividha Prabandha* is 1896, Kara expounded upon the connections literature and life, community, civilization and development. Written just prior to the launch of the *Utkal Sahitya* (Oriya literature) a Oriya language literary journal edited by Kara himself and published by the Utkal Sahitya Samaj (Oriya literary Association), these essays were frankly didactic and programmatic. The essays were aimed at the literate Oriya population and called for an active program of reading, discussion and production of literature in Orissa. Kara's views were not only influential in the Oriya public debates about literature but came to represent the dominant attitude towards literature production for the next three decades. In effect these essays can be read as a manifesto for the future development of Oriya literature. Even though there is little evidence about the actual influence of the 1896 text, it laid out Viswanath Kara's views of tradition, modernity and socio-cultural role of Oriya literature. As Kara became the most influential editor of Oriya literature of the early twentieth century, these views on literature came to dominate and direct Oriya literary production over the next three decades.[101]

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[101] It is only in the early 1920s, thirty years after this text was printed that new programs for directing future literary production emerged with the rise of the Sabuja group. Hence, it can be safely said that Kara's manifesto on literature remained the most influential directive on literary production for the first thirty years of the concerted effort to produce a new literary tradition for Orissa.

Written in the midst of the canon debate which was focused on both the utility and merit of traditional Oriya literature, Kara's essays addressed the problem of tradition in literature. Effectively, the argument between the two sides of the canon debate of the 1890s was based on a disagreement about how to treat the legacy of early modern Oriya texts. Those who critiqued texts written by early modern poets like Upendra Bhanja, Dinakrushna and Brajanath Badajena, found them deficient by modern literary standards. The defenders of these older Oriya texts argued that despite their irrelevance to modern Oriya social and cultural life they should be valued as artifacts of their own time and their merit judged by the recourse to standards prevalent in their own epoch. At issue here was the question of tradition. Since the 1860s—when the efforts to remove Oriya as a language of instruction from the schools of the Orissa division were put in motion—the Oriya intelligentsia has been consistently arguing that Oriya was a independent literary language worthy of State patronage and protection because it had a well established literary tradition of unquestionable merit. In this context, critiques of early modern Oriya literature emerging from within the ranks of the Oriya intelligentsia threatened the very basis of their negotiations with the colonial state for further support and patronage. Hence, at the turn of the century the Oriya intelligentsia was faced with a janus faced task. While they were impelled to establish the antiquity and literary sophistication of the Oriya language, they had to take into account the emerging cultural self-critique about the merits and relevance of existing Oriya texts in modern times.

This conundrum born out of the need simultaneously to celebrate the Oriya literary past and to present Oriya literature as literature proper to modern socio-cultural

needs of the Oriya people informed Kara's programmatic definition of literature. In the essay titled "Sahitya O Jibana" (Literature and Life) published in *Vividha Prabandha* Kara based his suggestions for a possible approach to Oriya literary tradition on an argument about the fundamental bond between literature and life. Through this discussion of literature and life, Kara proposed two types of standards to judge the merits of existing Oriya literature—one was based on the idea of timeless literature that had an appeal that would go beyond the context of its initial production and the other based on the ability of literature to reflect and aid human development in its particular temporal context.

Kara's proposals for standards that could be used to judge Oriya literature were founded on his understanding of the link between life and literature which was based on a concurrent development of life and literature as man progresses on the numerous registers of human development—love, friendship, mercy, forgiveness, faith, worship, etc. He called such literature *Jibanta Sahitya* (living literature).Kara's 'living literature' should not be confused with an argument for literary realism. Rather, in his view, literature was life-like because it represented the aspirations and development of human life.

Eventually, Kara connected literature with civilization through a discussion of literature's ability to portray the development of life. That is, he argued, if literature represented the progress of life then over a longer trajectory of time, it would reflect the growth of civilization. Thus, he noted, that the most civilized nations of the world have the most advanced literary traditions. This portrayal of literature as a marker of a community's degree of advancement towards civilization became –both for Kara as well as other literary critics—one of the most enduring justifications for increased Oriya

literary production.[102] However, implicit in this argument about literature as a marker of civilization was the idea of stages of development. Hence, for Kara, the 'value' of literature could be judged by its ability to reflect the development of man both at the broad civilization level in the *longue duree* as well as in a particular temporally localized stage of development.

In this context of civilization-al development, Kara introduced the idea of timeless literature. He contended that if literature honestly reflected life then it could remain relevant and appreciable in all ages. To illustrate his claim he used the example of the Vedas which betray the "symptoms of life, (from them) bursts forth simple hopes of simple souls" Kara's understanding of literature was based on his understanding of life to be a progressive realization of human needs driven towards the attainment on a singular goal—the achievement of absolute truth, love and virtue. Literature, to remain timeless, relevant and valuable, had to mimic this trajectory.

This led to his secondary standard for judging the contemporary merits of literature. He argued that if literature was not governed by the pursuit of this ultimate goal of life, then the imagination that produced this literature becomes distorted. Kara held that it is this distortion that produces literature of the kind produced by Bhanja. Such literature, Kara posed, could only embarrass the modern Oriya reading public. In an oblique reference to early modern literature, Kara noted,

In holistic literature the gradual development of truth, love and virtue is seen.

That literature is known as true literature which is constructed through the

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[102] A series of articles appeared on the same theme in two major Oriya journals *Utkal Sahitya* and *Mukura.* For instance seeL. E. B. Cobden-Ramsay, *Feudatory States of Orissa*, 1st 1910 ed. (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1982).

imitation of these three. Those who keep this objective in sight as they take up the task of creating literature: they are the real servants of literature and only they have the true interests of human society at heart. If it diverts from this objective then human imagination becomes distorted and the literature produced by such an imagination will be naturally limited and will result in the decay of human life rather than its development. Life is not sport— its objective is not to be controlled by the play of human desires or entertainment. Therefore, what is the value of literature that is unable to reflect any uplifting thought other than the description of human desire for entertainment? What good comes of such literature?[103]

By denouncing literature that was primarily aimed at human enjoyment, Kara privileged a functional understanding of literature. True literature, for Kara, should perpetuate the interests of human society and not simply entertain people. It is evident here that the wider shift of discussion from the utility to the merits of literature in public discourse about Oriya literature had taken a very interesting turn in Biswanath Kara's essays. For Kara the merit of literature lay in its utility for the development of human society. Hence, in the subsequent period, utility and merit in literature came to be conflated in discussions about the production of Oriya literature.[104]

Kara ended his essay on life and literature by discussing the problem of tradition in Oriya literature. In his statement about traditional Oriya literature, Kara attempted to balance the need to instill pride in the historical legacy of the Oriya community in the

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[103] Archana Naik ed., *Nirbachita Rachanabali: Biswanath Kara* (Bhubaneswar: Sahitya Academy, 1999). 21
[104] Such discussions recur in the Presidential speaches at the annual meetings of the Utkal Sahitya Samaj.

form of early modern texts with a program for the achievement of Oriya aspirations for the further integration and development of the Oriya community:

Oriya language is blessed with ancient literature. If we look at ancient Oriya literature then we will find many causes for pride. However, we will be disappointed if we investigate how far ancient Oriya literature approximates to our present standards. Ancient Oriya literature is much below the present standards, in this there is no doubt. This observation does not imply that we are doing any disrespect to this older literature or its creators. We revere those who have toiled to give life to our language. To do disrespect to them is an act of extreme ungratefulness. However, in the interest of truth we have to say that such literature does not represent the most important objectives of human life and it is not well rounded literature. The creators of ancient Oriya literature are not entirely at fault. Their milieu and our milieu are not the same. They (atleast most of them) have not been able to survive the ravages of time. At present, we are inspired by new mantra of a new age—we have before us new ideals. At such a time it will not do to look back at the land of the past: we have to follow our ideals. Our present duty is to work towards the creation of a well rounded literature. If we do not follow this ideal then there is no doubt that we will certainly remain at a lower stage in the development of community life. Ignoring the present, those who remain looking at the past instead of looking ahead, those who merely proclaim their pride in our ancient legacy, they are simply living in a fools' paradise. They are distanced from actual life. Yes, we accept that our

ancient literature is a matter of great pride, but how has that done any good for

us? They have worked according to their powers and gone. What have we done?

To what extent have our energies been expended to develop our mother-

tongue?[105]

Here, Kara was trying to find a middle path between the two sides that locked

horns during the canon debate of the 1890s. While he conceded to the critics of the

'ancient' (read early modern) literature who alleged that such literature did not live up to

present standards of literary analysis, he also sided with the defenders of traditional Oriya

literature by arguing that the Oriyas owe the early authors a debt of gratitude. It should be

noted that in doing so Kara did not resolve the question of tradition in this essay. That is,

he made no efforts to recuperate the legacy of early modern Oriya texts by proposing a

distinct set of standards to judge the merits of older Oriya texts. In Kara's opinion such

literature could only represent the historical literacy of the Oriya language and he

asserted that modern Oriya literature had to make a complete break with the literary

tradition of the early modern period. Hence, even though he emphasized the need to

acknowledge the contribution of the early modern period to the development of Oriya

language and literature, he effectively erased their legacy in the future development of

Oriya literature. Through this erasure Kara deferred the problem of dealing with the

legacy of older Oriya texts by calling for a shift in the focus of attention from traditional

literature to the formulation of a new literary tradition that was informed by 'new

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[105]ed., *Nirbachita Rachanabali: Biswanath Kara*. 22-23

ideals'.[106] At stake in this shift was the crucial effort to elevate the Oriya community on to a higher "stage in the development of community life." By laying out the stakes of this shift in focus, Kara established the criteria to judge the *utility*—hence *merit*—of Oriya literature as its ability to further the integration, education and development of the Oriya community.

Concomitant with this proposal for a more socio-culturally productive literature were Kara's arguments about literary discussions and the role of the literary critic. The new Oriya literature, centered on community, called for by Kara was founded on his notion of an economy of literary production involving the writer, the critic and the reader or the audience. In two essays published in the *Bibidha Prabandha* titled "Sahitya charcha" (Literary discussion) and "Sahitya O Samalochana" (Literature and Criticism) respectively, Kara expounded on the need for and scope of literary discussion as well as the function of the critic as a moderator in the economy of ideas and texts between the author and his readers.

In "Sahitya Charcha" Kara expounded on the paucity of Oriya literature when he noted   that " the desire to work for the advancement of their mother-tongue has arisen in the minds of many. However, they do not have the requisite skills or the requisite discipline."[107] The lack of school textbooks in Oriya, Kara argued in this essay, further illustrated the poverty of Oriya literature. For Kara, this paucity of Oriya texts was not mitigated by the presence of older literature. He illustrated his argument that older texts

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[106] As the question of tradition in Oriya literature was not resolved, the discussion on the merits of older literature in Oriya remained a matter of debate and anxiety among the Oriya literati till as late as the 1920s when Patna University decided to remove the works of Upendra Bhanja from the curriculum

[107] Archana Naik, ed., *Nirbachita Rachanabali: Biswanath Kara* (Bhubaneswar: Sahitya Academy, 1999).26

did not serve the Oriya community with a discussion of Upendra Bhanja's writing where he argued that literature that is not true to life could not contribute to the development of the community. He asked in a bluster, "How many writers are aware of the fact that the chief task of the writer is the education of the people?"

In order to enrich Oriya literature and remedy the problems with contemporary efforts at literary production, Kara contended that a definite program for the augmentation of modern Oriya literature had to be adopted. Kara based his new program for literary production on a three pronged approach involving reading of good literature, open discussion of texts and the exercise of critical thought. These three exercises, Kara argued, would help inspire a discerning attitude towards literature and intellectual acumen in general. It appears that through this program Kara was calling for the enhancement of critical ability to spot and emulate good literature. It should be noted here that this program was based on a public engagement with literature that would ideally involve most members of the Oriya intelligentsia.

In his essay titled "Sahitya O Samalochana" (Literature and Criticism) Kara extended the field for this community activism for the enhancement of Oriya literature by introducing and centering the reader in the economy of textual production. In this essay about the function of literary criticism, Kara discussed the rights of the reader, duties of the authors and the function of the critic.

It is true, literary criticism is useful for both the writer as well as the reader. Whether a particular piece of literature is good enough to occupy a permanent place in society, literary criticism can show it by examining every nook and

corner of the literary piece. Literary criticism reveals the value of literature to readers. Writers have freedom; they can freely express their opinion. However, just because they have written something does not mean that the people have to accept it meekly. If it is based on misinformation or is harmful, then the individual has the right to reveal that. … All writers should remember that—just as they have freedom (of expression), so too do others have freedom. There is one writer, there are many readers. Not everyone's vision is equally sharp, not everyone has finely tuned taste; therefore, not everybody is capable of good literary criticism. A civic literary critic performs this function as a representative of the people…..Whatever it may be, the chief task of literary criticism is to apprise the writer of his responsibilities.[108]

By tempering artistic freedom with responsibility, Kara effectively staged the reader as a consumer who was central to the process of literary production as his needs directed the efforts of authors. The critic in this economy was the representative of the readers and was bound to regulate literary production by critically engaging with the author's work and demanding that he heed the needs of the reader. This formulation of the literary world has three important implications. First, it gave the critic almost unlimited power to police and regulate future Oriya literature. Second, by centering the reader, Kara finally established the importance of the utility of literature as being the chief criterion for good literature. Finally, by centering the reader and shifting the focus of literature from entertainment to education, Kara mitigated the elite-ness of this move

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[108]Ibid. Kara 34

towards greater production of Oriya literature and made it a much more populist activity involving the author, the critic and the reader.

In 1897, one year after the publication of these essays, Kara's ideas about the nature of good literature and about the function of literary criticism in the production of such good literature bore further textual fruit. The Utkal Sahitya Samaj (Association of Oriya literature) was established a year after Kara published his essays in 1897. In the same year the Oriya literary journal *Utkal Sahitya* (Oriya literature) was instituted under the editor ship of Kara. Both the Samaj and the Journal were informed by Kara's ideas about literature. The journal was explicitly defined as forum for the discussion of how literature that would aid the development of the Oriya community could be produced. In the second annual meeting of the Utkal Sahitya Samaj, Biswanath Kara spoke at length about the role of literature in the life of the community in his speech titled " Jatiya Jibanare Sahityara Stana*"* (The place of literature in the life of the community). Kara explained what was at stakes in the creation of a Oriya 'literature of the community' (Jatiya Sahitya) for the constitution of the Oriya as well as pan Indian community.

> It should always be remembered that literature of the community is a method of creation of community life. I have said it before, at present the objective of all of India is to build a mega-community and because of it the creation of provincial literature is considered meaning-less and detrimental. However, it is important to think about one thing properly. It is not wise to throw away what we have and build community life based on artifacts produced somewhere else. In different places, among small communities, those thoughts that have been expressed and

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collected can never be overlooked. The community's self-hood easily touches that community's innermost heart and its lowest rungs. Also the way various provincial literatures in India are being developed, common similarities between these literatures are gradually increasing—it is no longer difficult for various communities to understand each other.[109]

It is evident that for Kara literary production was a populist activity aimed at constituting community life. As he understood good literature to be texts that reflect human life in its various faces, this statement indicates that Kara was conscious of the power that such literature could have in uniting and inspiring its readers. However, Kara tempered this populism of literature with the understanding that the Oriya literature and its community building project was part of something wider. His justification of this project points to the broader political atmosphere in India. The emphasis on unity and commonality of expression at the national level continued to make it necessary for leaders like Biswanath Kara to negotiate the demands of Pan-Indian nationalism even as they argued for using Oriya cultural artifacts to cultivate a sense of community in Orissa.[110] That is, even it is earliest moment of conceptualization, the region had to think itself as part of the broader nation. However, it should be noted that this acknowledgement of the metonymic relationship between the region and the nation was not based on a disavowal of regional particularity, because to do so would be impractical. As can be inferred from Kara's statement, only the literature written in the language of

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[109] Ibid.37
[110] At this point the Indian national Congress used English in it communication to fecilitate converstations across regional boundaries.

the people could possibly unite them. This assertion would eventually determine the

Indian National Congress's attitude towards linguistic diversity in India when Gandhi in

1931 would uphold both the need to use the vernacular and to use Hindi as a

cosmopolitan means of communication.[111]

Furthermore, Kara's comment about the power of vernacular literature to move

people reveals a new element in the understanding of language in Orissa. Infact the

debate of the 1890s about literature, tradition and community hinged on this new

element. That is, as the functional and political qualities of literature came to be fore-

grounded in the debate, it became apparent that regional languages that spawned such

literature were something more than just objects of affect or mother tongues. Vernacular

languages housed (through an ever growing body of literature) and enabled (through

discussion and propagation of literature) a continuous articulation of shared everyday life

of the people who spoke such languages. Kara's reference to the 'community's self-hood'

that 'easily touches that community's innermost heart and its lowest rungs' is a case in

point. Here language, through literature written in it, expresses the community's self-

hood. And this expression is unprecedented in its reach, to both the inner life of the

speakers of the language as well as the lowest classes among these speakers. The

transformation of language as a marker and enabler of community is complete. It is this

amazing ability of language, which by reflecting history of shared daily life of its

speakers through literature could also produce new possibilities of organizing its speakers

for political ends. This ability was not only central to the creation of linguistic identity

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[111] Mahatma Gandhi, *Thoughts on National Language* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Pub. House, 1956).

politics in the first place but also ensures that All-India nationalism could not ignore the potency of the allure of vernacular languages for the people of India.

Effectively in this section I have attempted to complicate the argument of the first section—that in the nineteenth century the Colonial Government's understanding of language was transformed. The colonial government realized that language was something more that an instrumental means of communication; it was a mother-tongue that could not be replaced by another more developed language. This section adds a new layer to this argument by illustrating that Oriya as a mother-tongue had to make a civilizational claim. This civilizational claim is articulated through the emphasis on education. Hence this nineteenth century debate on literature reveals that language in Orissa was more that just a fetish used to organize people. Rather, it performed a larger function in the life of the Oriya people— through literature language enables a modern imagining of the Oriya community. It is this far reaching functional presence of language in the lives of the Oriya people that makes the acknowledgements of linguistic diversity impossible to avoid for the Indian National Congress.

Conclusion

These three moments in the early history of linguistic politics in Orissa reveal how the Oriya language came to represent three different but influential elements of Oriya community life. The 1860s debate about the removal of Oriya as a language of instruction in the schools of the Orissa division became an occasion for both the colonial state and the oriya speaking elite to acknowledge the role of language as an object of affect rather that simply an functional means of communication. The accompanying

97

debate about the relationship between Oriya and Bengali in the early 1870s triggered an eventually influential understanding that the history of community was integrally linked with the history of the Oriya language. This understanding determined future articulations of historical memory of the Oriya community based on the philological account of the emergence of the modern Oriya language. Finally, the 1890s debate about 'useful' literature and productive literary criticism centered the role of language in the project of community building. In doing so the debate staked the claim of language as something central to the success of popular politics as people like Biswanath Kara asserted that only literature written in the language of the people could reach the hearts of the people. This was because language housed the historical memory of the people. As a result of these three moments linguistic identity politics came to be the most dominant register of political activity in Orissa in the early twentieth century. This was the root of the regional movement for the amalgamation of all Oriya speaking people under a single administration.

Therefore, my argument in this chapter is threefold. I argue against colonial and Bengali nationalist readings of language that understand it as simply an instrumental means of communication. I argue that if it were so then the Oriya elite would not have opposed the replacement of Oriya with Bengali, a more developed and useful language. However, and this is the second register of my argument, unlike historians like Sumathi Ramaswamy, I would argue that language is more that simply an object of affect. [112]On a third register, I argue that for some of the key figures involved in the production of modern Oriya literature language had an educational and civilizational role. It is this

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[112] See Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue : Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891-1970.*

civilizational role of language makes languages like Oriya modern and sets it apart from

and in a transcendental relationship with its dialects. Thus the late nineteenth century

discussions on language and literature were not only avowing Oriya language as a

mother-tongue, they were also attempting to set it up an independent and modern

language.

Furthermore, these debates about language and literature generated questions and

anxieties that influenced the future definitions of Orissa as a historical, geographical and

political category. The conflation of the history of Oriya language with the racial history

of the Oriya speaking people implicit in philological research projects of the nineteenth

century produced the historiographical mode that would be applied to the early twentieth

century Oriya histories of the Oriya speaking people. Additionally, these debates on

language and literature formed the grounds for the subsequent demands for the

amalgamation of the Oriya speaking areas. Essential to this demand was the need to

define the proposed province as a pre-existing historico-geographical entity that had been

artificially divided by the contingencies of colonial expansion. Consequently, the leaders

of the movement coined the term Natural Orissa as opposed to the existing artificial

Orissa to denote the proposed province. The next chapter will trace the construction of

the category of Natural Orissa as a historico-geographical reality and the accompanying

project of defining the inhabitants of the areas to be included in Natural Orissa as

constituents of the Oriya community. Particularly at stake in this definition was the

inclusion of the large tribal population of the area named Natural Orissa based on an

understanding of the role played by their antecedents in the formation of the Oriya

language.

Chapter 2

Naturalizing Orissa: History and the Problem of the Tribal (1872-1931)

"…orthodox historians would limit themselves to telling only "what really happened" on the basis of what could be justified by appeal to the (official) "historical record". They would deal in proper language and tell proper stories about the proper actions of proper persons in the past, Thus, insofar as history would be called a science, it was a discipline of "propriety."

-Hayden White[113]

In the introduction to his influential history titled *Orissa: Or the Vicissitudes of an Indian Province under native and British Rule* published in 1872, W.W. Hunter introduced the subject of his study as an unprepossessing and unlikely candidate for a historical narrative.

This book endeavors to delineate the inner life of an Indian Province. It tries to bring home to the imagination and the understanding of Englishmen, a state of society and forms of human existence far removed from their own. The narrative is embellished by no splendid historical characters. Nor does it possess the interest which belongs to striking crimes; to the world's call-roll of heroes it will add not one name. The people whom it treats have fought no great battles for human liberty, nor have they succeeded in the more primary task of subduing the force of nature to the control of man. To them the world stands indebted for not a single discovery which augments the comforts or mitigates the calamities of life. Even in literature—the particular glory of the Indian race—they have won no

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[113] Hayden White, "Preface" in Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History : On the Poetics of Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994). x

conspicuous triumph. They have written no famous epic; they have struck out no separate school of philosophy; they have elaborated no new system of law.[114]

An important colonial official in charge of drafting the extensive Statistical Survey of India in the 1870s, Hunter wrote this history to introduce Orissa to his British audience.[115] This history became one of the most influential narratives of the Oriya past until the early twentieth century when an independent Oriya effort to write the history of Orissa was put in motion in cultural organizations such as Utkal Sahitya Samaj and the Prachi Samiti. Even then, as Oriya historians endeavored to produce Orissa as a place deserving of history, the influence of Hunter's condemnation of Orissa as a land of un-happening, continued to shape the writing of Oriya history. That is, Hunter's treatment of Orissa and his subsequent discussion of the primeval nature of the inhabitants of Orissa produced one of the most enduring anxieties of modern Oriya historiography—the anxiety about the presence of tribals in the projected province of Orissa.

The term 'tribal' was ascribed to certain communities in colonial India. A fundamentally colonial category, the term tribal came to be loaded with many values that were considered essential markers of 'tribal' people.[116] Principal among them was the idea of primitiveness and lack of civilization. Hence the tribal were conceived of as

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[114] N. K. Sahu et al., *A History of Orissa*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Calcutta,: Susil Gupta (India), 1956). 1. A more detailed discussion of Hunter's project will be appear in the next section.

[115] Written as part of his much larger work the *Annals of Rural Bengal,* this work according to Hunter was necessary to enable more economical and efficient governance of the province of Orissa. See William Wilson Hunter, *Orissa: Or the Vicissitudes of an Indian Province under Native and British Rule ... Being the Second and Third Volumes of the Annals of Rural Bengal.* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1872). 1-16

[116] Ajay Skaria traces the emergence of this category in the mid 19th century and argues that the term crystallized into its most prevelant meaning by the 1860s. See Ajay Skaria, "Shades of Wildness: Tribe, Caste and Gender in Western India," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 3 (1997).

people who were involved in primitive means of livelihood such as hunting and subsistence agriculture. However, their perceived primitiveness ran deeper than their way of life in the eyes of colonial officials. The tribals were conceived of as the progeny of the original inhabitants of India—they were the Indian aboriginals. As opposed to tribals the Indian upper castes were considered the descendants of Aryan invaders who were reputed to have migrated into India from elsewhere.[117] Colonial explanations of the relative isolation and concentration of the tribals in particular areas produced the idea of exclusive domains of tribal and non- tribal 'aryan' communities. While the tribals were understood as essentially primeval and uncivilized, the upper-caste Aryan Indians were considered the actual actors of ancient Indian history—the fallen children of the golden age of Indian culture.

In the areas that the Oriyas claimed as part of the proposed province of Orissa, the tribal population was sizable. Just the northern and southern part of the proposed province, excluding the western area, contained 2307144 tribals of various communities such as Khondh, Savara, Godaba, Poroja, Munda, Oraon, Kharia, Hos and Bhumij.[118] Most of these communities were not primarily Oriya speaking or Hindu. In fact, quite a few of the tribal communities spoke their own languages and the tribes were named after the language they spoke.

For early twentieth century Oriya historians, the tribal presence in the Oriya speaking areas posed a historiographical problem. The need to counter Hunter's aspersion that the ancient Oriyas lacked historical achievement required a progressive historical

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[117] For a discussion of the ascription of primitiveness to 'tribals' see Ibid.726-729
[118] "Memoranda to the Orissa Boundary Commission," in *Private papers* (Bhubaneswar: Orissa State Archives, 1931). Appendix B, "The problem of the aboriginal tracts"

narrative of the Oriya past which presented the present day Oriyas as most modern editions of a historically illustrious people. However, historians of Orissa were faced with a dilemma. One the one hand, the contemporaneous presence of the 'primeval' tribal in the early twentieth century threatened to disrupt this new Oriya historicism. On the other hand, it was essential for Oriya historians to incorporate the tribal into both the past and present of the Oriya community even as their presence put in question the emergent Oriya claims to a higher civilizational status based on an illustrious historical tradition. This was because the movement for the formation of a new province of Orissa through the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking areas required histories that not only illustrated to the colonial government a shared historical past for all such areas but also made a case for the incorporation of the tribal population (non-Oriya speakers) of these areas into the Oriya community. Therefore Oriya historians of the early twentieth century were challenged with a three pronged task: the need for a history that established Oriya civilizational and historical bona fides, that conclusively proved that the Oriya speaking areas belonged to a single historical past and that incorporated both the main stream Oriya population and the non-Oriya tribal population into a single historical community. This project, both cultural and geographical, faced its greatest challenge in the figure of the tribal. As he was neither considered historically civilized nor linguistically Oriya, the tribal became a sticking point in the histories of Orissa written in the early twentieth century. This chapter illustrates how the tribal as a historiographical problem was resolved in both histories of Orissa written in the early twentieth century and the regional

104

movement for the formation of the province of Orissa. In particular I contextualize this resolution in the broader movement for the formation of the province of Orissa

Theoretically, this problem of the tribal could have been resolved by what Johannes Fabian calls the "Denial of coeval-ness" where the tribal is simply seen as an anachronistic presence who could be dismissed as an exception. However, in Oriya historiography the tribal could not be so easily dismissed. The tribal population played a peculiar role in the constitution of the proposed province of Orissa. The demand for a separate province of Orissa required historical proof of the incorporation of areas where a majority of the population was tribal. Hence rather than viewing them as inconsequential temporal exceptions, the Oriya historians of this period had to provide a theory that would explain the relationship between the mainstream Oriya speaking population and the tribal population. Yet this relationship could not undermine the existing hierarchies within Oriya society. Therefore, the Oriya elite anxiety about the tribal was based on a paradox. While Orissa as geographical category could not be imagined without incorporating the tribal into the Oriya community, the imagination of the Oriya community could not include the tribal due to his perceived historical backwardness.

