

**REORDERING A WORLD : THE TANA BHAGAT
MOVEMENT IN CHOTANAGPUR, 1914-22**

*DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY*

SANGEETA DASGUPTA

**CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110 067
INDIA
1992**



JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

NEW DELHI-110067

Centre for Historical Studies

DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled "Reordering A World: The Tana Bhagat Movement in Chotanagpur, 1914-22" submitted by Sangeeta Das Gupta is in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University and is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

R. Champakalakshmi
Centre Chairperson

Neeladri Bhattacharya
Supervisor

Neeladri Bhattacharya

C O N T E N T S

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PART I

1. STUDYING THE TANAS 1-27
Trends in the movement -- historiographical issues
2. THE ORAONS AND THE OTHERS 28-59
The coming of the dikus -- Vaishnavism and Islam
-- the loss of bhuinhari -- apostle of the Oraons

PART II

1. THE CULTURAL VISION OF THE TANAS 60-91
Dharmes and the cult of Tanas -- the precepts --
cleansing the world of spirit and magic -- other
Tana practices
2. THE COMPLEXITIES OF TANA POLITICS 92-129
Against rent and tax -- the coming of the savior:
the German baba -- authority and legitimation --
ambiguities of Tana practices -- on leaders and
bhagats
3. CONCLUSION 130-143

PART III

- THE TANAS, THE NON-COOPERATIONISTS AND THE STATE 144-173
Congress mobilization -- the link with the
Congress -- the Tana 'Swaraj' -- the Tanas and the
British state

CONCLUSION 174-176

BIBLIOGRAPHY 177-185

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would first of all like to express my extreme gratitude to Dr. Neeladri Bhattacharya for his guidance without which this dissertation could not have been what it is. He has introduced me to a whole range of themes and I have benefitted enormously from the suggestions that he has made at every point of the dissertation. In my two years with him, I have inconvenienced him on countless occasions with my late submission of papers, and I cannot thank him enough for the patience he has shown towards me.

I would also like to especially thank Prof. Gautam Bhadra of Calcutta University for his invaluable ideas and suggestions. He has given me many hours and has commented at great length on my work. Many of the arguments I have tried to develop have been born out of my discussions with him.

I need to thank many others too who have contributed in so many ways to my work. Ram Iqbal Babu has helped me procure the immensely rich primary material kept at the Bihar State Archives, Patna. Mr. Hegde took great care in typing out the dissertation. Without Mrs. Kakkar and her colleague at the Dean's Office, School of Social Sciences, J.N.U., I could not have submitted this dissertation. I also

thank all my friends -- Radha, Rupamanjari, Sanjay, Hegde, Rohan, Manmohan, Mithi and Gautam for their assistance in many different ways, but most importantly for always being there whenever I needed them. Jijaji has shown interest in my work and made useful suggestions. Kakamoni has always encouraged me and given me all the help that I required. Dolon has saved me from the occasional monotony of writing. Baba and Ma have given me every support and have been a constant source of inspiration for me.

Padmanabh has been with me throughout my dissertation writing. We have sat on the dusty floor of the record room at Bihar Archives, looked through huge bundles of almost disintegrating files and shared the thrills of discovering new sources. We have spent hours formulating many of the arguments. We have shared the joys and tensions that accompany dissertation writing. This dissertation is almost as much his as it is mine.

The faults in the writing remain entirely mine.

Sangeeta Das Gupta.

P A R T I

CHAPTER I

STUDYING THE TANAS

I

TRENDS IN THE MOVEMENT

It began in April, 1914. A twenty five year old youth, Jatra Oraon of Gumla sub-division, Ranchi (village Chepri Nawatali in Bishnupur police-station), proclaimed that he had received a divine message from Dharmes, the supreme God of the Oraons, that he would be a Raja. All his followers would share his kingdom and be Rajas too. Gathering a following of one to two thousand, Jatra, who claimed to be a deity and Bhagwan, sought to reconstruct Oraon culture and society through divinely inspired mantras or songs. The society had to be purged of evils like ghost finding and exorcism, belief in bhuts or spirits, idol worship, consumption of animal food and liquor.¹ His followers were no more to work as coolies or labourers under men of other castes and tribes, for the government or for the zamindars, and were to stop the payment of rent to the landlords. Ploughing their fields was unnecessary too: it entailed

1. S.C. Roy, Oraon Religion and Customs (Calcutta: 1928), p.341.

cruelty to cows and oxen, but failed to save the tribe from famine and poverty.² All those who did not join the movement, Jatra said, would be struck dumb. Jatra who claimed miraculous powers like curing fevers, sore eyes and other diseases³ was publicly installed as the new guru (Path Oktachs) by Turia. A white goat was sacrificed to Dharmes and the sacrificial meat that was cooked, instead of being eaten by the people, was scattered in the four directions by Jatra.⁴ The ceremony established him as the temporal and spiritual leader of the Oraons, the "Moses"⁵ who was destined to lead his people to a better world.

As the new faith began to spread, the people of nearly twenty villages joined Jatra and began to learn the Tana mantras. A panic was created amongst the local zamindars and non-aboriginal authorities as some acts of violence broke out. Particularly harassed were the zamindars, their servants being beaten and turned out of the jungles when they went to cut wood.⁶ It was found necessary to draft a

2. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 54 of 1925.

3. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.342.

4. P.N. Das, The Tana Bhagat Movement in Bihar (1914-47), Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Patna University, 1990, p.68.

5. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 54 of 1925.

6. Ibid.

few extra police into the chief centres of the unrest, and to diffuse the situation, Smith, the S.D.O. of Gumla invited the Oraons to a feast where daru (country made liquor) flowed in plenty in the accompaniment of dance and merry making!⁷

Jatra was finally arrested on his refusal to allow his followers to take up work as coolies for the construction of a local school. He was sent to Gumla for a trial where at first, he was declared to be a lunatic!⁸ His imprisonment for a year, his consequent release and the warmth accorded to him by his 'chelas' however failed to inspire him, and thus ended the first manifestation of the new spirit.

The next leader to be thrown up was Litho Oraon of Chaghra police-station. Her anxious husband on going to look for her when she did not return home for hours after her bath, found her seated on the bank in a semi-conscious state of spiritual exaltation, repeatedly uttering the words "Bom-Bom-Bom" - the orthodox salutation to Mahadeo. The teachings of the new leader of the faith that had been revealed to her by Mahadeo were significantly, substantially similar to that

7. Das, The Tana Bhagat Movement, p.70.

8. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 54 of 1925.

preached by Jatra.⁹ Litho, it needs to be emphasized, was a woman, the only female Guru of whom we have a reference.

By 1915, the movement which had initially started in south-west Ranchi spread through the western and central thanas of the district, to Bero and Kuru in the north and Mandar in the West, and reached as far as Palamau and Hazaribagh. Soon the movement more or less subsided in the south western and western parts of the Ranchi district, but it came to stay in the Lohardaga, Sisai, Lapung, Bero, Kuru and Mandar thanas, particularly in the last three areas.¹⁰

At this stage, the process of purifying the Oraon society of ghosts was in full swing. Young Oraon men would assemble after their evening meals at the boundary line of the village from which the bhuts had to be expelled.¹¹ While the whole village turned out for the spirit drive and armed themselves with twigs or branches of the tamarind tree, only the men could participate in the process, the women remaining behind the party. Each man would sweep, while uttering mantras, the ground in front of him with his tamarind twig, sweeping also each stone and the base of each

9. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.343.

10. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 54 of 1925.

11. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.347.

bush and tree. As they advanced, one or other of the men would become possessed and cry that the spirit had entered into him. While the possessed person danced, his neighbours uttered mantras and brushed him with the tamarind branches.¹² In the process, the whole company would arrange themselves in a circle. And with their hands folded as in prayer, keeping time by clapping their hands and lifting up each leg alternatively, the Tanas would, with shaking heads, chant their invocations. Sometimes they would walk round in a circle, sometimes kneel down and shake their heads. No musical instruments would be used. A song would be sung and resung several times, on which they rang many changes, changing the names of the superior powers (sun, moon etc.) by substituting all those with other good powers such as Birsa Baba (Birsa Bhagwan) and German Baba. Even powerful machines as the steam boat, the railway engine, the motor car, the bicycle, the telegraph and bombs were invoked.¹³ When the singing was in full swing someone would get possessed, shout and begin to run, and all would run about shouting to the spirits to go away. The entire process would

12. Tea District Labour Association, Handbook of Castes and Tribes (Calcutta: 1924), p.28.

13. I provide an extract of the Tana hymns,
Tana Baba Tana, Agni Boat Ke Tana
Tana Baba Tana, Relgari Ke Tana,
Tana Baba Tana, Bicycle Ke Tana.
Roy, Oraon Religion, p.350.

be repeated at another spot, and thus would the devil driving process continue till cockcrow. Every following night the exorcists would advance with their operations nearer to the basti or inhabited portion of the village. On the night when they reached the outskirts of the basti or cluster of homesteads, a white goat would be brought out, given some dust to lick (instead of rice to eat as it is done in sacrificing animals to the bhuts), and in place of being sacrificed, it would be let loose in the name of Dharmes or Bhagwan. The headman would pray for forgiveness for the past sins of the villagers committed in ignorance of the True Religion. After this they would enter the basti and for a few nights repeat the same operations of devil driving as before, singing invocations and throwing dust all round the angan or yard to drive away the bhuts. On the last few days of the exercise, they would enter the huts of the individual Oraons in the day time, search every nook and corner till they emerged with an article such as a stick or a plait of straw as an emblem of the bhut. Sometimes a part of the floor would be dug up to bring it out. This would be burnt or buried in some open space outside the basti or in the riverside. Offering of fruits and sweets to Dharmes and a purificatory bath ended the entire process.¹⁴

14. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.351-52.

The vociferous songs and incantations, and the bhut driving process which it accompanied, led to a feeling of panic amongst the authorities and zamindars who were not allowed to witness the rituals, and who felt that the Tanas were hatching a conspiracy to oust them from their country. By June 1915, boys returning to schools after summer vacations gave the information that more and more Oraons were becoming Bhagats. In July, the parents of several schoolboys reported to the missionaries that all the villagers were discarding the old religious beliefs. Dreadful stories about killing and selling of pigs and fowl were circulated. It was alleged that in their nightly meetings the new sectarians were holding out threats to the government and the sadans (non-Oraons). By August the Tanas were talked of by everyone. Administrative authorities at Ranchi took alarm and police pickets were posted at sensitive spots. So confident were the Bhagats in their own invincibility that one of them defied a zamindar to kill him, since the bullet from his pistol would be turned into water. The zamindar shot him dead. Another Bhagat claimed that he was deputed by the heavenly guru to inaugurate the Oraon Raj and take possession of all the government buildings at Gumla. He even went to take control of the quarters of the Gumla S.D.O. The papers he showed was a

Hindi primer in use in primary schools!¹⁵ Tanaism also spread to the tea plantations of the Doars, particularly to Assam.