The question of the tribal was not simply an academic conundrum. In this period history writing was important to anyone involved in the Oriya regional political project— the amalgamation of all Oriya speaking tracts under a single administration. Essential to this project was a justificatory historical narrative that produced the 'place' Orissa as a long standing historical and geographical entity. This was especially challenging because a historical Orissa that would be contiguous with the boundaries of the desired province

of Orissa had never existed in ancient times. Natural Orissa, as the projected province

came to be called, had been four different kingdoms in the ancient times—Kalinga,

Utkala, Odra and Kosala. Present day historians of ancient Orissa have gleaned from

ancient sources like the Mahabharata and the Manusamhita that "these areas were

inhabited by the (sic) different stocks of people, but in the course of time they gradually

became amalgamated, through the distinct nomenclatures of their territories continued to

exist."[119] The modern name Orissa is a 10th century AD bastardization of the name Odra

and its other derivatives such as Udra and Odraka.   A geo-political Orissa akin to the

projected Natural Orissa came to be established only in the 11th century AD under the

Imperial Ganga Dynasty that ruled Orissa for almost three and a half centuries.

It could be argued that the case for Natural Orissa could have been made by

referencing the historical Orissa of the Ganga Dynasty. However, the discursive

privileging of ancient Indian history as the justificatory marker for early twentieth

century political demands made it essential for the proponents of a separate province of

Orissa to prove that Orissa was an ancient geo-political entity. [120]Hence, in this period

the production of an ancient historical Orissa became one of the more significant projects

of Oriya regional politics. The effort was to ensure that the emergent histories of ancient

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[119] K.C. Panigrahi, *History of Orissa (Hindu Period)*, 3 ed. (Cuttack: Kitab Mahal, 1995), 4.

[120] Historians Gyan Prakash, Javeed Alam, and Sumit Guha have illustrated how ancient history is used in India as a justicatory basic of Indian nationalist political rhetoric. See Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason : Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), Javeed Alam, *India : Living with Modernity* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Also Partha Chatterjee and Lata Mani have shown hoe the production of orthodox tradition during the early colonial period drew heavily of colonial studies of Indian scriptures rather that from every day custom. Therefore a reading of ancient text became central to understand the Indian past. See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments : Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions : The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley ; London: University of California Press, 1998).

Orissa established that the four Kingdoms of Kalinga, Utkala, Odra and Kosala were integrally tied together by cultural and political bonds. Furthermore, the Oriya nationalist historians were invested in proving that these kingdoms were inhabited by both the original aboriginal inhabitants of the areas (understood as the ancestors of the tribals) and the 'civilized' Aryan immigrants from Northern India.

While Oriya historians were engaged in an effort to produce a unified, ancient, cultural, political and linguistic heritage for the Oriya people, the particular political ends served by these narratives defined the limits of what was acceptable as a story of the Oriya past. That is, not just any narrative would do. Oriya history writing in this period was a site where the very nature of the modern Oriya linguistic community was being produced. In particular, I argue that the Oriya elite's anxiety about incorporating a sizable number of 'aboriginal' tribal groups of the Oriya speaking areas into the Oriya community was resolved through specific iterations of origin myths linked with the Oriya linguistic community. These myths centered the Jaganath Cult, a Hindu religious tradition. By implicating both the tribal people and the Oriya speaking people in a legendary narrative these legends of the cult of Jaganath served as a bridge between these two groups. Through a reading of the historiographical use of these origin myths, this chapter traces the actual political stakes in producing narratives of the Oriya past that would both establish the unity of the tribal and non-tribal elements of Oriya society and maintain existing social hierarchies between the two groups.

I forward my argument by illustrating how both Bengali and Colonial official narratives of the Oriya past incited a native Oriya re-telling of history that would enable

the Oriyas to lay claim to a glorious past. Through a discussion of two histories --W.W.

Hunter's *Orissa* (1872) and B.C. Majumdar's *Orissa in the Making* (1926) I will

elaborate on the Oriya anxiety about the tribal. These histories, I will illustrate, were

accompanied and followed by a lively Oriya discussion of the nature, method and

function of history writing which resulted in a slew of new histories written in the early

twentieth century. A new orthodoxy of Oriya history nurtured in Oriya literary and

historical associations such as the Utkal Sahitya Samaj and the Prachi Samiti emerged in

this period. Through a close reading of a version of one of the more commonly used

historical narratives portraying the assimilation of the tribal population into the

'predominantly Aryan' community of the Oriya speaking people I will illustrate how the

Oriya anxiety about an inclusive community was resolved through recourse to a language

of shared everyday life and membership into a horizontal religious community. Finally, I

will illustrate geo-political stakes that required uncomfortable inclusion. The demarcation

of the limits of a separate state of Orissa in 1936 was contingent on proof that a majority

of the population of the Oriya speaking areas connected by bonds of community,

common history and a shared everyday life. To this end, the chapter will conclude with a

reading of memoranda submitted to the Orissa Boundary Commission which was

involved in demarcating the limits of the proposed province.

Early history writing in Orissa and the need for a patriotic history of Orissa

Early histories of Orissa were written by colonial officials in the nineteenth

century. These colonial histories of the Oriya speaking tracts, like histories of other

regions in early colonial India, were written as guides for colonial administrators. History

108

writing was a colonial exercise in as much as it produced useful colonial knowledge while creating a particular reality for the colonized people. Bernard Cohn points to the ontological power of history written by colonial officials in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The ontological power of these histories resided in the effects of the knowledge produced on the actual administration of Indian provinces. Cohn argues here that the study of Indian history allowed the Colonial officials to apprehend Indian customs and traditions. This in turn enabled them to effectively rule and administer India.[121] On the other hand by producing and perpetuating colonial knowledge these histories ossified particular interpretations of Indian society and its past. In so doing they produced a new self image of the subjects they were seeking to represent.[122]

Similarly, colonial histories of Orissa outlined the nature, of the land, people and culture of the region. These histories were necessarily essentializing and produced a distilled vision of the colonial apprehension of the native Oriya. Through a reading of W.W. Hunter's history *Orissa,* this section illustrates how Orissa is produced as a primitive land of no historical glory. Hunter's history serves as an instance of the colonial portrayal of Orissa that provoked the twentieth century native re-elaboration of the Oriya past.

In his introduction Hunter describes Orissa in the following words,

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[121] See Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge : The British in India*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).
[122] For instance, Nickolas Dirks illustrates how caste emerged as a colonial construction and became one of the more important factors in post-colonial Indian politics. SeeNicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind : Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, N.J. ; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 2001).

This book endeavors to delineate the inner life of an Indian Province. It tries to bring home to the imagination and the understanding of Englishmen, a state of society and forms of human existence far removed from their own. The narrative is embellished by no splendid historical characters. Nor does it possess the interest which belongs to striking crimes. To the world's call-roll of heroes it will add not one name. The people of whom it treats have fought no great battles for human liberty, nor have they succeeded in the more primary task of subduing the forces of nature to the control of man. To them the world stands indebted for not a single discovery which augments the comforts or mitigates the calamities of life. Even in literature –the peculiar glory of the Indian race—they have won no conspicuous triumph. They have written no famous epic; they have struck out no separate school of philosophy; they have elaborated no new system of law.[123]

Thus, in Hunter's view Orissa contributed nothing to the development of mankind. It had produced no heroes, no technological advancement, no great piece of literature, no school of philosophy or new system of law. The people of Orissa had not even triumphed over the forces of nature. It should be noted here that these very qualifications, that Orissa lacked, were the hallmarks of the western understanding of civilization. Thus, if one were to push Hunter's argument further, he would say that Orissa with no achievements in the field of arts, sciences or human bravery was an uncivilized space.

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[123] Hunter, *Orissa: Or the Vicissitudes of an Indian Province under Native and British Rule ... Being the Second and Third Volumes of the Annals of Rural Bengal.* 3

Hunter's reading of the history of Orissa was representative of the Orientalist essentialization of the non-western life. Anouar Abdel-Malek has argued that this effort to essentialize the Orient reads it as both historical and a-historical. He notes that

> According to the traditional Orientalists, an essence should exist—sometimes even clearly described in metaphysical terms—which constitutes the inalienable and common basis of all the beings considered; this essence is both 'historical', since it goes back to the dawn of history, and fundamentally a-historical, since it transfixed the being , 'the object' of study, within its inalienable and non-evolutive specificity, instead of defining as all other beings, state, nations, peoples, and cultures—as a product, a resultant of the vection of the forces operating in the field of historical evolution.[124]

Hence, the essentialization inherent in Orientalist scholarship involved the production of two parallel readings of the object of study: first, a reading that establishes the object's changeless historical essence, and second, a reading that underlines this changeless by posing it in a historical narrative where everything but the essence changes.

The structure of his introduction reveals that in Hunter's history of Orissa this dual reading appears in two parallel histories of Orissa: one, the unprepossessing history of the upper caste Oriya population and two, the history of the primeval tribal population caught in an equally primeval landscape. Here the unchanging tribal and his inability to tame the Oriya landscape serve as the essence of Orissa even as Hunter clearly does not equate the tribal with the rest of Oriya population. Hence, despite the absence of any

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[124] Anouar Abdel-Malek, "Orientalism in Crisis," *Diogenes* 44, no. Winter (1963).

apparent arguments about the linkages between the upper caste Oriyas and the tribals, Hunter attempted to substantiate his reading of ancient Orissa as a singularly uneventful place with the example of the primeval-ness of the tribal.

After arguing, as the passage quoted above has indicated, that Orissa contributes nothing to the textbook of history, Hunter notes that

> Yet if I have in any degree done justice to my materials, these pages can well dispense with the plots and scenic effects of history. Nature, long grown cold and inert in Europe, here toils as wildly at her primevial labour, as if the work of Creation still lay before her. She discloses her ancient secrets of land making and admits us as spectators to the miracle of the Third day. We see the dry earth ……Within the single province of Orissa she has brought together, as in a great museum, specimens of all her handicrafts, from the half formed amphibious regions around the river mouths, to the chaos of primitive rock which walls out the seaboard from the inner table land.[125]

What enabled Hunter to "dispense with the scenic plots of history" was his sudden move to a discussion of the primeval landscape of Orissa. In his discussion, Hunter reverses the traditional western understanding of the relationship between man and nature. He describes how in contrast to the west where nature has been tamed by man, in Orissa nature continues to act. In Orissa, nature 'toils' and 'discloses' her 'handicrafts' in a 'great museum'. On the other hand it is evident from Hunter's earlier discussion, that the people of Orissa have not produced any handicrafts of their own. For

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[125] Hunter, *Orissa: Or the Vicissitudes of an Indian Province under Native and British Rule ... Being the Second and Third Volumes of the Annals of Rural Bengal.* 3

Hunter, the active landscape rather than the people was the most exciting aspect of Orissa.

In another curious turn immediately after expressing his wonder at the untimely primeval antics of nature in Orissa, he mentioned the inhabitants of Orissa in archaeological terms—as organic remains—as sediments of times past, present only to illustrate their own impotence.

> Nor is the province less rich in organic remains. Upon the delta, and among the mountains which rise behind it, we come upon endless strata of races, dynasties, and creeds, from the latest alluvial deposit of Bengalies, with their soft Hinduism, to the aboriginal peoples and their hard angular faith. In Europe, the primeval tribes have disappeared from the range of observation into the twilight of hypothesis. Scholars have stood like Hamlet in the Elsinore graveyard, and see the bones of forgotten nations thrown up at their feet…Orissa exhibits a profusion of such primitive races not in a fossil state, but warm and breathing, living apart in their own communities, amid a world of suggestive types and links that elsewhere disappeared.[126]

By mentioning the endless strata of races, dynasties and creeds Hunter acknowledge the diversity of the Oriya people. However, through the use of the term 'strata' he imposed a civilizational and temporal hierarchy with in the various 'races' in Orissa with the Bengalis as the top most alluvial layer. However, his subsequent emphasis on the aboriginal peoples to the exclusion to all other 'races' and 'creeds'

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[126] Ibid. 4

113

seems to justify his initial claim about the lack of cultural achievement in Orissa.

Through the use of metaphor of museums and archeological soil sediments Hunter

portrayed the people of Orissa as a class of people stuck in the past. He saw the

aboriginal inhabitants of Orissa as the remnants of an earlier stage of human development

that have long disappeared in Europe.

In the body of his book, while Hunter fore grounded the lack of civilization and

advancement in his contemporary Orissa, he traced the ancestry of modern Oriyas to pre

Aryan 'aboriginal people'. He argued that the earliest inhabitants of Orissa were, "hill

tribes and fishing settlements belonging to Non-Aryan stock."[127] He saw the modern day

Savara and Khonds as the descendants of these 'aboriginal inhabitants' of ancient Orissa.

Hunter quotes ancient texts to illustrate the disdainful attitude of the Aryan Sanskrit

writers towards these tribes. In such texts they had been described as cannibalistic people

who were a " dwarfish race, with flat noses and a skin the color of charred stake." [128]

However, Hunter argues that these hill tribes were not the only inhabitants of ancient

Orissa. They coexisted with other communities "belonging to another stock and

representing a very different stage of civilization."[129]

To illustrate the stakes of Hunter's allusion to 'Aryans' I must introduce the

concept of Aryan and its implications for Indian nationalist historiography. As Tapan

Raychaudhury so succinctly put it

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[127] B. C. Mazumdar, *Orissa in the Making* ([Calcutta]: University of Calcutta, 1925). 52
[128] 52
[129] Hunter, *Orissa: Or the Vicissitudes of an Indian Province under Native and British Rule ... Being the Second and Third Volumes of the Annals of Rural Bengal.* 3

The Hindu self image has received a moral boost from…the writings of Professor

Max Meuller. His linguistic studies stressed the common origins of Indo-

European languages and the Aryan languages. These theories, transported into

popular idiom, were taken to mean that the master race and the subject population

were descended from the same Aryan ancestors. The result was a spate of

Aryanism. Books, journals, societies rejoiced in Aryan identity….Educated young

men in large numbers affected a demonstrative reversion to the ways of their

forefathers. ..With fasts, pig-tails, well displayed sacred threads, and other

stigmata of Hindu orthodoxy. The name "Aryan" appeared in every possible and

impossible context—in the titles of books as much as in the names of

drugstores.[130]

Hunter's acknowledgement of the present of diverse 'races' in Orissa coupled

with this narrative privileging of the 'tribal' section of the population enabled him to

essentialize Orissa as a land of primeval un-happening. This portrayal of Orissa,

particularly the marginalization of the 'aryan' element of the Oriya population would

potentially undermine later Oriya efforts to claim a higher civilizational status through an

Aryan kinship with their European masters.

It is against this backdrop that the search for a more flattering history of Orissa

took place. Various writers as early as 1907 drew attention to the need for a history of

Orissa written by Oriyas themselves. Oriya leaders argued that colonial and Bengali

historians had failed to write an adequate history of Orissa that would foreground the

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[130] Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture : The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).47

cultural heritage of the ancient ancestors of the Oriya people. For instance, in 1917 Jagabandhu Singha in his article 'Prachin Utkal' critiqued histories written by Hunter and some unnamed Bengali scholars and argued that, "In these times those who can advertise their accomplishments emerge victorious. Those, who remain silent have their ancient heritage appropriated by others"[131]

Here Singha made a veiled reference to the prevailing apprehension among the Oriya elite that the Bengalis and the Telegus were attempting to appropriate elements of the Oriya historical past. For instance, Singha devoted an entire chapter in his book *Prachin Utkal* to prove that Jayadev, the renowned author of *Geeta Govinda*, was Oriya and the text was originally written in Oriya.[132] In this chapter he refuted the contentions of a number of Bengali writers who had claimed Jayadev as a Bengali figure.[133] Thus in this period history writing was a site of cultural contestation between various regions in India. Claims about a glorious historical tradition were not only a response to colonial official narratives about the primitive ness of Oriyas but also an engagement with neighboring communities like the Bengalis and the Telegus in order to lay stake on the past. This perception of the usurpation of Oriya past contributed to the creation of defensive historiography that strove to reclaim the aspects of the Oriya past that had generally been ascribed to other regions.

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[131] Jagabandhu Singha, "Prachin Utkal,Part 1," *Mukura* 11, no. 9 (1917).

[132] ———, *Prachin Utkal (Ancient Orissa)* (Bhubaneshwar: Utkal Sahitya Academy, 1964 (1929 1st edition)).

[133] The Bengali historian of Orissa was a common figure. Apartfrom tohe colonial officials a nuber of historians from Bengal wrote histories of Orissa. See, for instance,Mitra, *The Antiquities of Orissa. By Rajendralala Mitra, .. These Are Some of the Relics of the Past, Weeping over a Lost Civilisation and an Extinguished Grandeur. .. Published under Orders of the Government of India.*

Essays on history published in the *Utkal Sahitya* reveal that through out the early decades of the twentieth century Oriya intellectuals were making an effort to define clearly the project of history writing. Their primary preoccupation was the introduction of a 'western' concept of history into Oriya discussions of the past. Therefore, many such essays began with clarifications about the meaning of the term *itihasa* or history. Contrary to claims by historians that colonial histories written by Indians were driven by traditional Indian understandings of *itihasa*, these essays explicitly modeled their discussions on a western understanding of historical writing based on evidence, observation and a rational search for a past reality.

For instance, in the essay titled "*Itihasa*" written in 1906 by Chandramohan Rana, proposed a new understanding of the traditional term *itihasa.* He argued that though the term itihasaa came from a Sanskrit root, its meaning had changed. Rana claimed that in its new sense History meant " a description of some person, community or country informed by its function, origin/cause and future/consequences."[134] Such an articulation of the understanding of history based on functions and consequences reveals the emergence of a functional attitude towards history writing in the early twentieth century.

Interestingly, Rana made no effort to explain the original meaning of *itihasa*. It appears that the essayist's primary concern was to make a case for the new *itihasa*. For Rana the new *itihasa* was to be modeled after histories written by major classical western historians like Herodotus. Even as Rana conceded that the histories of Herodotus contained a liberal sprinkling of fiction, he insisted that these histories were the Ur texts

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[134] Chandramohan Maharana, "Itihas," *Utkal Sahitya* 9, no. 2 (1906).

of a new kind of history writing. Rana pointed out that as such histories did not exist in Orissa. Hence, the task before the intellectuals in Orissa was to write new histories of Orissa modeled after western histories.

Intellectuals such as Rana applied themselves to the explication of the process of writing such histories. Fundamental to this process was the identification of dependable sources that would serve as evidence. In an article titled "Itihasara Krama" (The course of history) by Jogesh Chandra Rai read at the April 1915 Session of the Utkal Sahitya Samaj, the question of historical evidence was raised. Jogesh Chandra Rai called for a concerted effort with in the Utkal Sahitya Samaj to collect historical source material on the history of Orissa. Rai listed five important categories of texts: Madalapanji Temple records of the Jaganath temple at Puri, Geneological histories collected by the rulers of the Princely states, village records preserved in palm leaf manuscripts, minor temple records and copper plate inscriptions. Despite this call for attention to such a wide variety of sources, new historians of the early twentieth century depended heavily on the Jaganath Temple record—the Madalapanji papers. Consequently, products of such research remained deeply mired in the narrative strategies and evidentiary information provided in the temple records. The result was a deeply Hindu, upper caste telling of the history of Orissa.

As a result of such discussions about the need to write a new, more scientific history of Orissa, the Prachi Samiti was formed in 1930. Also, a history wing of the Utkal Sahitya Samaj, exclusively devoted to the investigation of the history of Orissa, had been

set up in 1915. Most histories written in this period were fostered in these two forums of historical writing.

Even though these two groups covered a variety of historical topics they were both informed by a common discursive interest in the historical construction of the Oriya community. Within the historical construction of the Oriya community, there were two main concerns. First, among them was the need to create a historical geography of Orissa that would incorporate all the areas being claimed as part of the proposed province of Orissa. Second, historians needed to counter claims like Hunter's primeval description of Orissa by establishing a glorious historical past for Orissa. This project of writing a glorious past for Orissa was threatened by the presence of the 'uncivilized' tribal in the imagined community of Orissa. Hence, historians of this period had to perform a dual task of proving that Orissa was a product of an ancient civilization while accounting for the tribal presence within the Oriya community without undermining their project of giving Orissa a glorious past. For this reason, the figure of the tribal became one of the most enduring preoccupations in the history writing in Orissa. The rest of the chapter investigates the implications of this anxiety for regional politics in Orissa.

Anxious Origins: Majumdar's *Orissa in the Making* and the problem of the tribal origin of the modern Oriya community.

Oriya anxiety about the tribal reached a flashpoint in 1926 when B.C. Majumdar wrote that not only were there tribals in ancient Orissa, they were also the ancestors of modern day Oriya people—even those who claimed Aryan heritage. B.C Majumdar, a professor at Calcutta University argued in his book *Orissa in the Making* that "…the history of

Orissa begins where the history of Kalinga Empire ends." An established and well regarded scholar of Oriya history and literature, Majumdar was tracing the process by which a unified linguistic Oriya community came into being. The corner stone of his argument was that the ancestors of modern day Oriyas had no links with the Kalinga Empire and in fact came to be identified as Oriyas as a consequence of the processes set in motion by the fall of the empire.

To illustrate the significance of Majumdar's claim about Orissa and Kalinga, I should introduce the Kalinga Empire. References to the Kalinga Empire abound in ancient Hindu scripture. These texts refer to the Kalinga Empire as a very powerful, cultured and prosperous Kingdom covering an area roughly contiguous with the proposed province of Natural Orissa. By claiming descent from the Kalinga Empire the Oriya historians of the period could claim a glorious historical heritage which had been denied to them by historians like Hunter.

Majumdar's claim and the unfavorable response it provoked among contemporary Oriya historians reveals the significance of history writing in the early twentieth century Oriya political life. For example Oriya nationalist historians like Jagabandhu Sinha posited alternative linguistic and racial pedigrees for the Oriya speaking people. Sinha argued that ancient Orissa, commonly called ancient Utkal, had always been linked with the Kalinga and the two names Utkal and Kalinga were often used interchangeably in the past. Sinha took particular offence at Majumdar's claim that the ancestors of the modern day Oriyas were aboriginal, 'uncivilized' Odra and Utkala races who were later Aryanized by people of Aryan stock rendered itinerant due to the fall of the Kalinga

Empire. Countering Majumdar's depiction of the origins of the Oriya language and people, Sinha argued that the Odra and Utkalas were of Aryan descent. The points of contention in these two narratives of the Oriya past hinged on question of the provenance of the Oriya language and, by extension, of the modern Oriya people.

By the time Majumdar's Orissa in the making was published in 1926, he was a well known academic figure in Orissa. A professor at Calcutta University, Majumdar had published many influential texts on Oriya literature. Most notably his three volume *Selections from Oriya literature* was a prescribed textbook for undergraduates in the Oriya department of Calcutta University. *Orissa in the making* was also designed as a scholarly text. To this end, Majumdar prefaced his book by clarifying that the book was "…intended to constitute rather a sourcebook than a story of Orissa for popular readers."[135] The book was commissioned by Calcutta University. Due to paucity of funds in the University, it was finally funded by the Raja of Sonepur, an Oriya speaking princely state.

In this section I argue that early twentieth century histories of Orissa had much more that the delineation of an ancient place named Orissa at stake. As the disagreement between Majumdar and Oriya nationalist historians like Singha reveal, it is the question of the racial and linguistic pedigree of the modern day Oriyas that is the central matter of contention. While both agree that the modern day Oriyas are descendants of the inhabitants of Odra, Utkala and Kosala, Majumdar's effort to delink the connection between ancient Kalinga and the history of Modern Orissa raised an objection from Sinha. Majumdar's claim was based on the argument that the ancestors of the modern day

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[135] Mazumdar, *Orissa in the Making*. i

Oriyas were infact aboriginal tribes who were 'civilized' by the invading Aryans and this history did not intersect with the history of the Kalinga Empire. Singha's discomfort with this claim which established an aboriginal heritage for the modern Oriya people is revealing.

> Majumdar's primary object was to investigate:
>
> How and when several tracts of dissimilar ethnic character did come in to the composition of Orissa as it now stands by accepting an Aryan vernacular as the dominating speech for the whole province…[136]

Thus his text described the process by which a historical Orissa came into being. He hoped to correct, what he considered was a prevalent misconception about the historical antecedents of Orissa. He argued that in writing the history of Orissa historians should take into account the history of not merely the coastal tract of Orissa. Rather they should investigate how the hilly tracts of Orissa came to be constituted with in the province of Orissa. He was seeking to do a holistic history of Orissa. Majumdar held that this exclusive emphasis on the history of coastal Orissa, particularly Puri, was misleading. This was because rather than all of modern Orissa only the coastal tract was part of the ancient Kalinga Empire. Scholars had mistakenly associated Utkala or modern Orissa with the ancient Kalinga Empire. As a corrective measure, Majumdar argued that historians of Orissa should look at the history of the hilly tracts and not coastal areas of modern day Orissa to trace the history of the land.

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[136] Ibid..ii

He focused on how racially disparate non-Aryan tribes named Odras and Utkalas came to constitute a linguistically homogenous group—the Oriya speaking people. Majumdar argued that the ancient kingdoms of Kalinga, Utkal and Odra were three distinct but contemporary political entities before the fall of the Kalinga Empire in the 7th century BC. He quoted ancient texts such as the *Mahabharata* to prove that Kalinga was a mighty empire that stretched from the river Ganga in the north to the river Godavari in the south. A highly cultured and economically prosperous empire, Kalinga has been mentioned in the Mahabharata as racially akin to the Aryan Angas and Vangas. In contrast the Utkala people are mentioned in his sources as "rude people of very early origin having no affinity with the races around them" They controlled a thin strip of land that ran contiguous to the Kalinga Empire. Similarly, the Odra people populated the north western part of present day Orissa. Majumdar quotes extensively from Huen Tsang's travel accounts to prove that the general disorder and chaos that ensued after the fall of the Kalinga Empire in the 7th Century BC was instrumental in the creation of Orissa. It is during this period of transition that the 'rude tribes' of the Odras and the Utkalas 'poured' into the coastal tract of the erstwhile Kalinga Empire. As this coastal tract was one of the primary centers of Hindu religion, contact with the religious institutions, resulted in the gradual hinduization of the Odras and the Utkalas to produce the ancestors of present day Oriya people. The name Orissa therefore draws from the word Odra. And Utkal, classical name for Orissa, draws from the Utkala, another ancient aboriginal people.