In 1916, the Oraon movement was definitely on the wane. Yet sporadic cases of violence arose, and in two murder cases, seven men were convicted. The focus at this stage continued to be on the elaboration of ethical norms for community cohesion, but the political content of the movement was unmistakable. Dallias from Ranchi visited Oraon villages in Palamau, organized meetings at night to sing songs and mantras, and people were urged to become Bhagats. Red articles like Kokra, mirchai and even red dhan were to be avoided since red things represented the British whom they were supposed to hate. Chechari, Adhi and Mahuadand in Palamau, Amratoli, Lugumi, Sale, and Tinkitanr were affected. The Oraons said openly that there would be a big battle between the Germans and the English in which the Germans would win and come to India. In the meantime the British may turn against the Bhagats but their bullets would be turned into water.¹⁶ Further, the Oraons would get another Maharaja, the Oraon Bhagats would be kings in their own country and the German Badshah (Kaiser) was on the hill

15. Das, The Tana Bhagat Movement, pp.89-90.

16. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 1165 of 1916.

on the other side of the Koel bringing gold. Three men of Ahirpura all shaking with an excitement and with their eyes red went to the thana and asked the daroga to have the pahis (legal documents) handed over to the Bhagats.¹⁷ True education was to come from heaven: so children were prevented from going to schools, and Mission schools were forced to close down. The Bhagats coerced the non-Bhagats by declaring their women to be Dains; non-Bhagats were also forbidden the use of wells.¹⁸

As the expectation of the messiah became more and more intense, adherants were convinced that God would soon come to deliver them. Village Birsampur, wrote Father Ewer, presented a curious sight. On the length of each house a row of tiles $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 feet wide were taken off over the interior of the house. God was to enter through these openings, and dogs were killed so that they would not bark when God made his advent at night. Dharmes was also said to have sent postcards from heaven and a blank postcard was actually handed over to Reverend Father Walrov. Bhagwan was to preside over their nightly meetings and hundreds of

17. Das, The Tana Bhagat Movement, p.88.

18. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 1165 of 1916.

slates were taken so that Dharmes would write messages to them.¹⁹

By 1919, there was a recrudescence of the Tana Bhagat movement under the leadership of Sibū and Maya Oraon. "Bhagwan" had told Sibū to leave his home and his family and wander over the "world" to reform it. He was told that there would be a marked change in the rules after the coming of the holi festival. Their raj was returning to them very soon. Bhagwan would send Sibū letters upon the subject of the reform of the world and Sibū produced pieces of foolscap upon which practically undecipherable Hindi had been written. Booklets were distributed even to the police which elaborated some of Sibū's ideas: "The musalman kill cows, so their bones will be broken... Marwaris sell cloth at a very high price, so their houses should be burnt... Zamindars realize taxes and keep dancing girls, they should be turned out...".

Accordingly no work would have to be done since bhagwan would feed the Oraons, no rent or chaukidari tax would be paid. Statements to the effect that hands and legs of all the people except the Oraons would be cut down were made by Sibū. Besides, women were not necessary in the present

19. Das, Tana Bhagat Movement, pp.93-94.

number and were to be massacred. Only a few would be retained to continue the race.²⁰

A change in Sibu's attitude was marked in the latter part of 1919. Collecting about 700-800 followers, he proceeded to Satpahari hill (Chandwa) in the Hazaribagh district where they expected the advent of a deity, a Saviour. After practising austerities for a month, and waiting patiently for several days in vain for his appearance, their provisions ran out. Sibu in his enlightenment then killed a heifer, dressed the meat, cooked it, and along with his followers, ate it. After this they went to a liquor shop where they consumed wine and food cooked by a Muslim. Sibu solemnly declared that the gods desired that the Tanas were no longer to observe the restrictions in food, drink and conduct and could thenceforth freely enjoy sorho singar batiso ahar, i.e., all kinds of carnal pleasures and all kinds of food. They were no longer Kols but brothers to the Hindus and Muslims and equal to them. God had, further, distinctly instructed him to convey to the people that they should no longer cultivate fields.²¹

20. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 1165 of 1916.

21. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 54 of 1925.

Sibu was subsequently arrested; yet the movement continued under a different group of leaders. Chief among them was Turia who repeated Sibu's teachings. Rent would not be paid to the zamindars though they would allow him to cultivate the land on the 'bataia'. Chaukidari tax would not be paid too. What is remarkable was their demand for "rasad" to the zamindars; these demands were made in writing and legibly specified the amount required: 200 maunds of Arwal chawal, 20 maunds of dal and 2 maunds of spices. They claimed to be non-violent and would not allow their children to be vaccinated as they were forbidden by their religion to see blood.²²

By 1921, the Tana Bhagat movement assumed an added complexity with the advent of the non-cooperationists in Ranchi. To the already existing ideas with anti-landlord, anti-British undertones, the non-cooperationists like Maulana Azad, Usman and Gulab Tewari added a fresh dimension. In a fortnight (31 January to 13 February 1921), fifteen meetings were held and three about to be held. Speeches were delivered in the local dialect. The Oraons were told that the true enemy was the British, "Gandhi Maharaj" would solve all the problems, the Indians were thirty-three crores of

22. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

people and had nothing to fear. Boycotts and strikes were advocated along with anti-liquor campaigns and boycott of courts. Oraons were invited and encouraged to speak in meetings.

The Tana response was a varied one. At one level, some became members of the Congress Party, attended Congress sessions, and gave some support to the Non-cooperation thanas set up by the nationalists in 1921. Yet, what stands out in bold relief throughout the 1921 phase was their adamant refusal to compromise on issues of land. Anti-landlordist tendencies can be discerned in the repeated cases of the Tana Bhagats forcibly ploughing the land of the zamindars and refusing to pay rent. So strong was their link with the land that S.C. Roy suggested that the government should buy up the landlords' rights in their villages and settle the villages with the respective aboriginal village communities on a fixed rental.²³

In 1922, there was a revival of the Tana movement, the suppressed excitement culminating in an attack upon the Sisai police-station. Sibu Bhagat and others raided the house of one of the Tanas who had refused to pay a fine imposed by the Tana panchayat and severely beat him up. When

23. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 50 of 1921.

the constables advanced to make the arrests, a mob of forty Tana Bhagats attacked them with lathis and balwas. In the brief encounter that ensued, the Tanas fled after a lathi charge by the police, leaving three of their members behind. Amongst other weapons, they left behind a Balwa and a sword.²⁴

Considerable activity was again noticed on the part of the Tana Bhagats in 1925. Garlanded and dressed in their best clothes, a batch of fifty paraded the streets of Lohardaga ringing a bell and singing songs. They stated that they had obtained their Raj and become Maliks. When questioned by the Inspector, one Gandura Bhagat said he was Gandhi, one said he was Dasarath, another claimed to be Ram Chander and a fourth Hari. They erected huts with wood taken from the Encumbered Estates. After that they arrived in Ranchi exclaiming "Hamar Raj Chenlia". They said they had come to see the Deputy Commissioner but did not attempt to do so and left Ranchi peacefully.²⁵

This then is the Tana Bhagat movement which I will be seeking to study in my dissertation. It is a movement whose

24. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 316(a) of 1922.

25. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 54 of 1925.

identity changed over time. And in each phase of the movement, different identities, often contradictory, coexisted.

II

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ISSUES

Little work has been done on the Tanas, the two recent articles of significance being K.S. Singh's "Tribal Peasantry, Millenarianism, Anarchism and Nationalism: A Case Study of the Tana Bhagats in Chotanagpur, 1914-25" (1988) and B.B. Choudhury's "The Story of a Tribal Revolt in the Bengal Presidency: The Religion and Politics of the Oraons, 1900-1926" (1989). We need to consider their arguments.

"Millenarianism", "anarchism" and "nationalism" - these three watertight compartments constitute for K.S. Singh²⁶ the unilinear dynamic of the Tana Bhagat movement. Having initially launched a reform movement, the Tanas turned violent in 1918 and joined the "freedom struggle"²⁷ in 1921. Singh suggests a transformation of a tribal-peasant identity

26. K.S. Singh, "Tribal Peasantry, Millenarianism, Anarchism and Nationalism: A Case Study of the Tana Bhagats in Chotanagpur, 1914-25" in Social Scientist, Vol. 16, 1988, pp.36-50.