Majumdar's argument had two important implications for the study of history.

First, by claiming that only the coastal tract of Puri was part of the Kalinga Empire and

the Kalinga Empire was controlled by the ancestors of the Andhra people, Majumdar

questioned the Oriya Nationalist effort to claim lineage from the Kalinga Empire.

Furthermore, if Puri, the seat of the religious deity of Jaganath, were part of the empire

controlled by the Andhra people, then the Oriyas could not lay claim to Jaganath Cult as

a national cultural unifier. Second, the argument that the modern day Oriyas, including

the Oriya upper caste elite, have descended from the hinduised aboriginal tribes of the

Odras and the Utkalas threatened to muddle the differentiation between the caste Oriyas

and the 'tribals' of the hilly tracts of Orissa.

Recuperating Odra-Rastra: Legend, History and Incorporation of Tribal Heritage

Oriya nationalist response to Majumdar's thesis was focused on disproving his claim that

the Odras and the Utkalas were uncivilized races who had no links with the Kalinga

empire. It should be noted that Oriya effort to establish the antiquity of Oriya civilization

was not merely a product of the response to Majumdar. The Oriya historians were

responding to the earlier histories of Orissa that presented it as a primeval land untouched

by human endeavor. In the case of Utkala, the task was easy because of the Sanskrit roots

of the term 'Utkala'. Utkala was read as the conjunction of Ut and Kala. This translated

to high art. Thus Utkala was the land of high art or high culture. In the case of 'Odra' the

task was not as easy, even as proving that Odra was the name of a civilized kingdom was

crucial. This was because Orissa was drawn from Odra Desa or Odra Rastra. Jagabandhu

Sinha mentioned in an article that the Bengali Vishwakosha defined Odra as people who

weight bearers. Infact, there were many different iterations of the term Odra in this period. Such references to the menial origins of the Oriyas forced the Oriya elite to systematically recuperate Odra from its contemporary definitions in existing historiography.

Here, I will focus on an article written Satya Nararyan Rajguru, a nationalist historian associated with the Prachi Samiti, titled "The Odras and their predominancy".[137] Rajguru was one of the founding members of the Prachi Samiti. The Prachi Samiti was set up 1931 and was intended to throw "light on the hitherto shrouded aspects of the great Kalinga civilization, which carried the arms of its cultural conquest far and wide, and made the 'Greater Utkal." [138]The founders believed that the ancient glory of Utkal was lost and with it was lost the prosperity and pride of the people of Utkal. History was to provide an uplifting memory of a glorious past that would rouse the people of Utkal from the depths of degeneration and powerlessness.[139] To this end, the Prachi Samiti was striving to bring about a revival of the Oriya past through historical writings and re-publication of ancient Oriya texts.[140]

Rajguru's essay was part of this mission to revive a glorious memory of ancient Orissa. In this essay Rajguru attempted to advance an alternative narrative of the formation of Orissa. This alternative narrative was based on the redefinition of the term Odra. He affirmed the prevalent understanding among Oriya nationalists that modern day

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[137] Satyanarayan Rajguru, "The Odras and Their Predominancy," *The Prachi* 1, no. 3 (1931).
[138] "Ourselves," *The Prachi* 1, no. 1 (1931).
[139] "People who made their land the cradle of all fine arts, whose maritime activites established an oversea empire and who kept burning the torch of independence when the same had been extinguished from the rest of India are today alas !healots abroad and hewers of wood and drawers of water in the land of their birth!" p 2
[140] See "Appendix," *The Prachi* 1, no. 1 (1931), "Ourselves."

Natural Orissa covers the territories of the erstwhile Kalinga, Odra and Utkala kingdoms. However, in contrast to Majumdar's thesis that Orissa was formed when the fall of the Kalinga empire resulted in the aryanization of the uncivilized Odra and Utkala people, Rajguru argued that the Odra people were the first Aryans to come in from the north. Hence, he argued, present day Orissa, is the result of the intermingling of these Odras with pre-existing aboriginal peoples of the land and the gradual spread of Odra influence over Natural Orissa.

In Rajguru's thesis the Odras were the fallen Kshatriyas mentioned in the Manu Samhita. He noted that some scholars have interpreted the term Odra as 'one who flies'. Thus Rajguru argued that "The word Odra as interpreted by some scholars is a synonym of a person who flies. Probably this is the first race to fly from the 'Aryavartta' or the northern part of India and settle in the south." [141]This reading allowed Rajguru to establish the Aryan heritage of the Odra people. As opposed to Majumdar's claim that the Odras were rude, uncivilized people who inhabited the fringes of the civilized Kalinga Empire, Rajaguru cited ancient texts like the ManuSamhita and Bisnuparva, to claim that the Odras were a race of people with a separate spoken language Odra-Bibhasa. This language was broadly derived from Prakrit and Pali and later came to be known as Odia. The region where it was spoken came to be called Odisa or as the British called it— Orissa. The later influx of the Aryan Utkala people resulted in the sanskritization of the Odia people.

While Rajguru established the Aryan heritage of the Odra and the Utkala people, he also attempted to establish the linkages between the tribal population of Natural Orissa

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[141] Rajguru, "The Odras and Their Predominancy."

and the Odra people. He treated two tribes in particular, the Khonds and the Savaras. [142]

He argued that both the Khonds and the Savaras are the products of the intermingling of the Odra people with the aboriginal people of Orissa. As proof of this, Rajguru took recourse to linguistic analysis of the tribal languages such as Santhali and Ho. He illustrated the similarities between words in Oriya and these languages to prove that languages like Ho are merely local dialects of Oriya. This allowed Rajguru to claim that the tribes such are Santhals, Parajas, Hos, Bhils, etc are part of the Oriya speaking community and that areas inhabited by them should be included in amalgamated Orissa.

While linguistic similarities established the membership of the tribals in the Oriya community, the relationship between tribals and the Odras had to be clarified. As has been discussed earlier, in existing historiography the Odras themselves were portrayed as the aboriginal ancestors of the modern day tribals of Orissa. This coupled with the claim that the Odras were also the ancestors of the modern day Oriya elite who were the product of the aryanization of the Odras implied not only that the modern day tribals and the Odras are racially linked but also that the modern day Oriya caste elite and tribals come from the same racial stock.

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[142] Perhaps this is because the Khonds and the Savaras were the most widely known of the Orissa tribes. Colonel John Cambell documented his expedition in the Khondmals to irradicate human sacrifice and female infanticide. This text and other colonial recordings of instances of Human sacrifice perpetuated the image of the savage tribals of Orissa. The Savaras were widely known in the colonial official circles because of their role in the functioning of the Jaganath temple. From the onset of colonial rule in Orissa, the Jaganath temple and the annual chariot festivals obsessed colonial administrative resources. Hence, due to their association with the temple of Jaganath the Savaras were well known to the colonial officials.

It appears, from Rajguru's choice of examples that his paper was intended partly for colonial officials. This ressonates with efforts among Oriya nationalist to write histories of Orissa that served as arguments for the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tracts. SeeArts, *The Oriya Movement : Being a Demand for a United Orissa.*

In order to maintain a clear distinction between the Oriya caste elite and the tribals of the hilly regions of Orissa, Rajguru turned to the originary myth of the Jaganath Cult. As Jaganath was considered the most important deity of the Oriya people, connecting tribals to Jaganath legitimized their incorporation into the Oriya community. In this myth found in the Madala Panji temple records, the original devotee of Jaganath was a Savara man named Basu. Indradyumna, a kshatriya king of Malava, sent Vidyapati, a Brahmin priest to bring Basu's idol of the deity to his kingdom. Vidyapati visited Basu and married his daughter. In the course of time Vidyapati was able to bring the deity to Indradyumna's kingdom. Rajguru argued that the offspring of the Brahmin and Savara Basu's daughter are the ancestors of the present day Savara. The legend goes— in recognition of Basu and his daughter's devotion to Jaganath, Jaganath himself decreed that the children of Basu's daughter be recognized as Suddho Savara or pure Savara.

The use of the legend allowed Rajguru to make two claims. First, the Savaras were culturally integrated into the Hindu caste system and belonged to Oriya community. Rajguru noted that it is these Suddho Suaras who functioned as cooks in the temple of Jaganath. As any service in the temple was considered a marker of the great devotion and had immense purificatory powers , the Savaras were assimilated into the mainstream Oriya community. Interestingly, while the essay began with a reference to Khonds and Savaras, there was no discussion of the assimilation of Khonds into the Oriya community towards the end of the essay. In fact, by the end of the essay the Savaras had come to stand in for all the tribals of Orissa. This shift coupled with the use of the Madala Panji

legend allowed Rajguru to make a case for the cultural assimilation of the Oriya tribals into the mainstream Oriya caste community.

Second, that, though the Savaras are tribals, they are a fairly evolved race of people. To this end, he described the Savara system of administration and claimed that even that colonial state defered to their code. Furthermore, the use of the legend allowed him to conclude that the "Savaras and the Odras were living side by side in Orissa." This emphasis on the 'side-by-side' coexistence is very revealing. Even as the essay seems to be straining against claims about the common origins of the Oriya speaking elite and the tribals, it is driven by the need to establish that both of them belong to the same community. The use of the language of 'side-by-side' enabled Rajguru to claim that the Tribals of Orissa and the caste Oriyas belong to the same community without having to accede to any racial commonalities. A common adjacency over a long period of time coupled with a common language was to Rajguru an adequate ground for community.

However, even as he emphasized the cultural advances of the tribal elements in the Oriya population, the use of the myth enabled him to maintain the hierarchies within modern Oriya society. The legend of Jaganath implied that while the tribals were assimilated into the Aryanised Hindu Oriya society, the terms of their coexistence was based on a clear distinction between the tribals and the caste Hindu Oriya elite.

Naturalizing Tribal Orissa: Memoranda to the Orissa Boundary Committee and the 'aboriginal problem'

These efforts to produce a normative Oriya past where the ancestors of aboriginal tribes and caste Hindus of the Oriya speaking areas lived 'side-by-side' had more than just

Oriya community pride at stake. The production of these histories was informed by the ongoing discussions within the colonial government to inscribe the limits of the proposed province of Orissa. By 1924 the Colonial government had decided to act upon the recommendations of the Montague-Chelmsford Report of 1918-1919 that argued for the reorganization of the British provinces in India on linguistic lines. To that end, the government had instituted the Phillip-Duff Committee to investigate the possibility of the transfer of the Ganjam district from the Madras Presidency to the new Orissa province. Similar efforts on a smaller scale were in process in other Oriya speaking areas located in other provinces. This atmosphere of the administrative reform of the political geography of British India was the context for efforts by historians like Satyanarayan Rajguru in Orissa to construct a unified and glorious past for all the Oriya speaking areas scattered in various British provinces. Such histories produced an Oriya historiographical orthodoxy which was put in service of the movement for the creation of a separate province of Orissa.

In 1931, the Orissa Boundary Commission was set up to define the boundaries of the proposed province. The commission received a number of memoranda that made the case for the inclusion of various outlying areas in the proposed province. The language of these memoranda, drafted by leading advocates for the formation of a separate province of Orissa, reveals the stakes of history writing in Orissa during this period. History was the means of producing a historical, 'long standing' regional culture that would inform the colonial production of a new geographical and administrative region in India. In other words, these histories were creating a concrete geographical region by arguing that in the

past Orissa and its people were part of a common experience. Such claims to common history enabled the Oriya elite to demonstrate that the Oriya people met the basic criterions that the Colonial state has set for an ideal provincial area.

The memoranda noted that the Indian Statutory Commission of 1930 had described these criteria as "…(common) language, race, religion, economic interest, geographical contiguity." [143]These criteria, particularly those of common language, race and religion, could be proved only through claims about a shared historical past which was based on a common development of language, race and religion. As the previous chapter has illustrated, colonial understanding of the development of language and race were entwined in the study of the origins of Indian languages. Hence to prove that a people shared the same language necessarily involved narratives of origin which established the commonality of race. In the case of Orissa, the effort to prove that all inhabitants of the Oriya speaking areas belonged to the same community involved more complicated discursive strategies. Owing to the discomfort with claims to common racial and linguistic origins among the 'non-aryan'tribals population of the Oriya speaking areas and the 'aryan' upper caste Oriya elite, historians such as Satyanarayan Rajguru drew on religious myths from the Jaganath Cult to establish a different kind of commonality. However this different commonality too had to be rooted in the past. This motivated the construction of histories such as Rajguru's treatment of the history of Odradesa.

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[143] "Memoranda to the Orissa Boundary Commission." 52 These documents are catalogued under two serial numbers and placed in the Private papers collection of the Orissa State Archives. They are a collection of memoranda sent to the Orissa Boundary Commission by various Oriya public organizations. Page numbers are idiosyncratic.

Rajguru's argument reveals the incredibly productive nature of the Oriya historiographical efforts to think the Oriya community as one comprised of both the Aryan and Non Aryans elements of the population of the Oriya speaking areas. Even as his argument produced a community based on a shared every day life, his use of the Jaganath origin myth is also indicative of how and why the Jaganath Cult became the normative religion of modern Orissa. Thus historians such as Rajguru and Jagabandhu Singha made the case for a common Oriya culture through histories based on the fundamental unity of experience that belied racial difference. Such a reading of the past also enabled Oriya claims to areas inhabited by aboriginal populations that interspersed areas where a majority spoke the Oriya language. This was especially crucial because the Oriya claims to these areas was threatened by the fact that the aboriginal peoples of these areas had their own languages such as Gond, Ho, Munda, Bhumij, Savara, etc. Hence, as claims to common linguistic identity could not be made in the face of such linguistic diversity, Oriya historians and the political leaders had to argue for a community based on a shared historic-geographical space—ancient Orissa. Therefore, these histories written by the Oriya historians of the early twentieth century were not only arguing for the recognition that all inhabitants of the Oriya speaking areas were part of one community, they were also attempting to validate the demand for a separate province of Orissa by creating a historical Orissa as a geographical region that may or may not have existed in reality. The importance of this claim to a common Oriya past is revealed in the justificatory refrain "since time immemorial" that recurred in the 1931 memoranda sent to the Orissa Boundary Commission.

It is evident from the memoranda that the need to incorporate the tribal

populations into the proposed province remained one of the more anxious preoccupations

for the advocates of the formation of the new province. Oriya claims to particular districts

in the Madras Presidency, Bihar and Orissa, Bengal Presidency and Central Provinces

greatly depended on proving that the sizable tribal populations of the aboriginal tracts

could be counted as part of the Oriya community. For instance, one of the memoranda

made a systematic analysis of the percentage of tribals in the population of each districts

and how the coupling of this segment of the population with the Oriya speaking non-

aboriginal population would constitute a majority—thus justifying the incorporation of

that district in the proposed province. This matter was particularly crucial in the case of

the southern Oriya speaking district of Ganjam in Madras Presidency which has become

a bone of contention between Oriya and Telegu leaders. As both Orissa and Andhra

Pradesh were provinces in the making, both proponents of both provinces laid claim to

the Ganjam district which had sizable populations of both Oriya and Telegu speaking

people. The tribal people of this district formed the third major demographic of this

district. Hence both the Oriyas and the Telegus argued for the incorporation of this group

into their community in order to prove that their linguistic group was a majority in the

district. The discussion of Ganjam in the memoranda written by the Great Utkal League,

the author noted,

> These parts are largely peopled by Khonds, Sabars, Porojas, Khondadoras and
>
> Godabas. There has always been a sinister insinuation on the part of our
>
> opponents to take these people almost as Telegus. To outnumber the Oriya

population they are trying to hoodwink the simpler folk with this dilemmatic argument; non-Oriyas versus Oriyas. Here they cleverly manage to add the aboriginals to the Telegus and thus to swell up the number of non-Oriyas. And thereby they discredit the Oriya claim to these parts. But it is only just that the real issue should be Telegu vrs. Non-Telegu because *there are very cogent grounds to take these aboriginals as castes of Oriyas for all practical purposes.* The Savaras reside only in Oriya territories and therefore be taken as Oriyas. Gadavas are found only in the Vizag agency and their language was taken as a dialect of Oriya in the 1911 Census Report. Census Report of 1901 takes Poroja as a dialect of Oriya too. …The Indian Government Letter of 1903(No. 3678) rightly remarked "The majority of the people of Ganjam Agency tracts speak Khond which as education spreads is certain to give place to Oriya.[144]

Two things emerge from this argument for the incorporation of the aboriginal tracts of the Ganjam district in the proposed Orissa province. Firstly, by introducing "cogent grounds to take these aboriginals as castes of the Oriyas for all practical purposes", this argument was attempting to do more than just lay claim to the areas inhabited by these aboriginals by recourse to colonial enumerative practices. The invocation of these grounds indicates an effort to understand the nature of the Oriya relationship with the aboriginal people differently. Infact, the discussions in the memoranda about this relationship reveal the tendency among the Oriya elite to think of the Oriya community and its ability to include the aboriginal communities as an

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[144] Ibid. 57

134

exception. Unlike other linguistic communities like the Telegus, Biharis and the Bengalis who could lay claim to these areas on the grounds of linguistic commonalities, the Oriya community—the framers of the memoranda argued— was best suited for the assimilation of these races without encroaching on the interests of the aboriginal peoples. I shall illustrate elsewhere in the dissertation, the way in which a new understanding of the Oriya community emerged in 1919-1920 that was based on the inclusive potential of the community due to its faith in the Jaganath Cult. One of the most significant figures in the Orissa branch of the Indian National Congress, Gopabandhu Das expounded the exceptional nature of the Oriyas community in a paradigmatic speech in 1919. He argued that the Oriya faith in the Jaganath Cult enabled the Oriyas to practice a deeply inclusive humanism which was based on a horizontal religious brotherhood among all the devotees of the Jaganath Cult.

Interestingly, this claim to an already present Orissa in the past did not suffice. The memoranda coupled these references to history with a more prescient argument about the need to link the areas inhabited by sizable tribal populations with the proposed province. This argument was based on an upper-caste paternalistic attitude towards the tribal populations of the Oriya speaking areas. While arguing for the incorporation of the aboriginal tracts of both Bihar and Orissa and the Bengal Presidency in the proposed Orissa province, one of the memoranda argued

> Be it noted here that the majority of the aboriginal people do not properly understand where their interests lie. We leave it entirely to the Government to

judge for them to see if they should allow these people to be swamped by the 'combatant Bihari' or the all-absorbing Bengalee.[145]

The protectionist language used to describe the tribal populations of this area rendered the tribal into silent non-actors in the rearrangement of the British provinces. While the tribals were appropriated as members of the oriya community, their participation in the community was curtailed. The argument made by the memoranda was directed towards establishing Orissa's comparative suitability as the primary host for the aboriginal peoples of these areas. The opposition between the 'combatant Bihari' or the 'all-absorbing Bengali' and the more inclusive yet non-intrusive Oriya was based on precisely the kind of historical community that Satyanarayan Rajguru's history of the tribal relationship with caste Oriyas produced. However as the language of the claim quoted above indicates, such a historical community is predicated upon a fundamentally unequal relationship of power between the caste Oriyas and the tribal people.

This unequal relationship is explained away in the memoranda by further discussion about the particular adeptness of the Oriya people at civilizing and assimilating the tribal populations of the area. While these claims do not deny the prevalent exploitation of the tribal people at the hands of the caste Hindus, they claimed that this exploitation was a necessary accompaniment to the gradual civilization of the tribal population.

We admit that these people have been subject to Hindu exploitation to certain extent, we also hold that the exploitation has gone hand in hand with civilization we don't like to enter into the discussion of the comparative economic position of

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[145] Ibid. 7

136

the Hinduized aborigines. But nobody can challenge that the Hindu culture played

prominent part in raising the states of these people and engrafted their culture

through the medium of their civilized tongue and if any race in India can claim to

have civilized the aboriginal, the most, it is the Oriya, we don't like to travel into

the regions of ethnology, but it is certain that Hindi has driven the aborigines to

the south-east and Telegu to its north-west till pushed by the Oriya and it is the

Oriya who has penetrated into the hilly regions, (sic) lived amongst the rude tribe

and made them absorb its culture and language and has been continuing as the

functional caste among the thousands of aboriginal villages, and it is the Oriya

rajas be they of Rajput origin or (sic) of Semi-aboriginal origin who have been so

long lending special protection to these people. If any nation is India has ever cast

his lot with the aborigines and lived its life with the aborigines it is the Oriya.[146]

While this statement re-iterates the exceptional nature of the Oriya community, it

introduces a new element into the justification of the incorporation of the tribal areas into

the proposed province of Orissa—the civilizing role of the Oriya language. The argument

that the civilizing influence of Hinduism, particularly though the medium of language,

has succeeded in 'engrafting' tribal culture into the mainstream, coupled with emphasis

on the Oriya exceptional ability to incorporate the tribal population points to claim about

the ability of the Oriya language to civilize the tribal population.

Considering the possibility discussed in B.C. Majumdar's history-- that both the

Oriya language and people descended of early aboriginal kingdoms of Utkala, Odra and

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[146] Ibid. Appendix B, "The Problem of Aboriginal Tracts". 2

Kosala – the distancing of the Oriya from the tribal and the establishment of a liberal hierarchy between them reveals the mechanics of discrimination in the imagined Oriya community. The statement quoted above not only denies the possibility of a racial kinship between the Oriya and the tribal but it also imitates the British liberal attitude towards the native Indian population in thinking a new kind of kinship. Hence, even as the Oriya community is being imagined as a liberal, inclusive and horizontal brotherhood, this reading of the relationship between the tribal and the Oriya effective maintained existing hierarchies within the Oriya speaking community.

Interestingly, this argument about difference and hierarchy between the Oriya and Tribal co-exists with Oriya arguments about Oriya self governance and the removal of the alien influence of the Bengali and Bihar "intermediary ruling races". Elsewhere in the memoranda, the authors argue that provincial governments in Oriya speaking areas are not truly representative of Oriya interests.

On this point authors of the Montford reforms remark that—" generally speaking we may describe provincial patriotism as sensitively jealous of its territorial integrity. If an all India politician of the brightest luster be scratched, the provincial blood will flow in torrents. Even the Provincial Government betrays a mentality and an advocacy that could only be expected from the professional Advocate. The dispatches and letters of the Government of Madras and C.P. since the days of Lord Curzon right upto the time of Sir John Simon, betray an advocacy for the majority community and sensitiveness for territorial integrity which no government constituted for the good government of various peoples

138

under their charge can ever resort to….Again the *"intermediary ruling power"*

i.e. the majority partners of the province who feed upon the minor partner and

appropriate to themselves all the loaves and fishes of service and hold the string

of commerce, trace and industry and who force the Oriyas to give up their

mother tongue, can never tolerate to the rid of their prey. Under the

circumstances mutual agreement can hardly be expected. All imaginable obstacles

and pleas will be put forward by the people and the Governments to keep their

territorial integrity intact. It is for the government to right the wrong they have so

long permitted through their stolid callousness. *If they fail the destruction nay*

annihilation of an ancient race, of an ancient language, of an ancient civilization

will lie at their door. It must be remembered that it was not by mutual consent

that the Oriyas preferred to remain under four different Governments, nor it was

by common…"[147]

Taken together, the two statements quoted above illustrate the emergence two

ideas of community in Orissa. First, there is the kind of community based on shared

everyday life of the Oriya and the tribal where despite quotidian neighborly-ness the

community is marked by hierarchical divisions. Second, the critique of 'intermediary

ruling power" and the oppression of the majority which would lead to the eventual

annihilation of the entire Oriya community, implies that the writers of the memoranda

were invested in a community of equal rights—a liberal community. Interestingly the

central argument of the above passage is the possibility of the extermination of the entire

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[147] Ibid. " Acid test of provincial areas".22

Oriya community due to the imposition of a different language and culture is oddly reminiscent of the Oriya claims about their suitability as "civilizers" of the tribal people. Clearly, while there is an effort to avoid a destructive homogenization of culture at the national level, the only way the tribal question is resolved is through the same process of aggressive homogenization.

<u>Conclusion</u>

As these memoranda to the Orissa Boundary Commission of 1931 reveal, history writing in early twentieth century Orissa was employed to *produce* the proposed province of Orissa as an area deserving of official recognition from the Colonial State as a bon-a-fide province. Central to this effort was the need to define the history and membership of the Oriya community in a manner that was both conducive to an upper-caste Oriya racial exclusivity based on claims to Aryan descent and the need to incorporate those inhabitants of the Oriya speaking areas who were not considered part of this exclusive community of the progeny of the Aryans—the tribal or aboriginal peoples of Orissa. Though a discussion of the way the ancient name of the Orissa and its inhabitants was interpreted in the early twentieth century by the Oriya elite, I have revealed that considerations of racial origin informed the production of a normative vision of the Oriya past. In particular, both the discussion of early colonial historiographical portrayal of Orissa as a primevial and uncivilized space and the Majumdar's 1926 claims that the Oriyas were descendents of ancient aboriginal communities such as Odras and the Utkalas illustrates the context for Oriya elite anxiety about the need to produce a history that was proper to their aspirations for the formation of strong modern Oriya community

with a separate province of its own. On the other hand, the sizable presence of the tribal population in the Oriya speaking areas necessitated the production of a historical past that would incorporate these communities in order to justify the inclusion of areas inhabited by them into the proposed province of Orissa.

The use of the language of side-by-side enabled the resolution of this dilemma. However, even as the effort of Oriya historians like Satyanarayan Rajguru was to provide a narrative of the Oriya past that featured all members of the modern Oriya community, such a history was invested in hierarchical divisions within modern Oriya society. It should be noted that what is also being produced here thought the incorporation of the tribals into the Oriya community is the idea of language as the primary marker of community. This inturn produces the Oriya community as a category that can be used to define the particular identity of the Oriya/Indian citizen. The rest of the dissertation illustrates how this newly formed idea of a homogenous Oriya community through language, literature and history informs the making of the Indian citizen. The cultural history traced in the first two chapters of this dissertation served as a backdrop for the development of regional identity politics in Orissa.

The emergence of Oriya cultural politics and means of understanding the universal Oriya self through particular cultural tropes such as the Jaganath Cult, enabled the formation of a Oriya political community. Such a community would seek its interests beyond the realm of language, education and literature. Even as the universal Oriya subject and the place Orissa is being defined in Oriya historiography from the early 1910 to the 1930s, the question of a political community based on this cultural identity comes

to dominate the Oriya public sphere. The remaining part of the dissertation traces the

emergence of politics and nationalism is Orissa during the early twentieth century.

Chapter 3

Towards a Politics of the Colonized: Utkal Sammillani and the Emergence of a Vocabulary of Nationalism in Colonial Orissa (1903-1920)

"What can a conquered community achieve by discussing politics?"
M.S. Das, 1908[148]

In the narratives of the freedom movement in Orissa, the 1920 Chakradharpur

session of the Utkal Sammillani, an Oriya regional organization, has been treated as a

landmark event.[149]In this session it was resolved that the Sammillani was to give primacy

to the fight for *swaraj* or self-rule rather than the struggle for the amalgamation of the

Oriya speaking tracts.[150] While these two objectives were not exclusive of each other, the

early Sammillani stance against participation in anti colonial nationalist politics had

emerged from a tactical decision to focus on particular Oriya interests rather than engage

in the broader ongoing critique of and opposition to colonial rule. The resolution at this

session to fight for *swaraj* has been treated as the beginning of the nationalization of

Oriya political life.

This resolution established the influence of the Indian National Congress on the

Oriya political scene. The Indian National Congress was the primary political

organization that led the anti-colonial nationalist movement in India during the late

nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Established in 1885, by the 1920s it

had come to dominate Indian politics. The Congress, as it came to be called, provided the

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[148] In Madhusudan Das, "Utkal Sammillani," *Utkal Sahitya* Vol 11, no. 3 (1908). p 63

[149] A detailed discussion of the Chakradharpur Session is provided in Chapter 5. Hence forth the Utkal Sammillani will be called Sammillani.

[150] The term *swaraj* can be roughly translated as self-rule. In the context of the nationalist anti-colonial movement in India led by the Indian National Congress, this term came to signify the ultimate aim of the movement for Indian independence. *Swaraj* after the 1920s meant the rule of India by Indians themselves. Hence to ask or fight for *swaraj* was to demand the right to self determination and responsible government.

most prominent platform for the articulation of all-India nationalism. As it was the largest all-India nationalist organization, the debates, discussion and decisions in the Congress influenced the ways in which India, as a national, cultural, historical and social entity came to be defined during the Indian struggle for independence. Furthermore, since its establishment in 1885 by A.O. Hume as a 'safety valve' for the venting of Indian dissent against colonial rule, it was recognized by the colonial government as one of the most representative voices of Indian opinion.[151] Thus, the Congress was regarded (both by the colonial government and the native elite) as the representative of the Indian people as a whole.

The establishment of Congress dominance over the Oriya political scene in 1920 precipitated a shift towards nationalism in Orissa. Public life in Orissa up to 1920 had been dominated by the movement for the amalgamation of all areas where a majority of the people spoke the Oriya language. Due to piecemeal acquisition of territories, the Oriya speaking tracts (as these areas came to be called) were scattered into three different British Provinces. Thus, by the time the British had completed the annexation of the Oriya tracts in 1803, western and northern Orissa were part of the Central Provinces, the Southern Orissa district of Ganjam was shunted to the Madras Presidency and coastal Orissa was under the Bengal Presidency. At the time of the Sammillani's inception in 1903, Oriya speaking people were linguistic minorities in three different British Indian provinces. The Utkal Sammillani was set up to address problems peculiar to such a state

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[151] The term 'safety valve' was a reference to the way in which the Congress provided for a platform for the Indian elite to articulate their dissatisfaction with the colonial state without undermining the control of the British over India. Just as a safety valve allows a safe expulsion of excess pressure in order to maintain an optimal amount of pressure inside an enclosed space, colonial officials believed that the Congress maintained British control of India by providing a contained platform for the articulation of Indian dissent.

of affairs and to lobby for the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tracts under a single administration. After 1920, even the articulation of particular Oriya interests had to be situated within a broader national interest. For instance, Gopabandhu Das, one of the major nationalist figures in Orissa, argued for the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tract into a single province by suggesting that India was a nation by divine design and that each province had to perform certain divinely ordained functions in the destiny of the nation. For this purpose, Orissa as region had to be clearly defined and located within a broader Indian national community.[152]

Historians have treated this moment as a point of rupture between Oriya regionalism and Indian nationalism in the narrative of the freedom movement in Orissa.[153] In such histories the Chakradharpur session marks the end of the parochial and isolated phase of the independence movement in Orissa and the beginning of more radical, mass based and national politics led by a younger and more leftist leadership.

Without disagreeing with this formulation, this chapter seeks to argue that there were both more fundamental transformations and continuities that accompanied the move from the regional to the national 'phases' in Oriya politics.[154] The exclusive focus in existing histories of twentieth century Orissa on descriptive narratives of leadership

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[152] See D. G. Panda, *Political Philosophy of Pandit Gopabandhu Das* (Cuttack: Santosh Publications, 1980). for a more detailed discussion of this aspect of Das' thought.

[153] For such histories of regional politics in Orissa see Purushottam Kar, *Indian National Congress and Orissa, 1885-1936* (Cuttack: Kitab Mahal, 1987)., Nivedita Mohanty, *Oriya Nationalism : Quest for a United Orissa, 1866-1936*, South Asian Studies ; No. 13 (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982).

[154] It is not the intention of the author to over-determine the differentiation between the regional and national. The use of the term 'phases' is a tactical one to unthread the manner in which existing histories of Orissa render the pre-1920 period into merely an episode in the history of the freedom struggle in Orissa. This chapter simply seeks to ask, "Was there an anti-colonial freedom struggle in Orissa before 1920?" This question is as much about the nature of politics in Orissa as it is about the nature of anti-colonial politics and nationalism in India as a whole.

changes and the growing influence of the Indian National Congress, attested by the

periodic enactment of nationalist mass politics in the form of the Non-Cooperation

movement (1920-1922), Civil Disobedience movement (1931) and the Quit India

movement (1942), often masks the conceptual and ideological processes that informed

the regional Oriya political elite's engagement with the demands of nationalist

cosmopolitan interests. Thus, even as these histories underline the rupture of the 1920

Chakradharpur session of the Utkal Sammillani, they undermine the complexity of the

ideological continuities from the earlier period, which enabled the adoption of nationalist

politics in the Utkal Sammillani and the subsequent establishment of the Utkal Provincial

Congress Committee.[155]

A focus on the rhetoric within the Utkal Sammillani about the nature and purpose

of politics, and its ultimate participation in anti-colonial nationalist politics, can reveal the

ways in which a *vocabulary of nationalism* emerged in this period-- despite the explicit

efforts by the Sammillani leadership to the contrary. Initially, the Sammillani attempted

to affirm an understanding of politics as governance where the sovereign colonial

government was responsible for the administration and protection of its colonized

subject. The Sammillani justified its abstinence from anti-colonial politics by arguing that

there was no need to politically oppose the colonial state as long as it was fulfilling its

responsibilities properly. However, despite its best efforts, this attempt to affirm politics

as governance remained riddled with contradictions. These contradictions illustrate a

surreptitious emergence of the language of anti-colonial politics and effectively anticipate

the re-orientation that occurred in the 1920 session of the Utkal Sammillani.

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[155] The Utkal Provincial Congress Committee was the provincial branch of the Indian National Congress.

This chapter unpacks these contradictions which produced a new vocabulary of nationalism through a revision of traditional language of politics, by focusing on the changing meanings of two important terms that recur in Oriya political rhetoric; Praja and Rajaniti. Rajaniti literally means the ethics (niti) of governance (raj) and is often used to denote politics. However during the period under review, the meaning of rajaniti constantly shifted. A related term, praja, which literally means subject also came to have many contexts and fluctuating meanings in this period.[156]

By 1920, rajaniti had come to mean anti-colonial popular politics. In this context the meaning of praja also changed from passive subject to a more active member of political life in Orissa. The importance of the term praja in Oriya political life is revealed in the recurring use of the term in the more representative organizations in the early twentieth century. For instance, the Praja Pratinidhi Sabha (Praja representative Association) was set up in 1910 to represent peasant interests to the Bengal government while it deliberated on the specifics of the new Orissa Tenancy Act of 1911 which finally established permanent settlement of land revenue in Orissa. The Praja Mandal Movement (1932-1948), an anti-feudal movement in Princely States of Orissa involving large sections of the Oriya population of the Princely States also defined its constituency as Praja. Praja in the titles of both these organization had a meaning that went beyond subjecthood. In this period praja came to denote "the people" in Oriya political rhetoric with all its associated connotations of a community of political, social and economic interests.

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[156] Subject here means subject to sovereign authority.

The career of these words reveals the prehistory of the concept of citizenship in colonial and post colonial India and its residual borrowings from early Indian concepts of subject-hood and sovereignty. I will trace the history of the changing meanings of praja and rajaniti through a study of three moments.

Uplifting the praja: Utkal Sammillani and the practice of popular social reform.

The terms Praja and Rajaniti were part of common parlance in the nineteenth century. However, when compared with the later use of the terms, they carried entirely different connotations. Symptomatic of these early meanings is the use of these terms in the rhetoric of the Utkal Sammillani that attempted to situate rajaniti and praja in an older framework of monarchical rule where the rajaniti was the ethics of governance followed by the Raja(monarch) to govern and protect his subjects—the praja.

In 1903, at the first annual meeting of the Utkal Sammillani, the President of the session Ramchandra Bhanja Deo, the ruler of the princely state of Mayurbhanj, justified the organization's decision to avoid politics by pointing out the particular politics or *Rajaniti* that was being debarred from discussion in the Sammillani. He argued:

> What is said to be *Rajaniti?* Why will we boycott discussions of *Rajaniti*
>
> in the Sammillani? [We reject it] by saying it is a science of governance:
>
> by saying it is any effort by human kind for the governance of the country
>
> or community or for the protection of its peace and prosperity or for the
>
> protection of the inhabitants from external attacks.[157] (additions mine)

Bhanja Deo proceeded to argue that, as rajaniti was about governance it was the prerogative of the colonial state. By comparing colonial rule with what he claimed was

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[157] Debendra Kumar Das, ed., *Utkal Sammillani(1903-1936), Part 1* (Rourkela: Pragati Utkal Sangha, 2005).,65.

148

misrule by earlier rulers such as the Maratha and the Muslim monarchs, he contended

that the Utkal Sammillani need not engage with questions of governance as the new

British Rajas lived up to their responsibilities as rulers. In fact, he argued that the primary

aim of the Utkal Sammillani should be to help the Oriya community recuperate from the

ill effects of centuries of Muslim and Maratha misrule through social, economic and

cultural reform. At stake in this formulation of the colonial rule as good rule was Bhanja

Deo's effort to ensure that the Utkal Sammillani did not participate in any opposition to

the colonial state, even as it ventured to carve out for itself a public domain where it

could represent the social, cultural and economic interests of the Oriya speaking people.

Ostensibly, by asking what is "*said* to be rajaniti", Bhanja Deo claimed to be

invoking a common-sensical notion of politics. In such a common-sensical notion, the

raja would be king and the Praja would be subject. And yet, smuggled in here, perhaps

entirely against his explicit desires and arguments, is also another notion of raja and

praja. This section will explore how despite themselves, the leaders of the Utkal

Sammillani set in motion the process of refined rajaniti and the role of the praja in

politics and society.

This allusion to a common-sensical understanding of politics indicates that a

normative formalized understanding of rajaniti had not yet been established in Orissa at

this moment. It is this uncertain domain of politics that the Sammillani attempted to

avoid. But the very question of whether politics should be avoided remained at the center

of public debate in early twentieth century Orissa. For the next seventeen years, the

question of whether the Sammillani should participate in political activity came to

provide a medium through which the meaning of politics and its efficacy were debated. Much of the debate returned to and engaged with this early definition of politics as governance. In this section, I examine the role assigned to the various actors involved in this economy of governance and protection. How did the *Praja* figure in this understanding of politics? How was the colonial state situated in this matrix of rule and protection?

Some curious tensions already mark Bhanja Deo's early rejection of politics. By defining politics as "any effort by *human kind*" to govern and protect, Bhanja Deo left ambiguous the actual identity of the governor. The emphasis on governance and protection implies a more state-centered understanding of *rajaniti* which could be read as an invocation of a traditional monarchical government where the sovereign *Raja* was responsible for the wellbeing of the subject *praja.* However, the use of the term 'human kind' threatens to disrupt this conservative definition of rajaniti by enabling a slippage in to a more liberal understanding of politics where all the constituents of the state have a stake in governance. It appears as though despite his reluctance to invoke popular politics, Bhanja Deo slipped into the very language of popular politics that he was seeking to avoid.

This tension comes into much sharper relief when Bhanja Deo proceeds to justify the avoidance of politics within the Sammillani by arguing that good governance by the new English rajas makes the intervention of the praja into the affairs of state unnecessary. With this elaboration of the merits of the English raja (English ruler), Bhanja Deo slips back into the language of the monarchical state where the Praja could only be a subject.

For instance, he defined bad governance as rule where "…the Rajas are selfish, and exploit their praja or are unable to protect their life and property."[158] Bhanja Deo used instances from the Oriya past, such as the period of the Muslim and Maratha rule, to illustrate bad governance. By juxtaposing the establishment of rule of law and social stability during the British rule of Orissa against, his view of the political, social and economic chaos of the Muslim and Maratha rule over Orissa, Bhanja Deo situated colonial rule within the matrix of the existing political networks. [159]The British colonial government could be seen as just another player in an already existing hierarchical political field and not necessarily an alien or colonial force. As rajaniti was defined as the ethics of governance, the changing identity of the ruler did not affect the concept of the political. Thus, this ambivalence about the identity of the ruler in Bhanja Deo's definition of rajaniti allowed the leadership of the Utkal Sammillani to accommodate colonial rule in an existing political matrix.

Interestingly, Bhanja Deo's attempt to avoid politics by arguing that the British are good rajas, involves a double move that subverts the very purpose that it attempts to accomplish. On the one hand there is an attempt to see the British as just another raja. On the other hand in insisting that the praja stay out of politics, he uses a novel argument: that the praja can stay out of the political sphere because the government is being run properly. It is the converse of this statement that threatens to subvert his effort to foreclose on popular politics. That is, the converse of his argument is that the praja need not stay out if the government is *not* running properly. By arguing that as long as the raja

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[158]Ibid.65.
[159] Ibid. 66.

was fulfilling his responsibilities, the praja can abstain for politics, Bhanja Deo was

providing for a possibility that a situation may arise when the praja could be a political

actor. Thus, even as he asserted the older notion of raja and rajaniti, he smuggled in new

notions of rule despite himself.

After establishing the efficacy of British rule over Orissa, Bhanja Deo argued that

since peace and stability had been instituted by the British, it was time to "repair the

losses suffered by the country due to many centuries of misrule" This was the function of

an organization like the Utkal Sammillani. He proclaimed that the primary aims of the

Utkal Sammillani would be to provide a common platform for the Oriya speaking people

living in different British provinces, to increase national wealth through supporting

industrial growth, to promote the spread of education among the people, to support

development of Oriya language and literature and to bring about social reform. Thus, the

Utkal Sammillani was imagined as a social, economic and cultural organization that

represented all the Oriya speaking people.

In Bhanja Deo's explicit formulations, the constituency of the Utkal Sammillani

was the Oriya praja of the English rajas. The creation of the category of Oriya speaking

people as a distinct community was a necessary precondition for the institution of the

Utkal Sammillani. In the nineteenth century the colonial imperative for more efficient

administration resulted in the use of vernacular languages at the provincial level since the

1830s.[160]Thus, provincial administration, governmental educational institutions and law

courts used the language spoken by a majority of the inhabitants of the province. For the

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[160] For a detailed account of the vernacularization of provincial administration in 19th century India see Mir, "Imperial Policy, Provincial Practices: Colonial Language Policy in Nineteenth-Century India."

speakers of the Oriya language, who were numerical minorities in a number of British

provinces, vernacularization of the colonial administration meant that they had to use

unfamiliar languages such as Bengali, Hindi and Telegu in their dealings with the

colonial state. Furthermore, linguistic nationalism in larger provinces with a minority

Oriya speaking population often tended colonize Oriya into their own language. In 1870,

Kantichandra Bannerjee, a Bengali teacher at a district school in the Oriya speaking

district of Balasore wrote a booklet called *Odia Swatantra Bhasha Nay* (Oriya is not an

independent language). Bannerjee argued that Oriya was a dialect of Bengali and should

be replaced by Bengali as the medium of instruction in schools. This booklet caused

uproar among the Oriya speaking elite because some government officials were also

leaning towards the replacement of Oriya with Bengali. In reaction to the booklet and the

accompanying Bengali signature campaigns, the Oriya elite floated newspapers such as

Utkal Dipika and Sambad Vahika to air arguments in favor of Oriya language. Moreover,

since the argument for abolishing Oriya from schools was based on the lack of good

Oriya textbooks, a textbook movement was started to provide Oriyas speakers with

reading and study material.

The publication of the booklet and the subsequent Oriya response set in motion

conversations and intellectual projects that focused on the definition of the limits and

nature of the Oriya language and canonization of Oriya literature.[161] For instance, in the

period between 1870 and 1920 many literary journals were set up to discuss the status

and future of the Oriya language. Journals such as Utkal Sahitya (est. 1897), Indradhanu

(1896) and Bijuli (1896) provided forums for debates about the function of the literary

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[161] This process is explained in greater detail in the chapter 1

critic in the development of Oriya literature and language, and role of language and literature in the building of community. Furthermore, efforts to produce a normative Oriya grammar, diction and literary canon reveal the gradual centralization of the language which contributed to clarifying the scope of the Oriya speaking community. In this period, the Oriya language was formalized through the publication of many dictionaries and grammar texts by colonial officials like John Beames, members of the Oriya speaking elite as well as British missionaries active in the area. Such efforts to codify the basic structures of Oriya language and grammar were fundamental to Oriya linguistic nationalism of the nineteenth century because it not only allowed the Oriya elite to resist attacks by other majority linguistic groups but it also helped them organize the Oriya speaking people around issues of linguistic purity and antiquity. [162]

Even as Oriya was being produced as a distinct linguistic category, histories were being written to establish Orissa as a separate geographical and historical category.[163] Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, historiography of Orissa was focused on tracing the ancient origins of the Oriya speaking people and delineating the boundaries of the kingdoms inhabited by them.[164] Efforts to demarcate the ancient origins

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[162] For example Beames, *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India*, G. C. Praharaj, *Purnnachandra Ordia Bhashakosha : (a Lexicon of the Oriya Language)* (Cuttach: V. Kar, 1931), William Brooks, *An Oriya and English Dictionary : Designed for the Use of European and Native Students and Schools* (Cuttack: Orissa Mission Press, 1874), Amos Sutton, *An Oriya Dictionary in Three Volumes. Vol. I. Embracing an Introductory Grammar, an English and Oriya Dictionary, and a List of Official Terms. (Vol. Ii. An Oriya Dictionary, with Oriya Synonyms ... By Rev. A. S. And Bhobananund Niaya Alaukar.-Vol. Iii. Embracing an Oriya and English Dictionary, Official Terms, and a List of Materia Medica, Etc.)* (Cuttack, 1841).
[163] This process is explained in greater detail in chapter 2.
[164] For instance O. R. Bacheler, *Hinduism and Christianity in Orissa Containing a Brief Description of the Country, Religion, Manners and Customs of the Hindus, and an Account of the Operations of the American Freewill Baptist Mission in Northern Orissa : Illustrated by a Map and Thirty-Three Engravings* (Boston: Geo. C. Rand & Avery,, 1856), microform :, William Wilson Hunter, *Orissa* (London,: Smith, Elder & co., 1872), Mazumdar, *Orissa in the Making*. And for a more

of the Oriya speaking community were essential to the creation of modern Orissa as a geographical and historical category. Furthermore, histories of Orissa in this period helped produce a common historical memory for the Oriya people, particularly around the important historical figures from the 16th century when the first classical Oriya texts were written. This productions of a glorious historical memory was bolstered by popular literature of the period: namely poems and plays like *Utkal Bhramanam*, *Utkal Laksmi, Prataprudra Dev* .[165]

Thus, by the time the Utkal Sammillani was formed, the Oriya speaking community was already a substantive cultural category. The Oriya praja that the Sammillani represented was already marked by a shared culture and language. This community based on language and culture was very different from the classical raja-praja community where all that defined the praja was that it was the subject. Here, ironically, praja was more than a subject. The praja while being bound together as a community by its subjection to colonial rule, was also inter connected by a pre-existing cultural movement.

By juxtaposing the Oriya community and praja as subject, the Utkal Sammillani leadership redefined the 'praja' as more than subject to a royal king. Praja now was marked by linguistic and cultural interests that were not within the governing responsibilities of the English raja. This community of interests bound the praja in

exhaustive list of texts see Laxmikanta Mishra and Sitakanta Mishra, *Historians and Historiography of Orissa : A Study in Perception and Appropriation of Orissan History* (New Delhi: Kaveri Books, 2005).
[165] A more detailed account of the relationship between literature and linguistic identity politics is given in chapter-1. Also see Subhakanta Behera, *Construction of an Identity Discourse : Oriya Literature and the Jagannath Cult (1866-1936)* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2002), Patra, "Formation of the Province of Orissa : The Success of the First Linguistic Movement in India".

connections that were not entirely mediated by the colonial state. Consequently, the very presence of Utkal Sammillani as a socio-cultural organization outside the influence of the colonial state provided a possibility for the Praja to explore his/her individual potential without limits posed by the colonial state. Furthermore, once the existence of such as Praja was conceived the possibility arose that this praja could practice a politics through a disagreement with the raja over questions of rule. This in turn could lead to a scenario where the praja could claim *as praja* some authority in the system of governance. It is this possibility that made Bhanja Deo anxious because by invoking the praja the Sammillani was already laying claim to politics. That is, even though Bhanja Deo used the term praja to ensure that the constituency of the Utkal Sammillani remained a-political and loyal to the colonial state, his very justification for the distancing of the praja from politics smuggled in the possibility of political activity by the praja.

Representing the Praja: Representations of Praja and Rajaniti in the Utkal Sahitya

The second moment in our history of the changing meanings of praja and rajaniti focuses on discussions about the relationship between social reform and politics in the *Utkal Sahitya*, one of the major monthly Oriya journals of the early twentieth century. Here, I explore how a different approach to the resolution of the problem of the praja and politics in the Utkal Sammillani was attempted by the separation of the social (inhabited by the praja) and the political (controlled by the raja). Ironically, as I will illustrate through a discussion of contemporary responses to the social/political separation, this did not make the Sammillani apolitical. That was because the social could be claimed as a

sphere of activity for the Praja, only through a messy conflation of social reform activism with political activism.

The *Utkal Sahitya*, like Utkal Sammillani, served as a platform for the articulation of Oriya concerns about social reform, status of Oriya language and literature, economic problems faced by the Oriya speaking people and the problem of the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tracts. Even though this journal received support and patronage from the Sammillani, it would not be correct to say that the journal was a mouth piece of the organization. Vishwanath Kar, the editor of *Utkal Sahitya*, himself held views that often ran counter to the official Utkal Sammillani policy on politics. Therefore the *Utkal Sahitya* served as a forum for debates on whether Oriyas should engage in anti-colonial politics as well as other contentious issues like the definition of a modern Oriya literary canon and a normative history of ancient Orissa.

Of particular interest to us here are the various essays on the nature and definition of politics as well as the relationship between efforts towards social and economic upliftment of the Oriya people and political activity, which appeared in the *Utkal Sahitya* from 1898 to 1920. These essays, some of which predated the Utkal Sammillani, informed the contemporary attitude towards public organization of Oriya interests. To read these essays is to explore the intellectual milieu of the period when regional identity, Oriya community and politics, were being conceptualized. Here such a reading will enable us to trace how the meaning of rajaniti and praja changed over time. These essays dealt with questions such as: What is politics? What is the relationship between Raja (King) and Praja? How can the praja be served best? What is the meaning of freedom

from social ills? How do we account for individual freedom and political freedom? Is one possible without the other?

Debates about the Sammillani's attitude towards politics often pivoted around the question of whether the social interests of the Oriya community could be addressed without political agitation. This question came to dominate the Oriya political life between 1903 and 1920. For instance, in 1914, M.S.Das the founder of the Utkal Sammillani reiterated at the annual meeting of the Utkal Sammillani or the Utkal Union Conference that political discussion should be avoided in the organization. Such a comment elicited a very vocal opposition as evidenced by an article by Lal Mohan Patnaik in the newspaper *Asha* published in Ganjam. Lal Mohan Patnaik was a major participant in the Ganjam Hitaisini Sabha which acted as a sister organization to the Utkal Sammillani in the Oriya speaking Ganjam district in the Madras Presidency. He argued that the Sammillani should propose a clear policy for the incorporation of political discussion.

> It cannot be argued that the government officials and others
> eschewing politics ought to attend the conference and ought to
> dissuade it from dealing, if not dibbling in politics or to leave it
> when political matters are necessarily introduced. This attitude is
> fraught with serious consequences and is highly impolitic, for it will
> tend to create a split in the camp of the present band of honest

workers who, according to their own light, have devoted their heart

and soul to the welfare of the Oriyas. Would the leaders respond?[166]

Patnaik took issue with the unilateral stand against politics that stifled the efforts of

participants who did not hold with the official Sammillani attitude towards political

activity. Instead of contributing "according to their own light," members were forced to

hold with this avoidance of political activity. In reply to his challenge 'Would the leaders

respond?', an article appeared in the next issue of the newspaper entitled " Politics and

the Uriyas" [167] The anonymous author argued that:

> There seems to be some misapprehension in some quarters as
>
> regards the idea implied in the expression "politics". A distinguished
>
> Indian said the other day that "there can be no politics for a subject
>
> people like the Indians" and rightly so. Politics as practiced in
>
> western and other countries connote the existence of equal rights
>
> and liberties among all the parts constituting a homogenous political
>
> whole or nation. This cannot be predicated of the Indians but it is a
>
> truism that certain section of the Indians assert a desire for colonial
>
> form of self government and so far, invest themselves with an air of
>
> politics. *There is yet a polar difference between such a political*
>
> *creed and the very modest aspirations of the Uriya community*
>
> *desiring union under one local administration.* Imperial issues are

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[166] "Recieved," *Asha*, 03-06 1914.
[167] 'Uriya' is simply a colonial version of the term 'Oriya'.

far too wide off the mark of the Uriyas. The responsible officers

here view the question as *purely social*…..To come to the point: the

suggestion by any association of the Uriyas or by the Utkal

Conference of a solution in the form of a resolution of the

administrative difficulties arising out of the dismembered condition

of the Uriya community under different local government can never

be said to be political…to behold political ghosts in a social

conference is political superstition…[168](emphasis mine)

This article proposed a very interesting relationship between the political and the social.

Even though politics as a concept was attaining a more substantive meaning, as the

author alluded to the necessity of equal rights as a prerequisite for political activity,

politics was posed as something unreal or ephemeral in contrast to the social activity. By

using terms such as 'ghosts' and 'political airs', the author argued that the colonized

Indians could only *pretend* to be engaged in politics in the absence of political equality.

The Utkal Sammillani in contrast was engaged in a much more realistic enterprise of

addressing real Oriya problems. Furthermore, the author argued that working in the

interests of the social was a far more active and engaged exercise than agitating for

political rights. He said:

There is nothing wanting in the Utkal Union Conference except workers

who will put their shoulders to the wheel and translate the ideals into

practice while nothing prevents the official Uriya from remaining in the

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[168] Unknown, "Politics and the Uriyas," *Asha*, 03-13 1914.

same street with the non-official Uriya as regards its propaganda. But if

educated men sit down and simply make a spectral analysis of politics then

they will be possessed by the devilish politics ever more.[169]

The juxtaposition of "workers who will put their shoulders to the wheel" in the interests

of the Oriya community and educated men who 'sit down and make a spectral analysis of

politics' underlines the perception that politics, at this moment, was not considered a

productive activity by the leaders of the Sammillani. It appears as though the author of

the article was saying that politics was an indulgence that only the more privileged could

afford in their efforts to avoid contributing to the Oriya community in any concrete ways.

Of interest to us here is this opposition of the social to the political. In this article they

were seen as mutually exclusive domains: the political sphere was controlled by the

colonial state and the social sphere was occupied by active members of the Oriya

community.

This separation of the social and political has a long history in colonial India. In

the nineteenth century, many Indian elite organizations were set up to discuss matters of

social, cultural and economic import to their constituencies. These organizations were

based on an understanding that they belonged to the autonomous sphere of 'Indian social

practice' which was outside the domain of political action.[170] Consequently, the Indian

public sphere came to be populated by associations which dealt with 'social' concerns of

the people secure in the assumption that such actions did not constitute political activity.

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[169] Ibid.
[170] For a discussion of this separation of the social and the political see Jon E Wilson, "Anxieties of Distance: Codification of Early Colonial Bengal," *Modern Intellectual History* 4, no. 1 (2007).

This separation of the social from the political was a byproduct of early Indian nationalism that was trying to forge an autonomous, un-colonized social space outside of the sphere of influence of the colonial state. The argument that Utkal Sammillani was a 'purely social' organization drew on this understanding of cultural-social nationalism as an a-political activity. As anti-colonial Indian nationalism came to be inscribed in the rhetoric of liberal democracy, citizenship and rights, the understanding that the social was constitutive of the political fundamentally changed the nature of the public organizations in India. Henceforth, to act for the sake of a social community was to invoke a distinct politics which had the interests of the social community at stake.

However, it is evident from the newspaper conversation discussed earlier that the situation of the Utkal Sammillani departed from this trajectory in its acceptance that while politics of the people was possible, the lack of political equality inherent in a colonial situation made such politics impossible for Indians. This stand was based on the Sammillani's loyalty to the colonial state. Such loyalty was akin to that of other organizations like the Muslim League that represented minority interests in the early twentieth century. These organizations, for limited periods in their career, saw the colonial state as an ally in their mission. The prevailing majoritarian attitude of the Indian National Congress, with its inability to incorporate minority or even regional interests into the Congress platform, led organizations like the Utkal Sammillani to ally with the Colonial State. Hence, the Sammillani's attitude towards politics needs to be understood both in the context of the separation of the social from the political in cultural nationalist

forums and as part of the minority loyalty to the Colonial state due to lack of support from the Indian National Congress.

In this section we will trace the debate about the meaning of politics and its relationship to the Oriya social movement through a reading of three articles that appeared in the *Utkal Sahitya* journal between 1897 and 1920. While the first article provides a glimpse of the more conservative understanding of Rajaniti which was based on the relationship between the raja and the praja, the later essays question this relationship by pointing out that in the Oriya situation the interests of the Raja and that of the Praja did not match. Therefore, they argue that the separation of the social and political was detrimental to the interests of the Oriya community because the objectives of an Oriya social movement could not be served by allying with the colonial state whose interests run counter to that of the Oriya community.

The Utkal Sammillani's definition of Rajaniti was echoed in early essays in the *Utkal Sahitya*. However, a close reading of such articles reveals that the concept of rajaniti was already more complicated than the Sammillani's understanding reflected. For instance, in an essay titled "Rajaniti", Sadhucharan Rai unthreaded the relationship between raja and praja, and in this unthreading endowed upon the praja a more modern characteristic of individual sovereignty. Analogous to the tension in Ramachandra Bhanja Deo's discussion of politics where a language of liberal politics crept into his rhetoric despite his explicit efforts to the contrary, Rai's formulation oscillates between a monarchical model and a model of politics that rests on the balance between the sovereignty of the raja and that of the praja.

In the essay "Rajaniti", Rai suggests that rajaniti was based on a homology between the sovereign/subject relationship and familial relationships.[171] This formulation of Rajaniti as management of family fits well into the Sammillani's understanding of rajaniti as governance. Rai wrote, "Raja is father, raja is mother, raja is brother, raja is teacher, and he is your closest friend."[172] He postulated that while the raja, like a father, could exercise his powers to discipline the praja; he should never abuse his powers. Furthermore, just as the mother comforted the child when it was punished, the raja too should protect the praja from the excessive punishment.[173] By enacting various familial and social relationships the Raja had to ensure that peace, brotherhood and freedom among the praja was maintained.

In this context, while the praja/subject depended on the Raja for familial and social support, Raja also required the support of the praja. In another essay titled 'Rajashakti O Prajashakti', Rai expanded on this inter-dependence between the Raja and Praja based on an economy of Rajashakti (power of the Raja) and Prajashakti (power of the praja).[174] Prajashakti, according to Rai, was the sum of all power that resides in all human beings. Rajashakti was the amalgam of all Prajashakti. In an ideal situation Rajashakti and prajashakti would balance each other. A decrease in Rajashakti could

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[171] By subject in this case I mean subject to the sovereign, As such, this understanding of subject is not the same as the subject as a being with consciousness and the ability to act. This is not to say that the subject-as-subject-to-sovereign is devoid of consciousness or action. Rather, that his/her very ability to act is limited by the terms of his/her subjection.

[172] Sadhucharan Rai, "Rajaniti," *Utkal Sahitya* Vol 1, no. 8 (1897). p 193. Rai wrote regularly for the Utkal Sahitya in the early decades of the twentieth century. Not much is known about the particulars of his life because the journal did not introduce its contributors to its readers.

[173] Rai, p-193
[174] Sadhucharan Rai, "Rajashakti O Prajashakti," *Utkal Sahitya* Vol 1, no. 10 (1897).

result in a people's revolution. An increase in Prajashakti could lead to the establishment of democracy or *prajatantra.*

It could be inferred from Rai's discussion that neither revolution nor democracy was the ideal condition. In the ideal condition, the praja would be content with the regime of the raja. However, Rai's formulation of an ideal situation did account for the individual agency of the praja. He held that "every praja was a miniature raja". Thus, Rai argued, as long as the raja recognized this individual sovereignty, his sovereignty would remain unmolested. Clearly, for Rai the Raja/Praja relationship was based on a balance between individual sovereignty and the sovereignty of the ruler.

Two things should be noted about the 'praja' in Rai's discussion. First, the praja here was understood as a subject under the protection of the Raja. By implicating the praja in a filial relationship with the raja, Rai invoked a traditional monarchical understanding of subject-hood where the praja's relationship with the state placed definite limits on his/her individual sovereignty. Just as a child is free and self-determining only to the extent that the parent deems it fit. Paradoxically, and this is the second thing to be noted about Rai's praja, the praja also has individual sovereignty which is of fundamental importance to the stability of the Raja/praja relationship and even rajaniti itself. When Rai argued that the each praja was a "small raja", the praja appeared in a completely different light. The argument that the raja/praja relationship depends on the balance between the sovereignty of the praja and that of the raja undermined the unquestionable control of the Raja over the Praja's destiny implied in the earlier idea of subject-hood. Even though this allusion to individual sovereignty does not

invoke democracy, or at least the praja's participation in political activities, it opens the

door to such possibilities. That is, the logic of individual sovereignty of the praja would

ultimately lead to democracy or *prajatantra.* It is this ultimate possibility that Rai

recoiled from when he wrote that in the ideal condition there should be neither rebellion

nor democracy.

However, Rai's ideal rule was predicated on the assurance that the Raja addressed

the needs of the praja adequately. Later formulations of rajaniti and its relationship to

Oriya interests which appeared in the *Utkal Sahitya* argued that the interests of the Oriya

praja were not addressed by colonial rule. Fundamental to this argument was a

questioning of the neat separation of the social and political endorsed by the Utkal

Sammillani and thinkers like Rai. For instance, in an essay entitled "Samaja Sanskara o

Rajaniti", an anonymous author argued that "a community's politics influences and

constitutes its social life in as much as it is influenced and constituted by the

community's social life."[175]

This questioning was symptomatic of the changing public opinion about colonial

rule in Orissa. Even as the Utkal Sammillani held on to the idea that Rajaniti was the

domain of the state and the interests of the Praja could be addressed without people's

participation in political life, a younger generation of Sammillani leadership came to

suspect this stand as loyalty towards the colonial state. Time and again the Sammillani

was called a "thanks giving organization" because critics claimed that the only activity

the Sammillani indulged in was to thank and please the British government. They were

described as a sycophantic group who merely paid lip service to the Oriya cause.

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[175] Anonymous, "Samaja Sanskara O Rajaniti," *Utkal Sahitya* 11, no. 4 (1908). 14.

The primary critics of the Sammillani were members of student organization like Bharati Mandir and the younger members of the Sammillani itself. Young students and lawyers such as Gopabandhu Das, Harekrushna Mahtab, Nabakrushna Chaoudhury, Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra, Lakhshminarayan Sahu, and Jagabandhu Sinha disagreed with the Sammillani's positive attitude towards the colonial state. Over the next two decades, many of these men came to play a significant role in anti-colonial politics in Orissa. Prominent among the opponents of the Utkal Sammillani were Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das, Godavaris Mishra, Krupasindhu Mishra and Harihara Mishra. Together they came to be called the Satyabadi group named after the Satyabadi School set up by Gopabandhu Das in 1909. This school came to symbolize anti-colonial nationalism in Orissa. Through their educational activities the Satyabadi group was engaged in social reform project that exposed them to the day to day realities of the common Oriya people. The politics of the Satyabadi group emerged from an understanding of the people as oppressed and disenfranchised under colonial rule. The Utkal Sammillani's formulation of 'praja' as passive receptors of good governance did not speak to the ground realities as witnessed by the Satyabadi groups.[176]

Criticism against the Sammillani was focused on the fallacy of the argument that Oriya interests could be forwarded with help from the Colonial state and independent efforts by the Sammillani. For instance, in an essay titled "Bharatare Rajanitic Andolana" the anonymous author argued that without political sovereignty the interests

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[176] A more detailed discussion of the Satyabadi group will follow in the next chapter. For more details see Mohanty, *Oriya Nationalism : Quest for a United Orissa, 1866-1936*. p 85-93.

of a race cannot be furthered.[177] He invoked the example of Britain, Germany and Japan to claim that these countries are developed because the state was controlled by the Britons, Germans and Japanese. In these countries, the author claimed, "Rajashakti (power of the raja), was allied with the prajashakti (power of the people). That is, the interests of the raja coincide with that of the praja. The author argued that this was not the case in colonial India, because British colonialism was based on the economic exploitation of Indian resources. Thus the British Raja's interests were diametrically opposite to those of the Indian praja. This was illustrated in the lack of equality between the Indian and British subjects of the English crown.

The author argued that only if the Indian praja had political rights could they ensure that the colonial government treated them fairly. In contrast to the prevalent understanding of politics, the author emphasized on the political rights of the praja. By raising the question of political rights, the author drew the praja more explicitly into the realm of the political. While the conservative notion of politics limited it to the sphere of activity of the sovereign, the idea of political rights of the praja invoked a realm of the political that was inhabited by both the sovereign and the subject. In this context, the praja was not merely a beneficiary of the good governance by the raja, rather he/she is had rights accompanied by duties and responsibilities. Thus the praja had a stake in the governance of the state.

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[177]Anonymous, "Bharatare Rajanitik Andolana," *Utkal Sahitya* Vol 9, no. 3 (1905). Though this essay is about political revolution in India, the author's point of departure is a critique of organizations that propose to emancipate a community without participating in politics. This essay was written in 1906 in the wake of the swadeshi movement in Bengal and was seeking to draw the Oriyas into political agitation.

These essays in the *Utkal Sahitya* illustrate how the praja as a category was becoming increasingly complicated. The province of individual sovereignty that had been recognized even by conservative thinkers like Sadhucharan Rai was beginning to expand beyond the limits of a term like praja as colonial rule came to be critiqued in Orissa. Even though the praja as a concept originated in the framework of subjecthood, the invocation of individual sovereignity and political rights resulted in a reformulation of the term praja into something akin to citizen.

Towards a politics of the Praja: M.S Das and the formulation of prajaniti

Prevailing arguments about the illegitimacy of the colonial rule and the concomitant fallacy of the Sammillani's expectations from the colonial state led to a reexamination of the Sammillani's political standing. This section explores Madhusudan Das' formulation of 'prajaniti' as an alternative to rajaniti to foreground efforts within the Sammillani to take into account the growing critique of its apolitical-ness. In this essay Das offered an immanent critique of the Sammillani's lack of effectiveness as an organization representing the interests of the Oriya community. Here immanent critique is a critique that "…seeks to provoke critical examination of the basic vocabulary of the movement of thought to which it belongs" [178]Thus I shall argue that while Das proposes an alternative politics (Prajaniti) he draws from the Sammillani's understanding of Rajaniti. The meanings of Raja, Praja and the relationship between them remain the

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[178] Here I borrow the term from Judith Butler who defined it as critique that "…seeks to provoke critical examination of the basic vocabulary of the movement of thought to which it belongs" in *Judith Butler, Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1990).*

same. Das' project was to re-introduce politics into the Sammillani platform while maintaining its distance from rajaniti. This was a necessary task because Das had to recuperate the Sammillani from critiques that see it as ineffective organization which was unable to meet its objectives due to its loyalist political stance.

Madhusudan Das (1848-1934) was one of the most influential figures in the Oriya public sphere of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He was a lawyer educated at Calcutta, who served as the Oriya translator to the Government of India, as member of the Orissa Association (est. 1882) and a founding member of the Utkal Sammillani. Das rose to fame early in his career when he successfully represented the Queen of Puri in her lawsuit opposing the implementation of Puri Temple Act of 1880. He dominated the Utkal Sammillani platform for most of the organization's active life.

The debate on the objectives and functions of the Utkal Sammillani in particular, and on the nature of communal activity of the Oriyas in general focused on the question of whether doing politics was essential to the project of the development of Oriya interests. In his essay "Utkal Sammillani", Madhusudan Das, the founder of the organization, responded by asking;

> What would a conquered *jati* achieve by discussing rajaniti?... Why will
>
> the conquerors listen to us if, as has been noticed elsewhere, we go around
>
> critiquing them?[179]

As the discussion of the Sammillani's understanding of politics reveals, rajaniti here was understood, among other things, as rhetoric and activity that opposes the

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[179] Das, "Utkal Sammillani." *Utkal Sahitya* Vol 11, no. 3 (1908) p 63

colonial state. Das held that such opposition would not help the Oriyas achieve their

objectives because the Oriya were a conquered race. It is interesting to note that Das,

unlike Rai, did not claim that the Colonial state was the legitimate sovereign who must

not be opposed. Rather, he called for a pragmatic policy to be adopted in the

Sammillani's relationship with the colonial state. Instead of antagonizing the people in

power, Das proposed that it would be productive to negotiate with them and educate them

about problems faced by the Oriyas.[180]

However, Das conceded to the critics of the Sammillani that the exclusion of

politics limited the organization's effectiveness. By breaking down the community's

development or *Unnati* into the *unnati* of *Dharma* (religion), *Mokhsha* (salvation), *Kama*

(desire)and *Artha* (wealth), Das argued that the exclusion of religious and political

discussion resulted in an inability to develop fully on any of these registers. Thus he

proposed that the Sammillani should allow for a partial inclusion of politics. He defined

this partial politics as follows:

> Praising and pointing out our problems rather than critiquing is our need of
> the hour… Such praxis is part of Rajaniti and it would be more appropriate
> to call it Prajaniti. The Sammillani often neglects this prajaniti because it
> confuses prajaniti with rajaniti.[181]

He then argued that prajaniti and rajaniti were two distinct spheres of activity. The duty

of the raja was to understand and eradicate the Praja's sorrows. The duty of the

Sammillani would be to thank the raja when he worked for the advantage of the people or

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[180] Given the membership of the Utkal Sammillani, it is not surprising that Das would argue against
politics. However, Das' effort here is to go beyond the loyalism and carve out a sphere of activity for the
Sammillani while maintaining its a-political image.
[181] Das p. 63

inform him of the people's problems. It was crucial for the interest of the Raja as well as the Praja to make this distinction clear and avoid any encroachment of one on the other.

Das' Prajaniti is not limited to praising the government. In the rest of his essay, Das laid out a manifesto for the praxis of Prajaniti. Through a process of elimination Das arrived at the conclusion that education would be the preferred praxis of the Sammillani. However, Das had a specific kind of education in mind, one that could not be imparted in schools and classrooms. According to Das, the Sammillani had to identify and educate the Oriya people about:

> What self interest is not at odds with the community's interest and
>
> that, what ever is against the interests of the community is not in the
>
> interest of the individual. *We should identify the tasks that* are in the
>
> interest of this province of India, *but not* against the interests of
>
> India and how are they to be achieved. In the present condition
>
> which of these tasks can be counted among our commonly held
>
> desires and which of these is it within our powers to achieve.
>
> Basically, what is the identity and responsibility of every individual,
>
> every family, every village and the whole Oriya province?[182]
>
> (Emphasis mine)

Thus the function of the Sammillani, according to Das, was to educate the Oriya people in the ethics of communal life. The Sammillani had to identify the interests of the individual, Oriya community and the Indian nation. It had to maintain a balance between

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[182] Das, "Utkal Sammillani." p 65

these interests and ensure that there was no conflict between the individual, the region and the nation. However, this did not imply that the interests of the region were subsumed in those of the nation. In the above passage there is a tactical recognition given to the possibility that the region may have interests that may not coincide with that of the nation. Das suggested that in such cases, these interests had to be curbed either in deference to national interests or in consideration of region's ability to materialize its interests. Thus, I would argue that in Das' formulation, identity and responsibility of the individual, family, village and the Oriya province was determined by the balance of interests between the individual region and nation. It can be inferred that regional identity was informed by both local and national concerns.

Das ascribed to the Sammillani a conceptual task .The actual task of development of the Oriya condition, such as the establishment of schools, local hospitals or co-operative bank was to be carried out by the rural organizations or *Gramya Samitis* set up by the Utkal Sammillani. The Sammillani itself was to clarify conceptual issues about community building and ensure that the Gramya Samities acted in accordance with the interests of the Oriya region and the Indian nation. Since Das argued that the activity of the Utkal Sammillani as well as that of the Gramya Samitis was Prajaniti, two types of Praja emerge here. First, the praja as Utkal Sammillani's members, whose function was to thank the government occasionally and formulate the legitimate interests of the individual, region and the nation. Second was the praja, as the Gramya Samitis, who were to work for the socio-economic upliftment of the Oriyas at the grass roots level. I would argue that this division of labor was symptomatic of hierarchies among the praja that Das

imagined. The Utkal Sammillani as praja ascribed to itself the position of the vanguard while the Gramya Samitis as praja were to be instructed by this vanguard in the rites of citizenship.

In Das' rejection and refiguring of Rajaniti, the stakes of rajaniti emerged clearly. In his essay, Das had a dual task. He had to accommodate critiques of the Utkal Sammillani's political standing while maintaining the Sammillani's distance from politics. Why did Das need to claim politics despite a discomfort about the possible repercussions of political activity? While he was reluctant to participate in the contemporary critique of colonialism, Das realized that acting in the interests of a community essentially involved political activity. However, political activity for Das meant organization of members of the community so that they could stake a claim in the interest of the region and the nation. What Das failed to address is how the Oriya community could be emancipated without opposition to the colonial state whose interests did not coincide with that of the Oriya community.

The limits of Das' politics were due to his inability to break away from the notion of politics as governance. Even as he struggled to bring the praja into the realm of the political, Das shied away from anti-colonial politics. His understanding of prajaniti or the politics of the praja was based on the assumption of the infallibility of the raja. Anti-colonial politics attacked the very foundation of his thought by arguing that the colonial state was an illegitimate sovereign. In the last active years of the Sammillani, this new understanding of politics became more and more influential. Finally in 1920, the Sammillani leadership capitulated to the demands of the younger members of the

organization and joined the Non-cooperation movement led by the Congress. Thus in 1920, the Sammillani officially espoused anti-colonial politics.

Conclusion

In the first moment I analyzed Sammillani's justification for abstinence from political opposition to the colonial state by situating rajaniti and praja in a framework of monarchical rule where rajaniti was the ethics of governance followed by the British Raja (monarch) to govern and protect his subjects—the Oriya praja. However, this move to deny politics through a reiteration of the raja praja distinction failed because the terms raja, praja and rajaniti were being imbued with new meaning due to the very activities of organizations like the Sammillani. These new meanings insisted upon the centrality of the praja. Through this centering of the praja in its discussion about socio-cultural reform, the Utkal Sammillani, despite its explicit reluctance, produced the possibility of people's politics. In the second moment, I explored the implications of attempts to sustain the raja praja distinction through a separation of the social and the political. In this formulation, the praja, though central, occupied an autonomous social sphere outside the influence of the colonial state that monopolized the political domain. However, increasingly, radical critique of the colonial state tended to undermine this neat separation of the social and the political by arguing that the praja was a political being. In the third moment, I illustrated an attempt to resolve this conundrum in Madhusudan Das' acknowledgement that the praja was political even as he attempted to limit the praja to prajaniti. Here prajaniti was thought of as a limited notion of politics that was subordinate to rajaniti.

In each of these three moments in the history of the praja and rajaniti, two opposing perspectives on politics seems to be vying for dominance; the contest is between Rajaniti as governance and rajaniti as anti-colonial people's politics. The tension in Ramachandra Bhanja Deo's speech at the first meeting of the Utkal Sammillani between popular government and a monarchical model of government where the praja could only be a subject illustrates this opposition. In the essays in *Utkal Sahitya* there was an effort to address this opposition through a discussion of the efficacy of an abstinence from politics in order to act in the favor of Oriya community. Finally, Madhusudan Das' formulation of prajaniti strained to resolve the opposition of the social and the political but failed to do so because he could not account for the growing critique of the colonial state. In all these cases, there is an effort to maintain loyal attitude towards the colonial state even as such a stand becomes increasingly impolitic. On the other hand the rhetoric of individual sovereignty, rights, duties and responsibilities crept into this definition of praja almost despite the writer's efforts to maintain the subject-hood of the praja. In 1920, at the Chakradharpur session of the Utkal Sammillani, the decision to join the Indian National Congress in this anti-colonial struggle was the result of the final dominance of this new notion of praja as a political being.

Looking at the debate surrounding the Utkal Sammillani allows us to understand how a vocabulary of anti-colonial politics emerged in the early twentieth century. In the period between 1903 and 1920 the meaning of politics changed from a set of ethics of governance to people's politics based on a demand for political rights from the colonial state. At stake in this change was the conceptualization of the Indian citizen. The praja

shifted from being a colonial subject into a nascent citizen. Even as the Sammillani shied

away from anti-colonial politics, it was forced to acknowledge the potency of the praja's

stake in both the social and political spheres. By tracing the development of the concept

of the praja from the colonial subject to a moment when it is poised to attain citizenship,

this chapter charts the process through which a politics of the colonized that was not

crippled by a lack of political equality was being thought in the early twentieth century

India.

Regionalizing Nationalism: Franchise and the Emerging Oriya Imagination of the Indian Nation

"…those who say that a colonized community has no politics, do not see human life in its entirety. Whether free or subjugated a community which lives within a kingdom and accepts the reign of a well structured State governed by the rule of law, has a politics in some form or other. The politics of a self-governing people will be different from that of a colonized people. However, it cannot be said the colonized have no politics."[183]

-Gopabandhu.Das, Presidential Speech at the Utkal Sammillani, December 1919.

In this landmark speech, Gopabandhu Das, one of the founding members of the provincial branch of Indian National Congress in Orissa, tried to claim a politics for the disenfranchised. Das was explicitly departing from the existing consensus within the Utkal Sammillani to refrain from any participation in political activity. This previous accord against politics was based on the understanding that politics was exclusive to the realm of the state and the rulers. The Oriyas, a colonized people devoid of any right to self determination, had no access to the realm of politics. Das argued that whether self governing or colonized, all people are political beings.

This 1919 speech at the Utkal Sammilani heralded the beginning of a new political atmosphere both within the Utkal Sammillani and also in the elite political sphere in Orissa in general. Exactly a year later, the Utkal Sammillani split on the question of

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[183] Gopabandhu Das, *Desa Misrana Andolana*, vol. 3, Gopabandhu Rachanabali (Collected Works of Gopabandhu Das) (Cuttack: Gopabandhu Janma Satabarshika Samiti 1976). 14

whether to join the Indian National Congress led Non-cooperation movement or to remain aloof from politics and maintain a conciliatory relationship with the colonial government. The faction for alliance with the Indian National Congress dominated and the Sammillani agenda was amended to include political agitation within the purview its activities. As the Sammillani's agenda shifted towards anti-colonial nationalist politics public life in Orissa came to be occupied with discussions of nationalism, freedom and individual self determination.

Das was explicitly making an effort to map out a politics of the *paradheen* or of those that are under the rule of Others.[184] In doing so he was responding to the earlier consensus within the Utkal Sammillani that was based on the understanding of politics or *rajaniti* as the relationship between the *raja* (Sovereign) and the *praja* (subject). In this framework the colonized Oriyas were the praja of the British colonial raja. The praja's critical engagement with politics or rajaniti could take place only as rebellion upon the collapse of 'rajaniti'. That is, with in the traditional framework of politics rebellion was legitimate when the Raja failed to effectively perform Rajaniti. Thus it was only when Rajaniti collapsed that rebellion by the praja was justified. Accordingly, the praja could not act politically. By arguing that, "Whether free or subjugated a community which lives within a kingdom and accepts the reign of a well structured State governed by the rule of law, has a politics in some form or other", Gopabandhu Das was gesturing at a different notion of praja: the praja as citizen. This chapter seeks to elaborate on the circumstances that precipitated this rethinking of politics as the politics of the colonized. At stake in this

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[184] Here I capitalize Other because in the term *paradheen* the prefix *para* means otherness. Thus paradheen does not merely translate as rule of some one else but rule by someone who is fundamentally other from the self.

elaboration is the history of the regionalization of nationalist politics. Therefore, this chapter reveals a moment when ideas of self determination and democracy came to be based on a concept of citizenship that was fundamentally marked by regional linguistic identity.

Two major phenomena in Indian politics forced leaders like Gopabandhu Das to break from the prevailing state-centered understanding of politics in Orissa to propose a politics that allowed the Oriya people to participate in political activity despite their disenfranchised status. First, this rethinking of politics was the consequence of the Colonial government's efforts to 'train' the Indian populace in the rites of democracy and citizenship that would enable the introduction of the self-determination in India. The Government of India Act of 1919, which introduced limited elected governance based on equally limited franchise, put in motion a public discussion about the education of the people in the rites of representative governance. The result of this discussion was a recognition that the people had to engage with questions of governmental policy and that this engagement was in itself political. This in turn necessitated the development of modes of communication that would educate the people in their rights and responsibilities as colonial subject/citizens.

The other phenomenon was the change in the attitude of the Indian National Congress towards regional linguistic politics. [185] In 1919-1920, the Congress recognized the need to reorganize Indian provinces on linguistic lines. Consequently, provincial branches of the Congress, called the Provincial Congress Committees (PCC), were established on linguistic basis. For instance, even though a separate province of Telegu

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[185] Henceforth the Indian National Congress will be referred to as the Congress.

speaking Andhra Pradesh or Oriya speaking Orissa did not exist, the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee and the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee were set up to represent the Telegu and Oriya speaking people. The warming of the Utkal Sammillani's attitude towards anti-colonial politics was directly linked to this shift in Congress policy.

The ultimate result of these two phenomena was the regionalization of Indian nationalist politics. The system of diarchy instituted by the Government of India Act of 1919 involved the introduction of wider elections which established a system of dual governmental responsibility between a popularly elected provincial government and the central government under the Governor General of India. One of the more novel features of the act was the institution of provincial elections that were based on the organization of the Indian electorate into regional units which would elect semi-autonomous provincial governments. The need to demarcate constituencies and assign representation to various elements of Indian society required the colonial government to take regional public opinion into account. Consequently, the reforms involved a systematic accounting of linguistic communities in India and language became one of the most important factors in determining representation in future elections. As regional identity movements had come to be based on language by the early twentieth century, the idea of Indian franchise and representation came to be marked by a system of classification that was based on linguistic regions.

While the colonial government's understanding of the Indian citizen/subject was marked by language as a result of the reforms, the Congress also had to re-orient its understanding of the nature of the Indian community. In contrast to its earlier insistence

on the homogeneity of the Indian population, the Congress now had to recognize linguistic diversity in India. That is, the Congress had to formulate an idea of the Indian nation that took into account linguistic difference rather than being threatened or disrupted by this difference.

Ultimately, this reformulation of the idea of the India nation as fundamentally constituted by a variety of linguistic communities impacted the way in which Indian nationalism spread and took root in the various regions of India. Institutions and modes of communication particular to various Indian regions came to play an essential role in popularizing the ideas of citizenship, national community and self rule in India.

This study reveals the nature of the metonymic relationship between the region and the nation. Through an analysis of the rhetoric of the Colonial Government, Indian National Congress and the Utkal Sammillani about the introduction of franchise and the relationship between language and politics, I will illustrate the relational nexus between citizenship, popular politics, all India nationalism and regional politics. With the emergence of more popular franchise and increased awareness of the need for a broader popular base in both regional and national organizations, the colonial government, Indian National Congress and the Utkal Sammillani had to conceptualize subaltern political participation. The argument of this chapter is neither about elite politics nor is it about subaltern politics. Rather it is an attempt to elaborate on the way in which the elite thought the absorption of the non-elite into the realm of the politics. Appealing to regional linguistic politics and using regional languages in all India nationalist political praxis was the most effective means of enabling a broader political base for both the

regional and national political organizations. Hence, I argue in this chapter that this need to create a political community that would reach beyond the elite produced the paradoxical concept of the Indian citizen who was marked by particular regional linguistic identities.

To that end, this concluding chapter is divided into three sections. Through a reading of the 1919 Constitutional reforms and the Utkal Sammillani's response, the first section reveals how the emerging ideas of colonial citizenship came to be marked by regional linguistic difference. The emergence of colonial citizenship required a reformulation of the notion *rule* or in Colonial India which would make way for the participation of Indian subjects to British reign in matters of government. Thus this section traces changes in the understanding of 'rule' or *rajya* through a reading of political discussions both within and outside Orissa that argued for a broadening of politics and the inclusion of the 'masses' in political agitation in India. It is in this shift in the meaning of rule in 1918-1919 that the roots of the change in the attitude of the Utkal Sammillani's politics lay.

The second section deals with the other phenomenon which led to the change in the Sammillani's attitude towards politics—Indian National Congress's recognition of linguistic politics in India. This recognition was based on a new emphasis on the constitutive role of vernacular language in the spread of mass politics as well as the importance of the vernacular in the establishment of self rule where the self is defined by linguistic identity. Through a reading of early Congress anxiety about religious difference and Gandhian definitions of *swaraj* (self rule) based on language, I will trace two

significant shifts in the Congress attitude towards regional languages in the early

twentieth century. First, through a detailed reading of the Congress discussions about the

1903 governmental proposal for the partition of the Bengal province along religious lines,

I will illustrate how Congress anxieties about divisiveness of religious difference was

allayed by the avowal of the indissolubility of the Bengali linguistic community. This, I

argue, led to a broader recognition of the importance of regional linguistic politics which

could potentially undermine the divisiveness of Hindu/Muslim religious difference.

Consequently, and this is the second shift in Congress attitude towards linguistic

difference in India, regional linguistic politics was incorporated into Indian nationalist

political praxis as a foil for discord caused by religious difference.

Finally, in the third section, through a reading of Gopabandhu Das' argument for

Utkal Sammillani's participation in anti-colonial politics I will reveal the emergence of a

new understanding of the relationship between the region Orissa and the Indian nation

based on inclusive humanism. Through a close reading of Gopabandhu Das' historic

1919 speech at the Utkal Sammillani, I will illustrate how this new understanding

emerged from four important shifts in the way the Utkal Sammillani, the Oriya

community, the place Orissa and the place India were understood in early twentieth

century Orissa. First, the Utkal Sammillani's understanding of itself as an elite

organization changed when Das argued for a more populist agenda. This in turn led to the

second important shift, the definition of the Oriya community changed from an exclusive

community based on language to a more inclusive community based on shared space.

This shift enabled the third conceptual move in Oriya politics as Gopabandhu argued for

a more inclusive politics based on expansive humanism. Consequently, this avowal of expansive humanism was the final move to account for the relationship between the Indian nation and the Oriya region. Das argued that Oriya faith in the inclusive religious tradition of the Jaganath Cult made a relationship between Orissa and India based on humanism possible. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to illustrate how the emergence of citizenship in India occasioned a resolution of conflicts between the politics of the region and that of the nation as the Indian citizen came to be marked with linguistic and regional identities.

A Magna Carta for India: Constitutional Reforms of 1918-19 and the emergence of liberal citizenship in India.

The idea of citizenship, based on general franchise, was officially introduced for the first time in India by the Constitutional reforms of 1918-1919. Primarily posed as a Constitution for the government of India, the declaration of the reforms drew many social and political institutions across the country into conversations about the nature and possibilities of a constitution for colonized India. The government itself, through its efforts to draft the reforms, became increasingly vocal about the need to educate the Indian masses in a new form of governance that fundamentally broke with the earlier understanding of government as an institution essentially divorced from popular will. Apart from this radical change in the idea of the relationship between the individual and the state, the reforms had another profound influence on Indian politics. As franchise was primary introduced at the provincial level, this nascent form of Indian citizenship was marked by regional identity which varied from province to province. This was the first

step towards the regionalization of Indian politics, and by extension the regionalization of Indian nationalism.

My discussion of these reforms and their reception by an Indian nationalist leader, B.G. Tilak and by M.S. Das, the president of the Utkal Sammillani in 1918 is an attempt to trace the conceptual transformation of rule inherent in the reforms. While it cannot be argued that the colonial government's move towards the introduction of franchise was anything more than a foil for opposition to British colonialism with in India and a response to the global demands for restitution of self-determination to colonized people, the very introduction of popular franchise required the colonial government to theorize new ideas about the responsibilities of colonized subjects. As early as 1916 the need to secure Indian self determination had already become a major concern both in the Colonial Indian Government as well the metropolitan Government of England. Historian Richard Danzing quotes a proposal introduced in the Executive Council of the colonial government in India which noted that,

> The only goal to which we can look forward is to endow India, as an integral part of British India, with the largest measure of self government compatible with the maintenance of the supremacy of British rule.[186]

It is obvious from this quote that it was not the intention of the British government to enable absolute self determination in India. Yet also apparent is need to envisage the need to envisage the idea of a new 'self government compatible with the maintenance of the supremacy of British rule'. This paradoxical idea of Indian self government had to first engage with the existing ideas of British colonial sovereignty over its Indian subjects

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[186] Richard Danzing, "The Announcement of August 20th, 1917," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 28, no. 1 (1968). 20

which did not allow for an idea of individual Indian sovereignty. Therefore the colonial government was faced with a task to imagine a sovereign Indian citizen who was simultaneously subject to the British Empire. I argue that this imagination of partial autonomy for India was predicated on a re-thinking of the concept of rule or *rajya.* Through a reading of Tilak's discussion of Home Rule or Swaraj and M.S. Das's response to the reforms I will argue that colonial subject-hood came to be re-imagined in such a way that the Indian subject could have a say in governance.

Before embarking on a discussion about how the introduction of provincial franchise led to the regionalization of Indian politics, a brief account of the Constitutional reforms of 1918-1919 would be instructive. The Montague Declaration of August 1917 proclaimed the intention of the government to work towards "…the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British empire."[187] The reforms of 1919 were the enactment of this governmental policy to institute responsible government based on popular elections. In keeping with the spirit of the declaration, the reforms introduced two major changes to the existing form of government in India. First, the reforms introduced the idea of direct election which was based on limited popular franchise. Hitherto, a system of indirect elections was used to enable Indian representatives to be members of the Indian Legislative Council and the Provincial Legislative councils based

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[187] Great Britain. India Office and India. Governor-General (1916-1921 : Chelmsford), *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* (Calcutta,: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1918).

on a very narrow franchise.[188] Second, a system of diarchy where the responsibility for

the governance of British India was shared between a partially elected Central

government and the Provincial Government was introduced. The Franchise committee set

up to investigate the eligibility criteria for franchise and categorization of the Indian

electorate into constituencies suggested that franchise be based on territorial

constituencies within each province. This provincial and territorial classification of the

new Indian electorate created a new citizen who was not simply a potential voter but who

was also a subject marked by regional or provincial identity.

The British Government was forced to institute constitutional reforms in India due

to growing demands for self determination by the Indian political leadership who were

influenced by the British involvement in the First World War against Germany. During

the war, the demand for self-governance became increasingly strident in India as the

British argument for Indian support in Britain's war effort had been made on the grounds

that the soldiers of British Indian Army were fighting forces that were attacking the very

foundations of the democracy and self determination in the World. The subsequent Indian

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[188] The pre-existing system of indirect elections is explained in the Report on Constitutional Reforms in a discussion about the limitations of the existing system. The report notes "The chief of these are the very restricted nature of the present franchise, and except in the constituencies composed on the member of some special class or community, the lack of any real connection between the primary voter and the member who sits in the councils. In the Indian Legislative Council there are eighteen members who are elected to speak for sectional interests, and nine who may be said to represent, however remotely, the views of the people as a whole. So far as can be stated the largest constituency which returns a member directly to the Indian Legislative Council does not exceed 650 persons; and most of the constituencies are decidedly smaller. The constituencies which return the nine representatives of the people at large are composed of the non-official members of the various provincial legislative councils, and the average number of voters in these electoral bodies is only twenty two, while in one case the actual number is nine. In the case of the provincial councils themselves there is the same division of members between those who are directly elected to represent special interests and those who are elected indirectly as the representatives of the general population. For the latter the members of the municipal and local boards either acted as electors or chose electoral delegates to make the election; but in neither cases do the constituencies exceed a few hundred persons." in Ibid. . 53

demand for self-government emerged from this argument as Indian leaders argued that this protection of self determination should extend to Britain's own colonies.

However, it should be noted that these early demands for self determination or even responsible government were not based on clearly democratic ideas of sovereignty of the Indian people and an all out critique of colonialism. For instance, a reading of the documents of the Home-Rule League set up in 1916 by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant to lobby for the introduction of representative government in India reveals a continued investment in the sovereign-subject relationship between the British Government and the Indian people. This is evident in the formulation of the Home-Rule League's demands for constitutional reforms. In particular, the idea of Home- Rule or what Tilak famously called *Swarajya* that served as the catchword of the League was one of the earliest articulations of self governance in India. The term swarajya is constituted of two words- swa- meaning self literally or in Tilak's own definition 'our' and rajya meaning rule. Tilak defined the term as Home Rule or 'our right to manage our own home'. This definition is slightly different from the literal meaning of the word which is 'self rule'. The crucial difference lies in the use of the term 'home' in Tilak's translation of swarajya. Why does Tilak replace 'home' with 'swa' or self within his translation of Home-Rule as *Swarajya?* Through a reading of Tilak's translation of swarajya as Home-rule, I will illustrate how in the period preceding the declaration of the constitutional reforms of 1918-1919, the concept of rule was gradually shifting away from the domain of the Raja and transforming into a category tenuously linked to popular will. Tilak's

swarajya was an early iteration of a subsequent definition of Indian sovereignity that formed the basis of anti-colonial movement in India over the next 30 years.

A closer look at Tilak's argument about the demand for Swarajya and the idea of *raja* in his understanding of Home Rule reveals what is at stake in his use of the term 'home'. Tilak's use of the term 'home rule' as the translation of swarajya is symptomatic of his broader effort to argue for a qualified idea of *self* rule which paradoxically did not threaten the rule of the British *other.* For instance, in a speech at the beginning of the Home Rule movement in 1916, Tilak offered a curious definition of swarajya, one that simultaneously introduced Indian self governance and maintained the sovereignty of British rule in India. He said,

> The idea of swaraj is an old one. Of course when *swarajya* is spoken of (it shows that) there is some kind of rule opposed to *swa,* i.e. our, and (that) this idea originates at that time. This is plain. When such a conditions arrives it begins to be thought that there should be *swarajya,* and men make exertions for that purpose. You are at present in that sort of condition. Those who are ruling over you do not belong to your religion, race or even country. The question whether this rule of the English government is good or bad is different. The question of 'one's own' or 'alien' is also different.[189]

In other words, Tilak argued here that Swarajya is 'our' rule as opposed to rule by someone who does not belong to the category 'our'. He noted that the conditions for Swarajya had arrived because the present rulers did not "belong to your religion, race or

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[189] *Lok. Tilak's Speeches on Home Rule*, (pp. 132. Benares, 1917). 3

even your country"—because the rulers were *other* than us. However he continued his statement by qualifying that the 'question of one's own or alien is different'. That is, the question of alien-ness is an entirely different matter which though related to the question of swarajya, need not be raised in this instance. Hence, for Tilak, in this definition of swarajya which is based on difference, the question of difference itself could not be asked. Tilak defers that question for later. Therefore there is a strange ambivalence in Tilak's definition of Swarajya based on the opposition between 'one's own' and 'alien'. While he is arguing for self rule, he stops at pointing to the alien-ness of British Rule. Elsewhere, Tilak argued that,

> 'Alien-ness' has to do with interest. Alien-ness is certainly not concerned with white or Black skin. Alien-ness is not concerned with religion. Alien-ness is not concerned with trade or profession. ..But, if a man is exerting himself for the good of Indians and takes measures in that direction, I do not consider him as alien. If anybody has charged this administration with being alien, he has done so in the above sense. At first, I thought that there was nothing particular in this, The Peshwas's rule passed away and the Muhammaden rule passed away. The country came into the possession of the English. The King's duty is to do all those things whereby the nation may become eminent, be benefited, rise and become the equal of other nations. That king who does this duty is not alien. He is to be considered alien, who does not do this duty, but looks only to his own benefit, to the benefit of his own race, and to the benefit of his original country.[190]

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[190] Ibid. 6

By raising the issue of interests Tilak was not only making a case for the need for self rule but also creating an inclusive definition of belonging that enabled British rule to be seen as not alien.

Tilak's contradictory qualification of swarajya involving the deferral of the question of alien-ness contains the germ of his idea of sovereignty and kingship implicit in swarajya or Home-rule by Indians. That is, by deferring the question of alien-ness Tilak constructed an idea of self-rule that was divorced from any concept of nativist Indian sovereignty. As is evident from the above quotation, he did not consider the English rule as alien simply because it was not native to India. Hence for Tilak, the idea of self-rule could not involve a questioning of the sovereignty of the British rule over India on the grounds that it is alien to India. He makes this point very forcefully in his rather extended discussion of sovereignty through an argument about the status of the British Emperor in the actual government of India and irrelevance of the Emperor to the demand for Swarajya.

To this end, he punctuated the rest of his speech with the refrain that "the question of swarajya is not about the emperor". The English Emperor, or more broadly the King, in Tilak's idea of swarajya was the embodiment of an 'invisible sentiment' of sovereignty. On this matter he noted,

> …the universal sovereignty of the English Government has been established in India……But the present system of administration is such that some of able men who have been educated in England and have received college education come to Indian and the State administrations of India is carried on through them. Emperor

is (merely) a name. When you give a visible form to the sentiment which arises in your mind at the mentions of (the word) *raja i.e.* (king) there is the present emperor. This sentiment is invisible. When a visible form is given to this invisible (some thing) there is the King—the Emperor. But the Emperor does not carry on administration. The question of swarajya is not about the Emperor, not about this invisible sentiment.[191]

Here, according to Tilak, the emperor represents an 'invisible sentiment' which is invoked when one thinks the term 'raja'. In other words, if 'raja' means the sovereign, then the present British Emperor is the embodiment of the idea of sovereignty implicit in the term 'raja'. In this formulation, sovereignty is actually an idea, a sentiment, something invisible. This does not mean that Tilak considered sovereignty to be an unnecessary or unimportant thing. After making this argument that sovereignty is an intangible concept, he affirmed that "There must be a King; there must be a State Administration." It appears from this statement that Tilak was conflating the idea of King with state administration. However later in his speech he labored the point of difference between these two categories by opposing the invisibility of the sovereign concept with the visibility of administration. Hence, for Tilak there were two types of British government at play in India- the invisible sovereign British Government and the visible administrative arm of the British government comprising of the Indian Legislative and Executive bodies. He warned his listeners repeatedly not to confuse the two. "Do not

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[191] Ibid.4

create confusion in your minds by confounding both these things." he said, "These two things are quite distinct."

This distinction was crucial to his effort to think 'swarajya sans Indian sovereignty'. He located the demand for swarajya in the domain of the visible British governmental administration and not on the register of the sovereign control of the British over India. Hence the demand for self rule was the demand to allow Indians the opportunity to 'manage' Indian administration. He repeatedly reiterated that this demand may threaten to effect a change in the mode of administration of India but it did not threaten the sovereignty of British rule in India. Therefore, it is evident that for Tilak the demand for swarajya was not a critique of colonialism even thought it was a significant act of resistance.

In this context the substitution of 'home' for 'swa' or self is consistent with Tilak's argument for qualified self rule. In a different speech, he argues that swarajya means 'our right to manage our own home." The term 'manage' recurs in his speeches on Home Rule. By consistently employing a term like 'manage' that had implicit in it an idea of trusteeship, Tilak reinforced his argument about a limited self rule that was in keeping with the continuance of British sovereignty over India. The term 'home' performed a similar function. Because by invoking the idea of Home Tilak evoked the idea of something that was not home- the world. Scholars have established how in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Indian political and social rhetoric made use of the tropes of home and the world to establish boundaries between the domain of activity of the Indian people and that of the British government. By using the term Home

rule as his translation of swarajya, Tilak conjured two complementary ideas of rule; rule of the home and rule of something larger than the home. Though the physical reflection of this division is unclear, idea of two rules enabled Tilak to ask for self-rule without asking for the end of British sovereignty in India. In other words, it enabled him to maintain the rule of the British *king* or *raja* even as he demanded the right of the Indian people to rule themselves.

In his discussion of self rule by Indians, Tilak engaged with two crucial questions that were being raised about self determination by Indians; the possibility that the demand for swarajya was seditious and the fitness of the Indian people for self governance. Both these issues influenced the subsequent efforts by the colonial government to prepare the constitutional reforms in India. This was because at the core of the question of sedition was a particular understanding of the relationship between the British sovereign and the Indian subject which was based on the sovereign's absolute control in matters of government. This relationship had to change in order to accommodate the emerging idea of self governance based on representative government. As representative governance is founded on the principle that the individual exercises his stake in matters of government through his representative in council, the colonial government had to recognize the Indian subject's right to have a say in matters of rule.

By proposing a limited idea of self governance through the use of terms such as 'home' and 'management', Tilak effectively created an argument that the demand for Swarajya was not act of sedition or *rajadroha* (or opposition of the raja/king). Tilak's need for making this explicit is very revealing. While it can be argued that Tilak's move

195

to make a case against the possible seditious nature of the demand for swarajya was a tactical decision to avoid aggravating the British Colonial government, a much more complex argument can be made for Tilak's hesitation to preach sedition. In his definition of swarajya, Tilak opposed sedition to something unprecedented in British Indian politics, the people's right to participate and have a say in governance.

"There is no swarajya. There is no swarajya. What does it mean? What do we ask for? Do we say 'Drive away the English Government'? But I ask what (is it) to the Emperor? Does the Emperor lose anything whether the administration is carried on by a civil servant or by our Belvi Saheb? [cheers]. The rule still remains. The Emperor still remains. The difference would be that the white servant who was with him would be replaced by a black servant [cheers]. From whom then does this opposition come from? This opposition comes from those people who are in power. It does not come from the Emperor. From the Emperor's point of view there is neither anarchy nor want of loyalty, nor sedition in this. ***What does rajadroha [sedition] mean? Hatred of the King. Does 'King' mean a police sepoy?*** I said some time back that this distinction must first be made. Otherwise, [lit. then] if tomorrow you say 'remove the police sepoy' would it constitute sedition? Such is the belief of the police sepoy [laughter]. In the same manner go up a little and you will see that the demand made by us is right, proper, just and comfortable to human nature. The same has been done by other nations. It has not been done only in our country. .*Swarajya, swarajya--* what does it mean? Not that you do not want English rule. There is a mistake at the root.

…This argument is brought forward by men whose interest lies in deceiving you.

Do not care about it at all.[192]

Given the forceful-ness with which Tilak countered the charge of sedition in the demand

for swarajya and the audience's enthusiastic response to his assurance that participating is

the movement for swarajya does not constitute an act of sedition, it can be argued that

idea of rajadroha was particularly unpalatable for both Tilak and his audience. It can also

be argued that this hesitation to participate in rajadroha was a result of the popular fear of

reprisals from the British government. However, his assertion that the 'demand made by

us is right, proper, just and comfortable to human nature', hints at the possibility of a

different reading of Tilak's repeated refrain that the demand for swarajya was not

seditious. Here, Tilak was doing more that merely reassuring his listeners that such

actions are not sedition. He was doing something positive. By legitimizing the demand as

natural, he was attempting to think a new kind of subject who was entitled to tell the

sovereign that he/she is not ruling properly. Furthermore, in Tilak's formulation, not only

was the subject entitled to express dissent but this expression was essential to proper rule.

Such a reading would suggest that Tilak was introducing a new kind of relationship

between the raja and his subjects where the demand for an opportunity to participate in

governance did not necessarily involve a violent opposition to the sovereign's right to

rule. In other words, by claiming that swarajya was not rajadroha or hatred of the King,

Tilak was essentially trying to re-imagine colonial subject-hood in such a way that the

subject could have a say in governance. The fact that he had to forcefully and repeatedly

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[192]Ibid.21

impress upon his listeners that such a demand was not an attack on the sovereignty of the British Raja, could be read as a symptom of an existing understanding of sovereign-subject relationship that was based of a notion of rule where the subject had no say on the affairs of governance. It is in this break from an older understanding of rule that Tilak's demand for swarajya is radical.

This changing relationship between the subject and the sovereign in British India was also a major concern for the planners of the constitutional reforms of 1918-1919 within the Colonial government. The officials involved in the drafting of the reforms were chiefly concerned about the need to educate the rural Indian masses in the rites of citizenship—particularly among the peasantry whose idea of the state and its representatives had to undergo a significant shift to accommodate the new relationship between the sovereign and the subject. That is, as the right to vote was introduced selectively among the Indian population the relationship between the British sovereign state and its Indian subject came to be marked by the imposition of the State's responsibility towards its subjects through the election of people's representatives to the Legislative bodies in India. The Report on the Constitutional reforms of 1918, remarked on the significance of this change in the way India was governed in their discussion about the political awareness of the rural peasantry.

> Hitherto, they have regarded the official as their representative in the councils of government; and now we have to tear up that faith by the roots, to teach them that in future they must bring their troubles the notice of an elected representative—further, that they have the power to compel his attention. We have to bring about

the most radical revolution in the people's traditional ideas in India. Unless the

political changes now in contemplation are accompanied by an educational

campaign directed to awaking in all classes alike, but especially in this particular

class, a sense of citizenship, disaster will certainly result.[193]

The language of 'radical revolution' and 'uprooting' underlines the unprecedented nature

of the shift in the politics of India that was enabled by the reforms of 1918. At issue here

is the Indian peasant's attitude towards the colonial government which had to change

from the peasant's 'faith' that the government officials represented his interests in the

higher echelons of the colonial government to a much more active involvement in

governance where he had the 'power to compel' the attention of the person *he chooses* as

his representative. Again the change is only at the level of governance and, like Tilak's

swarajya, does not adversely impact the actual sovereignty of British rule in India. Hence,

the radical rupture implicit in the 1918 reforms is located in the introduction of popular

participation in legislative governance through elected representatives.

It should be noted here that the lack of prepared-ness for the reforms indicated by

the Report's call for the education of the people became one of the most controversial

issues linked with the constitutional reforms of 1918-1919. Scholars have noted how the

language of 'unfitness' came to be used by the colonial government over the years to

delay the complete efflorescence of Indian citizenship through the establishment of

entirely elected legislative bodies and the attainment of dominion status for India.[194]

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[193] ———, *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms*.87
[194] Other colonies of the British empire like Ireland, South Africa and Australia has attained dominion status which meant that these colonies were governed entirely by representatives of the natives of these

Historians have argued that the British government used the rhetoric of unprepared-ness

to relegate the people of the India to the " waiting room of history" where they were to be

educated in the nuances of citizenship and political life and wait for the bestowal of the

right to rule themselves till the British government felt that the Indians were ready for

self rule. My focus on the reforms is not an effort to counter this reading of the British

rhetoric. In fact, a close reading of the Report on the reforms indicates the use of a

language of protection in relation to the Indian rural population which can be read as an

effort to defer the assignment of complete self rule. For instance, when the Reports

discusses the impact of the reforms on the rural peasant, it is noted

> They have all been dispensed for him by the official government in the past; and
>
> we must always bear in mind that he will not find it easy to learn to arrange them
>
> for himself in future. He has sat on caste *panchayats;* he has signed joint petitions
>
> to official authority. But he has never exercised a vote on public questions. His
>
> mind has been made up for him by his landlord or banker or his priest or his
>
> relatives or the nearest official. These facts make it an imperative duty to assist,
>
> and to protect, him while he is learning to shoulder political responsibilities.[195]

I agree with the reading of present historians that the British focus on the unpreparedness

of the rural populations was not always directed by concerns for the proper functioning of

democratic electoral processes in India. Rather it was an effort to defer the conferral of

absolute citizenship couched in a language of paternalistic concern. However, my effort

colonies even through these colonial governments were in a tributary relationship with the British
Government in England.
[195] Great Britain. India Office and India. Governor-General (1916-1921 : Chelmsford), *Report on Indian
Constitutional Reforms*.89

here is not to mine for information on the actual lack of preparation of the people of rural India for the duties of citizenship which would involve a straight forward reading of the British argument. Neither is my effort to reproduce the pre-existing studies on the modes of deferral of Indian citizenship by the British colonial government. On the contrary, my reading of the reforms attempts to situate it in a discursive history of citizenship in India. Despite its limitations and subterfuge, the constitutional reforms of 1918-1919 are centrally important to such a history because they reveal (along with Tilak's *swarajya*) a moment of profound rupture in the way both the colonial officials and the Indian political elite read the relationship between the sovereign British government and its colonized Indian subjects.

This moment of rupture is particularly important because it was the beginning of one of the most enduring preoccupations of Indian nationalist as well as post colonial politics--the politicization of the Indian masses. It is in this context that the use of the vernacular also became important in politics for both the colonial government that was trying to introduce representative government and the Indian political elite of the Indian National Congress that was trying to rouse the masses to join the struggle for self determination. Later in the chapter, it will be illustrated how there was an increasing realization within the ranks of the Indian National Congress that a common national political agenda could not be propagated through out India without recourse to vernacular languages. While English served as a lingua franca for the urban English educated elite of the Indian Provinces, the majority of the Indian population used the local vernacular for public communication. As has been illustrated in the first chapter, the vernacular public

sphere was fairly well developed by the 1920s and could effectively serve the interests of Pan-Indian nationalism.

In the history of the development of politics in Orissa, it is this rupture that occasioned the rethinking of politics noted at the beginning of this chapter. That is, when Gopabandhu Das attempted to assert the right of colonized people to participate in politics by arguing that "The politics of a self-governing people will be different from that of a colonized people. However, it cannot be said the colonized have no politics,"[196] he was trying to introduce to his listeners the idea that the Indian subjects of the British Raj *could* have a say in the way they were governed. The special session of the Utkal Sammillani in August 1918 was a prelude to this shift in the attitude towards political discussion in Orissa. This session was organized to engage with the details of the Constitutional reforms.

A reading of the presidential speech given by Madhusudan Das at this 1918 session reveals the gradual shift in the Sammillani's attitude towards politics. As noted in the last chapter, from its inception in 1903 till 1920, the Utkal Sammillani had explicitly banned political discussion—meaning criticism of the colonial government—in its meetings. Hence, the very discussion of the reforms with a clearly stated intent to proffer criticism to the government was radical break with the prevailing Sammillani policy in 1918.[197] This break foreshadowed the landmark decision in 1920 to allow political

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[196] Das, *Desa Misrana Andolana*.14
[197] Das began his speech by saying that " We have met here with an object, which is well defined, that object is the consideration of the Report in Constitutional Reform." and proceeded to define the objective as criticism. Reprinted in ———, ed., *Utkal Sammillani(1903-1936), Part 1*.

discussion in the Utkal Sammillani by adopting the Indian National Congress program of non-cooperation.

Even though the Sammillani broke with tradition by introducing criticism of the government to its platform in this session, Madhusudan Das's speech represented the prevailing reluctance of the organization to question the sovereignty of the British government. As the last chapter illustrates the Sammillani figured itself and its constituents as praja or subject to the British Raja or sovereign. M.S. Das firmly placed his critique of the government's reforms within the framework of this relationship by naming the August 20th 1917 Montague Declarations that laid out the agenda for the reforms as the *Magna Carta* for India "granted by His majesty to his Indian subject(s)."[198] However, even as he placed the reforms within the context of a monarchical economy of rights and power, he indicated that it was not quite the same kind of Magna Carta that was bestowed on the English people in 1215 AD.

> The Magna Carta of the British Constitution was exhorted by a king, who has no sympathy with the aspirations of the people, no respect for their just and legitimate rights; but the Magna Carta of the Indian Constitution was the free gift of a constitutional monarch announced by his ministers in the national parliament.[199]

By opposing the notion of a 'constitutional monarch' to that of a 'King' Das indicated a shift in the understanding of sovereignty as well as the sovereign subject relationship.

[198]Ibid. 422
[199] Ibid. 423

While the sovereignty of the Constitutional monarch was not compromised by the 'free gift' of the Indian Magna Carta, he was more receptive to the 'just and legitimate rights' of the people. Quite like Tilak's idea of Swarajya and the colonial government's own efforts to introduce responsible government without upsetting British control over the Indian state, M. S. Das' framing of the constitutional reforms as the Indian Magna Carta enabled him to both sustain an idea of sovereignty rooted in the British emperor and account for the emergence of a new kind of politics in India where the Indian people were laying stake on governance.

Furthermore, M.S. Das' speech reveals the impact of the reforms on the manner in which the political geography of India came to be envisioned in the subsequent years. Much of his speech was devoted to the implications of the suggestions for the re-organization of the provinces on linguistic grounds in the Report on the Constitutional reforms. In discussing these suggestions M.S.Das addressed the report's concerns about the need to gradually politicize the rural Indian population by underlining the importance of linguistically homogenous provinces for the effective politicization of the people. He explicitly linked the question of redistribution of British Indian territories on linguistic lines with the objectives of the constitutional reforms of 1918 by connecting language with access to citizenship. In order to make his point, Das quoted the Report's discussion on the necessity for the re-distribution of British India on linguistic lines for the successful implementation of the constitutional reforms.

> We have seen how historical reasons brought them about. We cannot doubt that
> the business of the government would be simplified if administrative unites were

both smaller and more homogenous; and when we beat in mind the prospect of

the immense burdens of Government in India being transferred to comparatively

inexperienced hands, such considerations acquire additional weight. It is also a

strong argument in favour of linguistic or racial units of government, that by

making it possible to conduct the business of legislation in the vernacular, they

would contribute to draw into the arena of public affairs men who were not

acquainted with English.[200]

It is clear that for the writers of the Report on the Constitutional Reforms of 1918,

language was fundamental to the implementation of the reforms. Apart from the logistical

simplicity that linguistically homogenous provinces would enable, the use of the

vernacular would aid the progressive education and participation of a wider number of

people in electoral practices. Accordingly, the Report submitted that "In Orissa and Berar

at all events it seems to us that the possibility of instituting sub-provinces need not be

excluded from consideration at a very early date." [201] By proposing the reorganization of

provincial boundaries, the writers of the report were conceptualizing the future of India as

'a sister-hood of states, self governing in all matters of purely local or provincial

interests…"While Madhusudan Das applauded the Report's allusion to the need for

reorganization of provincial boundaries, he took issue with the implicit deferral of any

actual State action to that end. In the rest of his speech he made a forceful argument for

the reorganization of Indian provinces on linguistic lines based on the claim that the

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[200] Quoted in Ibid. 439
[201] Quoted in Madhusudan Das' speech reprinted in Ibid. 437

Government's efforts to institute political reforms would come to naught if provinces were not linguistically homogenous.

This claim was based on his contention that self governance was linked to language in India. By introducing the idea of 'intermediary ruling classes' Das attempted to prove that in linguistically heterogeneous provinces like Bihar and Orissa and the Bengal Presidency the speakers of minority language were at a great disadvantage in the new atmosphere of representative government. Instead of introducing limited self governance through the institution of Provincial autonomy, the reforms would put in place an intermediary ruling class of Biharis and Bengali who were in a majority in the aforementioned provinces. As Oriyas were a minority in both provinces, they would be assigned a fewer number of representatives to both the Bihar and Orissa and Bengal provincial legislatures. This in turn would mean that the Oriya would not have an equal say in matters of government and hence would not enjoy a true measure of self-rule. Das emphasized that this lack of self rule for the Oriyas and the institution of 'intermediary ruling classes' would both mar the 'sisterhood of Indian states in the future' and jeopardize Oriya loyalty to the British Empire.

> The reform proposals are in response to a new sense of self-esteem which the war had awakened… Orissa will not yield to the Biharees the position of an intermediary ruling race. If the present position is not improved, there will be friction, which is not desirable in the interests of both Bihar and Orissa. Law abiding and peaceful citizenship is recommended in school books but potentiality

for creating unrest and start agitation carry the prizes. Orissa has yet to learn this. The concessions to Bihar were a price paid to prevent agitation…

The demands of the war and the proposed responsible government have put a higher value on loyalty combined with development of a spirit of sacrifice in the interests of the Empire. A potential spirit of unrest must have a discount put on it. National consciousness and self –esteem ought to develop into national pride and sustain the spirit of sacrifice. Realization of the responsibilities, which the new atmosphere has given birth to, is an impossibility without the growth of the national consciousness. Allow a group of people to occupy the position of an intermediary ruling race and you store up trouble for the future from the dominant race and deprive the empire of loyal support from another race. Allow one race to exercise a dominant influence over another and you mar the glorious picture of a sister-hood of states in India of the future.[202]

In this statement about the dangers of 'intermediary ruling races" Das centered the implications of the growth of 'national-consciousness' on the success of the Constitutional reforms and the future of Empire in India. Interestingly, by national-consciousness he did not mean Indian Nationalism. Rather, the nation in national consciousness denoted the various linguistic groups in India. It would not be wise to make much of this slippage since the same word was used to denote community, nation, caste and religious groups in Orissa—*jati.* Hence, the slippage between Oriya national feeling-*Oriya Jatiya bhava* and Indian national conciousness- *Bharata Jatiyata* often

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[202] Ibid.433

occurred in discussions about community in Orissa. However, as this speech was made in English, the use of word 'national' to denote Oriya or Bihari community needs to be taken seriously, albeit with concessions. By thinking of these communities as nations in themselves, complete with a historical past, common language and a shared everyday life, Das was envisioning a particular kind of India which was constituted by a sisterhood of states where each linguistic community had equal stake.

Das' statement implies that this national consciousness of the linguistic communities of India was central to the success of the Constitutional reforms as the idea of responsible government was closely linked to self determination which was in turn based on the absence of intermediary ruling races. The 'realization of responsibilities' was impossible without the growth of national consciousness because it this consciousness that inculcated pride and a 'spirit of sacrifice'. This linking of national consciousness to realization of responsibilities has a lot more at stake than a simple clarification of the development of citizenship from community allegiances via the establishment of electoral politics. In this curious use of the phrase 'realization of responsibilities' (without the mention of government, a term often coupled with 'responsible' in this period) leaves the term 'responsibilities' open for interpretation. It appears from Das's comments about sacrifice and Empire that the responsibility being spoken of here in not merely about the rigors of citizenship but also about responsibility to the Empire. This of course is in keeping with his earlier discussion of the introduction of franchise in India as the sovereign's *gift* to his subjects.

There are two important implications of this use of responsibility in Das' speech. One , for Das, the newly introduced idea of responsibility involved a coupling of responsibility toward one's immediate community (in this case the Oriya community) and responsibility towards the British Empire. Hence, for Das, responsibility entailed in responsible government, both for the citizen and the representative responsibility, was marked by a responsibility to the Empire. This understanding of citizenship was fundamentally tied to Imperial rule in India. This leads to the second implication of the use of responsibility in this manner. By tying the nascent idea of citizenship to Imperial rule and characterizing the future of India as a sister hood of linguistic nations, Das made empire rather than the Indian nation the organizing force of the Indian state.

In final analysis, Das' argument about the 'intermediary ruling classes' and his linking of responsible government with British imperial control over India, was based on the reflections in the Report on Constitutional reforms about the importance of vernacular languages to the success of the reforms themselves. By stressing the link between language and access to self rule, Das was arguing for the recognition of the regional nature of the emergent citizen in India. Hence for both the framers of the Constitutional Reforms of 1918 and the Utkal Sammillani the reforms were about the introduction of a new kind of relationship between the Colonial State and the Indian people. Furthermore, this relationship was marked by an idea of a regional citizen based on a regional electoral constituency. This is particularly reflected in M.S. Das' formulation of 'intermediary ruling races' which emphasized self rule through a demarcation of distinct 'racially' differentiated regions.

Speaking to the heart of the people: Indian National Congress policy on vernacular languages and linguistic politics.

Gopabandhu Das' 1919 speech that made an effort to envision a politics of the colonized and the eventual decision of the Utkal Sammillani in 1920 to join the Non-Cooperation movement led by the Indian National Congress was also occasioned by a significant shift in the attitude of the Congress towards linguistic politics and vernacular languages. In the past, the Congress attitude towards Oriya proposals for the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tracts had ranged from indifference to direct opposition. As the Congress came to realize the important role of vernacular languages in popular propaganda --which in turn was essential to the spread of political message of anti-colonial nationalism among the Indian masses-- those involved in the movement for the formation of Orissa came to see the Congress as a valuable ally. Allegiance to the colonial state was no longer the only path towards the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tracts. The demand for the reorganization of British Indian territories on linguistic lines was introduced as a major objective of Congress politics in this period. This moment is crucial both in the history of politics in Orissa and the history of the development of Indian Nationalism. The acknowledgement of the claims of linguistic nationalism in the Congress, enabled budding Indian nationalists in Orissa to carve a space for anti-colonial politics in a region where all such politics had been avoided in the hopes that an appeased Colonial government would grant that the demand for a separate province of Orissa. At the national level this acknowledgement of regional linguistic politics occasioned a re-imagining of the Indian nation as a conglomeration of linguistically diverse regions. It

210

was in this period (1918-1920) that the metonymic relationship between linguistically diverse regions and the unified Indian nation was established. This section will trace the prehistory of this moment and also illustrate how this new idea of the Indian nation enabled an elision of other more pressing registers of difference—particularly the Hindu/Muslim question. Two important themes will be dealt with in this section—the curious relationship between the Congress attitude towards language and the organization's engagement with the problem of Hindu/Muslim communalism and the realization within the Congress that its objectives for the politicization of the Indian masses was impossible without the use of vernacular languages.

Language became an important issue on the Congress platform in 1903 when the British government published plans to partition the massive Bengal Presidency into two halves. Bengali Muslims were a majority in the proposed east Bengal province and Bengali Hindus were a majority in the new western half. The proposals for the partition of Bengal lead to the first mass- based public demonstrations against the policies of the colonial government—the Swadeshi Movement of 1908. While the Swadeshi movement figures as a major landmark in the history of anti-colonial nationalism in India, the partition of Bengali played a pivotal role in two other histories in early Indian nationalism-- in the history of communalism in India and that of the Congress attitude towards language in national politics. In 1903 after the plans for the partition of Bengal were made public, the Congress met for its major annual meeting in Madras and severely criticized what its leaders saw as the Government's efforts to create dissention among the

'bengali speaking brethren' on religious grounds.[203] Here, the linguistic community of the Bengali speaking people was privileged over the actual religious communities that the Bengali speaking people belonged to. Paradoxically, this acknowledgement of the linguistic identity of the Bengali people involved an argument for the retention of existing political boundaries of British Indian provinces in general. This argument entailed an opposition to other plans for rearranging regional boundaries that would *unite* other linguistic communities in India. In particular, the Congress resolutions in Madras criticized the not only the partition of Bengal but also the proposals of the Risley circular which called for the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tracts including the Ganjam district of the Madras Presidency under a single administration. [204]Criticizing all government efforts to rearrange provincial boundaries the Congress resolved in Madras,

> Resolved that the is Congress views with deep concern the present policy of the Government of India in breaking up territorial divisions which have been of long standing and are closely united by ethnological, legislative, social and administrative regulations and deprecates the separation from Bengal of Dacca, Mymensingh, Chittagong Divisions and portions of Chotanagpur Division, and also the separation of the district of Ganjam and the agency tracts of the Ganjam and Vizagapatnam Districts from the Madras Presidency.[205]

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[203] This language of 'bengali speaking bretheren' recurs in the Congress discourse about the Partition of Bengal. See A.M Zaidi & S. G. Zaidi, " Volume 4: 1901-1905 on Road to Self -Government," in *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, ed. A.M Zaidi & S. G. Zaidi (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd, 1978).
[204] For an account of the Risley Circular see Arts, *The Oriya Movement : Being a Demand for a United Orissa*.
[205] Zaidi, ed., *Inc the Glorious Tradition -Volume One: 1885-1920*. P 238

This contradictory resolution questioned both the government's efforts to divide the Bengali linguistic community and unite the Oriya linguistic community alienated the Oriya political elite. It appeared that the Congress would not support Oriya efforts for the amalgamation of all Oriya speaking areas under a single administration.

The 1903 Congress recourse to claims about the interests of regional linguistic community in its opposition to the partition of Bengal compounded a curious conflation of the question of religious difference and the idea of a linguistic community. The argument that linguistic community produced a shared every day life that trumped the demands of religious separatism recurred in the early twentieth century Congress rhetoric about the Hindu-Muslim relationships. For instance the 1906 annual Presidential address by Dadabhai Naoroji spoke about the need to inculcate a 'thorough political union among the Indian people of all creeds and classes' by emphasizing the linguistic commonality between people of various religious groups.

In this appeal for a thorough union for political purposes among all the people, I make a particular one to my friends, the Mohammadens... All the people in their political position are in one boat. They must sink or swim together. Without this union all efforts will be in vain. There is the common saying –but also the best commonsense—"United we stand—divided we fall. There is one another circumstance, I may mention here, If I am right, I am under the impression that the bulk of the Bengalee Mohammadens were Hindus by race and blood only a few generations ago. They have the tie of blood and kingship. Even now a great mass of the Bengalee Mohammadens are not to be easily distinguished from their

Hindu Brothers. In many places they join together in their social joys and

sorrows. They can not divest themselves from the natural affinity of common

blood. On the Bombay side, the Hindus and Mohammadens of Gujarat all speak

the same language, Gujarati, and are of the same stock, and all the Hindus and

Mohammadens of Maharastric Annan—all speak the same language, Marathi and

are of the same stock—and so I think it is all over India, excepting in North India

where there are the descendents of the original Mohammaden invaders, but they

are now also the people of India.[206]

While this passage raises many interesting questions about race, religion and

historical memory, let us focus on how language is used to trump religious difference in

Naoroji's call for the thorough unification of all classes and creeds in India. In his

formulation the difference between Hindus and Muslims is an artificial and historically

contingent difference. Religious identity by definition is also a historically contingent

form of identification which cannot enable Hindus and Muslims of various regions of

India to "divest themselves from the natural affinity of common blood". By moving

immediately to the assertion that the Hindus and Muslims of Maharastra and Gujarat

share a common language and racial origin, Naraoji afforded linguistic community a

primordial status in the organization of the people of India. It was a marker of difference

far older and influential than religious difference which was threatening to disrupt his

dream of a united India.

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[206] A.M Zaidi & S. G. Zaidi, "Volume 5 (1906-1911): The Surat Embroglio," in *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, ed. A.M Zaidi & S. G. Zaidi (New Delhi: S. Chand and Company LtD, 1978). P 136-137

It is evident from the language of first Indian constitution to be prepared by

Indians in 1928 that this use of linguistic affinity to trump religious difference had come

to dominate the way in which constituents of the Indian nation were being categorized

and enumerated. The Nehru Report written under the presidentship of Motilal Nehru was

published as the first native constitution for India .After spending a lot of ink on the

question of communalism and communal representation in the future Indian electorate,

the Report turned to the question of linguistic reorganization of states. The Nehru Report

deemed the question of linguistic reorganization of the States as a issue which was 'more

germaine to the Constitution of India." [207]Focused mainly on the question of the creation

of a new Sindh province, the Report's discussion of the details of the proposed reforms in

the boundaries of the Indian provinces called for a deliberation on the issue which

considered "the general question on the merits apart from its communal bearings."

Implicit in the Nehru Report's efforts to set aside the question of religious difference and

focus on the question of linguistic regions was the imagining of the Indian nation on

linguistic terms. It is evident that by 1928, the dominant way of thinking about difference

in India was through language rather that religion. Congress rhetoric often presented

political debates based on religious issue as illegitimate and harmful to the interests of the

Indian nation. However, by 1928 the idea of a differentiated India seemed to be

acceptable to the Congress leadership. This was because instead of religion language had

[207] Conference All Parties and Motilal Nehru, *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Conference to Determine the Principles of the Constitution for India : Together with a Summary of the Proceedings of the Conference Held at Lucknow*, 3rd ed. ed. (Allahabad: General Secretary, All India Congress Committee, 1928). 44

become the dominant and most acceptable register of difference for the Congress platform.

How did this come about? The roots of this resolution of difference lie in the late 1910s when the Congress leadership attempted to broaden its popular base through local propaganda. In conjunction with the increased governmental attention to the politicization of the Indian masses as the result of the Constitutional reforms of 1918-1919, the new impetus within the Indian National Congress to 'broaden its base' made the question of *language* of popular political discussion very important. In 1920, Annie Besant, the President of the Indian National Congress Session at Lahore noted

> In many parts of the country, where Conference are carried in the vernacular, the raiyat attend in large numbers, and often take part in the practical discussions on local affairs. They have begun to hope and to feel that they are a part of the great National Movement, and that for them also a better day is dawning.[208]

Besant saw the use of the vernacular languages as a way to include in the 'great National Movement' the hitherto excluded sections of the Indian population—the raiyat or peasants. In Congress the raiyat or peasant often came to stand in for the lower classes of rural India. Hence, like the framers of the Report on the Constitutional reforms of 1918, Besant and her colleagues at the Congress had come to realize that popular participation in 'practical discussions on local affairs' was impossible without the use of the vernacular languages in political and public forums. What should be noted here-- is

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[208] A.M Zaidi & S. G. Zaidi, "Volume 7(1916-1920): Emergence of Gandhi," in *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, ed. A.M Zaidi & S. G. Zaidi (New Delhi: S. Chand and Company LtD, 1978).202

the emergence of more general concern with the *local* and the implications of greater

attention to 'local affairs' on the growing constituency of the 'National Movement'. The

realization that the awareness of a membership in the Congress led 'National Movement'

had to come via a greater involvement in discussions about local affairs points to the

ways in which the emergence of the need to increase popular participation in political

affairs led to the rethinking of the relationship between the national and the local. Hence,

apart from the efficacy of using the vernacular in public political discussions, the

Congress leadership at the center was also coming to realize that the incorporation of

local affairs within the concerns of the day to day activities of the Congress was essential

to broadening the reach of its politics. Ofcourse, local issues had been espoused by the

Congress leadership in the past. For instance, Gandhi's support of the peasants in

Champaran in 1916 was definitely based on an attempt to draw on local politics to make

the case for a wider political demand for reforms in colonial governance. However, these

early efforts at involvement in local affairs were meant to serve as exemplars. They were

meant to be spectacles that would reveal the problems with colonial governance. Besant's

invocation of local affairs was motivated by an entirely different need—to involve a

greater number of people in Congress practices through a greater attention to

particularities of their daily lives: to bring the nation home to the local. Hence, the local

came to be constitutive of the national in this period.

This concern with language and the local was echoed in Gandhi's discussions

about language in the early 1920s when he centered language as matter of great

importance to the fight for Swaraj. It is through his rhetorical intervention that the

question of language became of the most prominent issue with the ranks of the Congress in the 1920s. By the time both Annie Besant and Gandhi were talking about the question of language the Congress had called for the establishment of new provincial branches called the Provincial Congress Committees (PCCs). The constituency of these PCCs were based on linguistic lines rather that the existing provincial boundaries. Once the Congress had recognized linguistic politics through the establishment of PCCs on linguistic lines, the Congress adopted the demand for the redistribution of British Indian territories on linguistic lines as one of its foremost demands in the early 1920s. Even through the politics of the Congress and its attitude towards the constitutional reforms of this period underwent significant changes in this period, the Congress attitude towards vernacular languages and linguistic politics remained constant.

In his advocacy of vernacular languages in the 1920s Gandhi made the use of Indian languages central to anti-colonial praxis. He did this in two ways: first, his critique of the use of English as the lingua franca of India was based on the need to use the language of the people in popular propaganda and second, he made the demand for linguistic reorganization of Indian provinces central to demand for self rule in the Congress politics of the 1920s.

In his 1920 article titled "An appeal to Madras" Gandhi argued that the use of English in popular propaganda undermined the ability of political speakers to reach their audience. He noted that in all the years since the establishment of the Congress party, English had been useful only as a "spectacle but never for its real educative value."[209]

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[209] Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 19 ([Delhi]: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1958). 332

That is, political speeches in English may have drawn the crowds to experience Congress politics only as passive spectators. Such a popular experience of Congress where the common people did not participate as thinking citizens, rather as devotees following the example of the spectacular English speaking political leader was no longer desirable by 1920. Given the increasing attention to the political education of the common people due to the Constitutional reforms, the Congress was beginning to adopt of policy of increasing popular awareness of the people's role in a democratic political set up. Gandhi's discussion of popular politics and the relationship between the leaders and the people is symptomatic of this shift. In an article titled "About leaders and Public", he noted

> There is a new awakening in the country. The common people now want to play
> their part, are ready for self sacrifice, but do not know the way. And so long as we
> do not speak to the people in their own language, what can they understood? How
> can they understand?[210]

Regional vernaculars became central to the project of building a new mass based political movement where every individual understood his role in the movement—'was ready for self sacrifice.'

As the Congress leadership came to realize the importance of vernacular languages to their political project, they espoused the demand for the linguistic re-organization of the Indian provinces as a central political aim. In 1920, immediately after the declaration of the Constitutional reforms while the Congress was still prepared to

[210] Ibid. 179-180

participate in the provincial elections, Gandhi wrote an article titled "What should the voter do?" [211] He suggested the voters ask their prospective representative the following questions.

> 2. Do you hold that all the affairs of a province should be conducted in its own vernacular and that the affairs of the nation should be conducted in Hindustani --- a combination of Hindu and Urdu? If you do will you endeavor incessantly to introduce the use of vernaculars in the administration of the respective provinces, and the national language in imperial administration?
>
> 3. Do you hold that the present division of the provinces of India was made for administration and political purposes and that no regard was paid to the wishes of the people? And do you hold that this division had done much harm to the national growth.[212]

These questions reveal the growing importance given to linguistic reorganization of the provinces during this period. By posing the lack of linguistically organized provinces as an impediment to national growth, Gandhi shifted the emphasis of regional linguistic movements from regional interests to the Indian national interests. That is, the demand for linguistically organized states was no longer required merely to safeguard the interests of particular linguistic groups. Rather, linguistic reorganization of Indian provinces was central to the interests of the Indian nation as such reorganization would lead to national

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[211] ———, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 20 ([Delhi]: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1958). 319
[212] Ibid.

growth. Hence, Gandhi made regional linguistic politics cosmopolitan and nationally relevant.

Thinking the region within the nation: Changing attitude of the Utkal Sammillani towards Anticolonial politics.

As the prevailing understanding of rule based on the relationship between the British sovereign and the Indian colonized subject was changing due to the introduction of electoral franchise in 1919-1920 and the Indian nation came to be understood as a conglomeration of linguistically distinct regions, Oriya attitudes towards anti-colonial, nationalist political agitation radically changed. The emerging recognition of regional linguistic politics within the Congress in 1920 occasioned a radical change in the attitude towards anti-colonial politics and alliance with the Indian National Congress within the Utkal Sammillani. As has been noted in the earlier chapter, it is at this moment that All India nationalism was given primacy in the Utkal Sammillani and, through the activities of its members-- in Orissa in general. This nationalization of regional politics could not have been brought about without the intervention of a new breed of Oriya political activists led by Gopabandhu Das. These activists attempted to rethink crucial relationships that were the basis of the Sammillani's attitude towards political activism— the relationship between the British Raja and the Oriya Praja, the relationship between the interests of the region Orissa and the Indian nation and finally the relationship between the elite of public organizations and the people they seek to represent. It is this rethinking that produced a new notion of citizenship in Orissa articulated through terms

such as 'praja-sadharana' (ordinary-subject) often used by Gopabandhu Das in his writing. Central to this rethinking was the privileging of those who constituted the 'silent masses of India' in definitions of community and politics. This section returns to the 1919 moment of Gopabandhu's speech and traces his ideas about politics, citizenship, region and nation to illustrate how the emerging ideas of representative government on the one hand and a nation constituted of linguistic difference on the other, enabled a regional understanding of citizenship and the region's role in the future of the Indian nation.

Gopabandhu's speech was not only the harbinger of the changes in Orissa politics but also the most sustained and representative statement of the changing attitude towards political activism, the colonial government and the Indian National Congress in Orissa. In this speech and other writings Gopabandhu Das conceptualized the relationship between regional linguistic politics and Indian Nationalism. Fundamental to his understanding of this relationship was Gopabandhu's populist recourse to the idea of the smallest fragment of both political units-region and nation--the common Oriya praja. In his speeches and writings, Gopabandhu, like Gandhi, called for mass participation in the political activism and made the individual Oriya central to both regional and national politics. Therefore his definition of the relationship between the region and the nation was founded on the primacy of the needs, interests and potential of the individual Oriya person.

In order to make his point Das used both rhetorical strategies and conceptual intervention into the way community was thought in Orissa. Through rhetorical strategies

222

such as using the rhetorical structures of past Presidential speeches to introduce new concerns into the Sammillani platform, Das attempted to reformulate the very meaning and symbolism of the Sammillani as a community organization. While he called for a reformulation of the prevailing understanding of the Utkal Sammillani to include more populist ideas and imperatives, Das also introduced a new way of thinking about community itself by arguing that the ultimate objective of the Utkal Sammillani should be the establishment of *udaar manabikata* or 'expansive humanism'. This informed the way he re-conceptualized the constituents of the Oriya community and located the Oriya region within the Indian nation. More significantly, the notion of 'expansive humanism' informed his eventual construction of the identity of the Oriya/ Indian citizen.

If we read the speech for the rhetorical strategies that Das used an interesting pattern emerges. He used subversive rhetorical strategies to introduce new concerns and issues that had been hitherto been neglected in Presidential speeches. He employed the very structures that the earlier self-consciously apolitical and elitist presidential speeches used to introduce a much more populist political agenda into the Sammillani. For instance, at the very onset of his speech, Gopabandhu addressed the issue of elitism in the Utkal Sammillani by arguing for a need to think about the organization in broader terms. As the Presidential speeches of the earlier years had often begun with obituaries to notable members of the Oriya community, Gopabandhu too commenced with obituaries to recently deceased members of the Oriya elite. However he departed from the earlier speeches by using this occasion to call attention to even greater losses to Oriya population due to the ongoing famine and floods in Orissa in 1919. The significance of

223

this departure was not simply because of the mention of the Oriya masses in the same register as the members of the Oriya elite but also due the tone of this invocation of the Oriya people.

> Other than this, in different unknown corners of this land, overwhelmed by scarcity, food shortage and disease many left helpless and hopeless are dying an untimely death—If they had lived a long life with healthy and strong bodies they could have added great strength to this country. Who knows what talents lay hidden in them. Who can say what they could have contributed to society if these talents were given time to develop? Today we have a deep sorrow in our hearts for those helpless, unknown dead of Orissa. It is superfluous to say that their deaths have weakened Orissa. Each one of them, either in a big way or a small way, were the strength of this community union of ours.[213]

This mention of the dying millions of Orissa was doing something more than bringing public attention to their plight. Das was attempting to engage with the earlier tendency of the Utkal Sammillani to see itself as a vanguard class that spoke for the interests of the 'silent long suffering Oriya people'. Such an understanding of the Sammillani had implicitly marked the organization's definitions of the Oriya community with a profound divide between the elite and the non-elite.[214] In this divided notion of the Oriya community, the non-elite of Orissa could only be led, protected and provided for. Perhaps

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[213] Das, *Desa Misrana Andolana*. 10

[214] For instance in the first Presidential address of the Utkal Sammillani, the President while attempting to argue that all members of the Sammillani were essential to the success of the organization, had established a hierarchy within the organization speech and the idea of contribution according to ability———, ed., *Utkal Sammillani(1903-1936), Part 1*.

this was why the leaders of the Sammillani used the term 'praja' or subject to denote the Oriya people. Alternately, perhaps this paternalistic attitude towards the Oriya people was a product of the involvement of the Princes of the twenty three Princely States of Orissa whose view of the Oriya people was marked by their own monarchical status. In this speech, Das was seeking to counter this tendency within the Sammillani to view the Oriya people as child-like dependents of the organization. While refraining from demonizing something that was essentially a product of the movement's early efforts to build a public notion of a political community that did not pre-exist the organization, Das was arguing that it was time to see both the organization and the Oriya people differently.

Signaled here, is the emerging notion of the Oriya praja as something more that subjects to the colonial state. Das made his point through this discussion of the untapped potential of the Oriya people. By thinking of them as potential contributors to the Oriya community rather than the consumers of the boons begotten by the Utkal Sammillani from the Colonial state-- as the earlier use of the term 'praja' seemed to suggest-- Das centered the role and interests of the Oriya people in the development of a community project like Utkal Sammillani. This shift reveals the earliest move within the Utkal Sammillani from the elitist civic activities based on the management of the Oriya people to a more populist political agenda where the people themselves had a direct stake.

Furthermore, by invoking the potential of the Oriya people, Das was surreptitiously turning on its head the previous tendency within the Utkal Sammillani to focus on the potential and significance of particular members of the organization. His awareness of the tendency is evident from his attempt later in the speech to defend the role of particular

members of the organization as a vanguard class. By using the language of potential and talent which had hitherto been used in the service of upholding elite control on the Utkal Sammillani, Das was attempting to radically change the way the people, the elite, potential for development, etc were being thought of within the organization. To this end he called for a more inclusive understanding of the organization.

This Sammillani is of the Oriya community. It is not only of those who are present here or of those who have written letters of support in lieu of their absence. For that matter, this Sammillani is not just of those men, women and children of the Oriya community who are living today; those who have not been born yet, those who will be our descendents in hundreds of years to come—this Sammillani is theirs. This is the continuous life force of the Oriya community. If we do not see the Sammillani as such then this Sammillani will remain a mere *Conference*—that is, it will be a meeting of knowledgeable Oriya people aimed at discussing the interests of Orissa or that of Oriya people and the pure feeling of union, the constant image of community feeling will not be reflected in the Sammillani.[215]

This call for a more expansive understanding of the Sammillani was based on his argument for a much more inclusive understanding of the Oriya community itself. This speech featured an entirely new construction of the Oriya community which was no longer merely founded on the Oriya language. Rather, Das' new Oriya community was based on the *place* Orissa.

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[215] ———, *Desa Misrana Andolana*.10

Who is Oriya community? It is seen around the world that communities are named after places. A feeling of affinity develops naturally among those who inhabit the same place. Their hope, purpose, fate and future is confined to a singular interest for welfare. Their land of action is the same and undifferentiated. For them that very land is a pure and lovable space. It is their birth place. In their view it is equal to heaven. Therefore, those who live in such a defined tract of land –they are one community and they are named according to the name of that land. According to this natural law those who have been born and have died with the same hopes and desires, and have been imbued with the same interests—they are all Oriya community.[216]

This definition of the Oriya community signaled a significant shift the understanding of community in Orissa as the fundamental basis of the Oriya community shifted from language to place. Definitions of community in Orissa, both before and after the formation of the Utkal Sammillani had always been based on language. As the first chapter of this dissertation illustrates, the efforts by the colonial state to replace Oriya with Bengali first occasioned public articulations of the interests of the 'oriya community'. Since then community came to be defined as a group of people speaking the same language. Occasional efforts to broaden this understanding to include non- Oriya speaking communities who resided in the Orissa Division were made by the Domiciled Bengalis of Orissa Division. The domiciled Bengalis were a influential group within the Oriya literati of Cuttack and played an important role in the Oriya language movement of

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[216] Ibid. 12

the nineteenth century. In 1905, the *Star of Utkal,* an English language paper published by a member of the domiciled Bengali community featured an article which introduced the term 'utkaliya' to denote members of the Oriya community. Utkaliyas were people who lived in the Oriya speaking area but did not use Oriya in their day to day lives. [217] However, it was with Gopabandhu's speech that the dominant understanding of the Oriya community went through its first divorce from language.

By founding his understanding of community on spatial categories like *stana (place), sketra (area)* and *Bhumi (land),* Gopabandhu called for a shift in focus from linguistically based community to geographically organized regional community. In his speech, G. Das managed this shift by calling into question the distinction between Utkal and Oriya. The common understanding of Utkal - due to its links with the term *Utkaliya--* invoked the idea of the inhabitants of Orissa. The appellation Oriya denoted the speakers of the Oriya language. Das posed—is there a distinction between those who inhabit Orissa and those who speak Oriya?

> Some people even see a difference between Utkal and Oriya. In fact there is no difference between these two and there *should not* be any. Whether they are from Bengal or Punjab, from Marwar or Madras, Hindu or Muslim, Aryan or Aboriginal, those who have assimilated their selfhood and interest with Orissa --- Orissa is theirs and they are of Orissa. These days it is impossible for a place to be inhabited by the same kind of people. There is almost no place on earth where different communities or societies are not living together. Only, the focus of their interests is one. It is natural and acceptable that over time they become united as a

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[217] Anonymous, "Utkaliya," *Star of Utkal* 1905.

community. The United States of America is an exemplar of such a formation of community affiliation.[218](emphasis mine)

This move proposed to shift the locus of Oriya regional politics from an exclusive community based on linguistic identity to a more inclusive constituency based on a shared everyday life in a common *place*. However, the argument for a community based on adjacency and commonality of interests did not necessarily involve a disavowal of the Oriya community as a linguistic unit. Rather the very invocation of other such linguistic identities such as Bengali, Punjabi, Marwari etc reveals Gopabandhu's investment in the distinctive-ness of these identities. In fact, he was calling for a cosmopolitan idea of community where shared interests, common historical experience and future aspirations transcended rather than effaced particular linguistic identities. Furthermore, by calling for transcendence of linguistic identities he did not forsake the idea of a distinct region of Orissa. Infact, for Das, the transcendence of particular linguistic, religious or caste identity was possible precisely because the geographical category Orissa was assumed as an irrevocable reality. Hence, his call for the inclusion of other linguistic groups in the Oriya community did not threaten to demolish the long cherished vision of a separate province of Orissa.

The geography of the proposed province of Orissa became central to the objectives of the Sammillani as a consequence of Das' privileging of a spacial definition of the Oriya community. Hence, in this session a new constitution of the Utkal

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[218] Utkal is a term used both to denote the Oriya language and the place Orissa as a geographical category. In this particular instance Gopabandhu is using Utkal to denote the both and here Oriya denotes simply the language.Das, *Desa Misrana Andolana*.12

Sammillani was drafted where the concept of 'natural Orissa' as a geographical category was defined. [219]In the new constitution, Natural Orissa was opposed to the existing 'artificial' or political Orissa that did not include all Oriya speaking areas. This 'Natural Orissa' was the proposed province of Orissa that the Utkal Sammillani had been lobbying for since 1903. Das' privileging of shared space over shared language underlined the centrality of the category of 'natural Orissa'. In chapter 2 I have illustrated how the definitions of the Oriya community came to be centered on establishing the historicity of 'natural Orissa' in early twentieth century Oriya historiography.

As the definition of regional community came to be founded on a commonality of interests and shared everyday life rather than exclusively on language, Gopabandhu was able to argue for a new set of objectives for the Utkal Sammillani that were aimed at fostering an inclusive politics based on expansive humanism. He listed three main objectives of the Utkal Sammillani. First, the Sammillani was to be responsible for fostering kinship among the various communities that had made Orissa their home. Second, the Sammillani should participate in politics because as a well-rounded community organization all interests and concerns of the community fall within the purview of the Sammillani. He argued that without political power it was impossible to achieve the over all development of the Oriya community. Hence participation in politics, which as the previous chapter illustrates was understood as anti-colonial activism, was essential to the effectiveness of the organization. Finally, Das proposed that the ultimate aim of the organization should be the establishment of liberal humanism. At stake in these three disjointed objectives was G.Das' effort to bring about a major reversal in the

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[219] ———, ed., *Utkal Sammillani(1903-1936), Part 1*.

position of the Utkal Sammillani on Oriya participation in the Indian National Congress led anti-colonial political movement. Through a radical revision of the understanding of Oriya community Das was attempting to argue for a different understanding of the relationship between Orissa and India as well as Orissa and the Colonial state.

At the root of this revision was his use of expansive humanism which enabled him to forge an intrinsic connection between the interests of the Oriya community and that of the Indian nation. It should be noted that rather than merely arguing that primacy should be given to the interests of the emergent Indian nation G.Das argued his position from the vantage point of a member of the Oriya community. That is, he approached the question of the relationship between Orissa and India from the perspective of the interests of the Oriya community. Hence, he argued that the achievement of the ultimate goal of the Utkal Sammillani—expansive humanism—could be possible only through espousing broader Indian objectives.

> Indian feeling will definitely help us in our journey towards gaining expansive humanism. We have to remember that we are part of the Indian community. India is a mega-nation, hence over time many small communities marked by provincial differences have emerged in India; only all their fates are encompassed in the fate of India. Whether we are connected with Indian institutions or not, we have to more or less participate in the trials and tribulations of India. …We have to remember that we are human first, then Indian and finally Oriya. If we do not keep this thought in mind then the development of our community is impossible. Every individual has freedom, only without social foundation this freedom cannot

emerge. Just like that, the freedom of Orissa will blossom on the firm ground of strong Indian nationalism and all-inclusive expansive humanism.[220]

Unlike Madhusudan Das' sisterhood of provinces organized by a common allegiance to the British Empire, Gopabandhu Das' India remains unmarked by Indian subject-hood to the British. Infact, this construction of the Indian community ignores the British presence in India entirely. Hence, while M.S. Das' organizing principle for the making of the Indian nation was a shared bond with the British Empire, for Gopabandhu Das it was a social kinship of common interests. The Indian nation in Gopabandhu Das' formulation was a society of linguistic provinces where the freedom of each province was ensured by the establishment of the strong national civil society. Hence, Das posed Orissa as something akin to a citizen in the Indian social world populated by other such communities. Also the emphasis on India as a liberal civil society allowed him to re-imagine the relationship between other communities residing in Orissa--Biharis and Bengalis.

The earlier Utkal Sammillani attitude towards these groups is best exemplified by M.S.Das' description of the Bengalis and Biharis as 'intermediary ruling races". That is, M.S. Das argued that being majority linguistic groups in their respective provinces, these groups of people occupied a more dominant position in the colonial hierarchy of influence. They acted as intermediaries between the colonial rulers and the Oriya people. Such a reading of the relationship between these communities and the Oriya community implied unequal and oppressive transactions between Bengalis and Biharis and the Oriya

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[220] ———, *Desa Misrana Andolana*.15

community. Through his discussion of liberal humanism and a national civil society, Gopabandhu Das attempted re-imagine the relationship as equal. This was not just an effort to reduce animosity between the groups but also a subversive effort to provide a definition of the Oriya and Indian community where such 'intermediary ruling races' could not dominate.

Having established Orissa's place within the Indian nation, Gopabandhu Das moved to establish the particular characteristic of the Oriya community that made it most adept at imagining a liberal and inclusive community. Das argued that historically only the Oriyas have been able to recognize the importance of expansive humanism and lead an inclusive social and spiritual life. He based his argument on the Oriya community's allegiance to the Cult of Jaganath. He notes

The history of the Oriya community clearly reveals that the Oriyas have forever been proficient at this expansive Humanist ethic and have experienced an everyday connection with India…Even though Orissa is bounded by rivers and mountains, they (the Oriya community) have transcended these boundaries and moved towards greatness. At the focus of nationalism is liberal humanism, in all of India it was the Oriya people who understood this. ….Among the Oriya this nationalism and love for the country could never be rigid, lifeless, barren and selfish. It was never founded on the desire to gain ruling power or violence. It was based profound religiosity and firm faith. Peace, friendship and freedom are its symptoms. In Orissa this thought is materialized in Nilachal Dham (Puri- the seat of the Jaganath Cult); hence Jaganath is the national deity of Orissa. …In the ethic

of Nilachal there is no distinction between big and small, raja and praja, Brahmin and Chandal, friend and foe or even Hindu and Buddhist. In the later Chaitanya age even the distinction between Muslim and Hindu was obscured. Because this seed of expansive humanism and pan Indian nationalism lies in Nilachal, over the ages devotees and great men have been attracted to Nilachal.[221]

Through this discussion of the Jaganath Cult, Das is able to both establish the exceptional and exemplary nature of Oriya community and make an argument for equality within the Oriya community by drawing on the notion of equality before God.

Conclusion

Gopabandhu's humanist definition of the Utkal Sammillani, the Oriya community and the relationship between the region Orissa and the Indian nation established the basic structures and ideas that were fundamental to the foundation of liberal democracy in India. His redefinition of both the Utkal Sammillani and the Oriya community enabled him to posit a new idea of liberal community which was not based on any exclusive marker of identity. Rather, it was based on a shared everyday life which in turn enabled him to see members of both the Oriya and the Indian community as mutually interchangeable and fundamentally equal.

This was clearly a departure from Madhusudan Das' understanding of the Non-Oriya speaking people such as Bengalis and Biharis as 'intermediary ruling races' whose control over the fortunes of the Oriya speaking people, in the Bengal Presidency and the province of Bihar and Orissa, threatened to negate the colonial government's efforts to

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[221] Ibid. 15

introduce representative government based on franchise. Gopabandhu Das's concern about the creation of a community based on the homogenizing potential of expansive humanism was informed by his desire to think the relationship between the Oriyas, Bengalis and Biharis differently.

A stake in this rethinking was an argument for a national community that allowed for both Indian nationalism and Oriya regional affiliation. The shift in the understanding of community represented by difference between Madhusudan Das and Gopabandhu Das' approach to Bengalis and Biharis illustrates the gradual expansion of the limits of regional and national allegiances. That is, the move from an idea of regional community based on exclusive interests to an idea of regional community predicated on expansive humanism enabled the imagination of an Indian citizen who could be simultaneously loyal to both India and Orissa.

Conclusion

Gopabandhu Das' re-evaluation of the relationship between the Oriya region and the Indian nation illustrates the central contention of this dissertation. I have argued that this relationship was fundamentally based on the need to imagine a citizen of India who could be simultaneously loyal to a place other than India—a citizen with divided loyalties. Indeed, the need to ensure the right to self determination required both the regional and the national elite to reach a consensus on the nature of the relationship between the region and the nation. In Orissa, the shift between M.S. Das' portrayal of the Biharis and Bengalis as 'intermediary ruling races' and Gopabandhu Das' liberal humanist reading of the Indian national community where all regions were part of national socious with all its attending rights and responsibilities indicates a re-evaluation of the relationship between the Oriya region and the Indian nation. At the root of this re-evaluation was growing awareness of the right to self-determination.

In my reading of the period between 1900 and 1920 I have departed from existing histories of Orissa that pose the introduction of all India nationalism as a trigger for the disavowal of 'narrow parochialism' and the beginning of a 'truly' nationalist 'phase' of Orissa politics. Rather, I have attempted to study the re-evaluation of the relationship between the region and the nation beyond this framework of nationalist hegemony. I have argued that to see the 1920s as regional capitulation to the force of all India nationalism is to efface the complex negotiations between the region and the nation during the 1910s when the nation itself came to be understood as marked by regional and linguistic

difference. That is, the shift in the politics of Orissa in 1920 was not a result of the nationalization of regional politics- a shift from 'narrow parochialism' to inclusive national cosmopolitanism—rather it was the result of the regionalization of national politics.

At the core of my argument about the relationship between the Oriya linguistic region and the Indian nation is the story of the making of the Indian citizen. As the last chapter reveals, in the 1910s the need to politicize larger sections of the Indian population came to occupy a central position in public discussions about politics. Compelled by divergent motives, both the colonial government and the anti-colonial nationalist parties in India were involved in the project of thinking Indian self determination through the construction of a universal Indian citizen. Linguistic difference and its fervent articulation by various regional public associations threatened to disrupt this project. However, rather than efface this linguistic difference by arguing for the dominance of a single national language, the leaders of the Indian National Congress chose to work linguistic difference into the very fabric of the Indian nation. Hence the 1910s saw the emergence of a paradoxical figure of the universal Indian citizen who was marked by particular regional linguistic difference.

This history of the emergence of the metonymic relationship between the region and nation, between multilingual allegiances and all India nationalism is markedly different from the career of language and nationalism in Europe. The relationship between language and nationalism has been especially fraught in European nations. The establishment of the dominance of Spanish in 1492 Spain, Herder and Fichte's argument

for the privileging of German as the national language of Germany and the establishment

of the French language in the service of the creation of 'one state, one nation, one

language' are histories implicated in the linguistic violence that the emerging political

elite perpetrated on the hitherto marginalized minority languages of the Europe.

Scholarship on linguistic nationalism in Europe has often focused on the operations of

power at play in the originary moment of the emergence of nationalism in the nations of

Europe. For instance, studies on the emergence of Spanish nationalism from the 15th

century to General Franco's era in the 1940s trace how cultural and linguistic minorities

were marginalized and silenced through an active policy of repression of the use of

minority languages such as Catalan. Furthermore, even as scholarship on nationalism and

language in Europe has focused on the marginalization of languages spoken by minority

groups, there has been increasing scholarly attention paid to the fact that such

marginalization does not remain uncontested. Hence, European historiography on the

relationship between language and nationalism in Europe has posited multi-lingual

nation-states as sites of linguistic domination and contestation driven by majoritarian

efforts to obliterate difference within the national community.[222]

    While this framework is useful in the study of nationalism in Europe the

understanding of the relationship between language and nationalism as a play of

domination and contestation does not suffice in the increasingly globalized world where

populations of nations have become more of more multilingual in the past 50 years. For

instance, the European framework is unable to account for the increasingly diasporic

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[222] For more detail see essays in Stephen Barbour and Cathie Carmichael, *Language and Nationalism in Europe* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

population of America or England where the allegiance to mother tongue and use of the dominant language of the State co-exist. Contemporary nations are marked by a postmodern acceptance of difference as something that is constitutive of the collective. Nowhere is this more apparent that in the political praxis of the various Indian linguistic regions which operate in relative peace with the unitary demands of all India nationalism.

Hence my reading of the relationship between language and nationalism in early twentieth century Orissa through the narration of the story of the making of the Indian citizen has attempted to propose a different framework for understanding multilingual nationalism. Rather than reading the relationship between linguistic difference and unitary nationalism as a site for dominance and contestation I suggest that the relationship between India's many languages and all India nationalism is defined by the constitutive and enabling role played by regional languages in the making of Indian democracy and citizenship.

Symptomatic of this relationship between linguistic difference and nationalism in India was the idea of regional domicile in India. In March 1943, seven years after the formation of the new province of Orissa, the Orissa Domicile committee was set up to define the legal definition of a domicile of Orissa. Consisting of some of the major leaders of the movement for the creation of the Orissa Province, this committee dealt with the perplexing question of balancing national universalism and the need to circumscribe the limits of the legal Oriya citizen who would be entitled to resources provided by the provincial state government. The framers of the report noted in their discussion about nationalism and universalism that

Indian Nationalism is of a composite character, No useful purpose will be served by ignoring facts, or by trying to twist them to suit a particular theory, nor will it be helpful for us to import analogies from Europe and America for guidance of our conduct, as thousand years of eventful history have gone to the making of the different sub-nations that inhabit the Indian soil. The proper adjustment of our mutual relations demands that we should recognize our unity as well as our diversity. Any attempt to grind us into a dull, dead uniformity in the name of our common nationhood is bound to cause friction, and end in disruption. Provincialism, rightly understood and kept within proper limits, is quite a health phenomenon, and is nothing to be ashamed of. There is no disguising the fact that an Oriya, Bengali or a Gujarati feels his kinship with a fellow provincial much more keenly than he does with a Tamilian or a Panjabi, and this is true with rare exceptions of the members of every provincial group. To ignore this fact is simply to misunderstand the nature of Indian nationhood, and store up trouble for the future. It is time that the composite character of Indian nationhood were properly understood. India is not and never will be one uniform nation in the sense in which France and Germany are nations, and any attempt to cast the different peoples that inhabit this country into one uniform cultural and linguistic mould is sure to end in failure and possibly lead to disaster. We must recognize both unity and diversity and must now seek to justify any wrong step by importing false analogies from outside.[223]

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[223] Orissa Domicile Committee, "Report of the Orissa Domicile Committee," (Bhubaneswar: Government of Orissa, 1944).

The question of criteria for provincial domicile pushes this question of unity and diversity, read nation and region to the limits. The problem hinged on the need to define the limits of entitlement of non-Oriya speaking people to the benefits and resources offered by the Provincial government of Orissa. This eventual statement acknowledges the irascible diversity of the Indian population. Infact, by saying that to ignore diversity "is simply to misunderstand the nature of Indian nationhood" this statement is an argument for the constitutive role of the region in the making of the nation.

I would like to end the dissertation by pointing to two implications of the issues discussed in this project. The first implication is illustrated by the Domicile Committee. The example of the domicile committee illustrates the importance of elite discourse to the organization of Indian political life. While it is has not been the my intension to argue against the push towards a greater focus on the incorporation of non-elite voices in the recording of Indian history, through this project I attempt to show that such incorporation is impossible without understanding how elite discourse frames the idea of community, citizenship and belonging in modern India.

The formulation of the Oriya/Indian citizen was based not only on liberal ideas of equality but also a deliberate effacement of the many unequal relationships of power and domination already present in Indian society. When the figure of the tribal was incorporated into the Oriya community, elite rhetoric rendered him significant by assigning him a child-like status.

As chapter 2 illustrates, early twentieth century histories of the Oriya community which attempted to produce a unified Oriya community often based their

arguments on Hindu scriptural legends which were steeped in the hierarchical

understanding of Hindu society. In such a society the tribal could only enter

surreptitiously through the back-door. The incorporation of the illegitimate son of the

crafty Brahmin Vidyapati and a tribal devotee of Lord Jaganath in the originary myth of

the Oriya community is a case in point. As Satyanarayan Rajguru's use of the

Indradyumna legend discussed in chapter 2 reveals elite discourse framed a common

Oriya sense of belonging in divinely ordained community where the half caste son of

Vidyapati and an un-named tribal woman is incorporated only through the intervention of

divine intervention.

This leads to my second implication which has to do with the peculiar life of

political liberalism in India. Through an analysis of the language of Oriya politics—praja,

raja, rajaniti, prajaniti, rajya, intermediate ruling races and udaar manabikata—this

dissertation attempts to show how these basic concepts of citizenship, franchise and self

rule had to be negotiated with and 'made Indian' through the creation of an entirely new

language of politics. Furthermore, the peculiarity of the career of liberalism in India also

drew from the way in which often arguments which were in opposition to each other

employed ideas of liberalism.

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