27. Ibid., p.46.

from the millenarian, to the agrarian, and finally to the political. Implicit here is an evolutionary schema in which each stage seems an advance over the earlier one. One of Singh's chief aims is to show the rise of peasant consciousness among the Oraons since the "agrarian component of the Tana Bhagat Movement" is relatively little known "compared to its socio-religious and political dimensions".²⁸

The trajectory of the movement, according to Singh had well marked, distinct stages (1) Jatra Oraon's movement of monotheism, vegetarianism and teetotalism; (2) Sibu's leadership where ghost hunting gives way to a no-rent campaign which assumes an activist form: Oraons would not plough or do work for either the government or the zamindars; (3) Violent action in Sirguja against non-aboriginals classes such as Chhatris, Brahmins, Muhammadans, Dajwars, Kheriwars, Chausis, Korwas, Barghas etc.; (4) The 1922 phase where under the impact of the national movement, agrarian issues were radicalised and discontent heightened to an unprecedented level. By 1921-22, the merger with the Congress movement was complete.

What is totally overlooked in this conceptualisation is the integral link between religion, economics and politics

28. Ibid., p.36.

in the Tana Bhagat movement. Since Singh sees these threads as disparate and distinct, rather than in interaction, he is forced to leave unexplained certain trends which he mentions and which to him seem regressive: for example, the return after the Sirguja uprising of the Tana Bhagats to a phase of puritanical community purification with marked Brahmanical influences.²⁹

Singh's postulate of the Tana merger with the Congress is yet another theme that needs to be reanalysed. He writes, "Their (Tana) commitment to the Congress ideology was whole hearted and they tenaciously clung to the national party at considerable personal sacrifice... Almost in one leap under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi (they) significantly widened the area of activities and expanded its consciousness from the local to the national level...".³⁰ For the Congress, boycott of alcohol and the use of foreign cloth, non-violence, plying the spinning wheel and the settlement of disputes through the panchayat system were of prime importance. Attempts were made to shift the focus of the Tana movement into one against the government. And yet the Tana anti-landlordism continued, and Singh provides no evidence to reveal the Congress support for this campaign of

29. Ibid., p.43.

30. Ibid., p.49.

the Tanas. Equally incomplete was the Tana commitment to non-violence, as it is clear even from Singh's study. The Tanas infact regarded the British, on certain occasions, as the 'ma-baap', an appealing agent who would bring justice against the zamindar.

B.B. Choudhury³¹ on the other hand has juxtaposed a series of episodes strung across the period 1914-1926 in Ranchi, Palamau, Jalpaiguri and parts of Madhya Pradesh. Through a narrative of events, Choudhury has sought to construct the Tana Bhagat movement and understand its continuities and changes. The Tana Bhagat movement was not a mere continuation of the earlier Bhagat cult but differed from it with regard to its origins and orientations. It was essentially a collective enterprise, aiming at the cultural and moral regeneration of the Oraon tribe. After commenting on the contradictions in Risley, S.C. Roy and much later K.S. Singh's writings, Choudhury makes the following conclusions. The religious revitalization movement as an instrument for achieving political goals was not a unique feature of the Oraon movement. In fact, it points to the fact that it is futile to look for a "pure" unchanging

31. B.B. Choudhury, "The Story of a Tribal Revolt in the Bengal Presidency: The Religion and Politics of the Oraons, 1900-1926", in A. Chakraborti (ed.), Aspects of Socio-Economic Changes and Political Awakening in Bengal (Calcutta: 1989), pp.30-57.

consciousness of the tribal insurgents. As the relatively closed tribal order of the pre-colonial days had been fast breaking up, the tribals assimilated a wide variety of cultural influences. "Ethnicity" then, as a cultural concept, is inseparable from responsiveness to diverse alien cultural influences.³² Further, pointing to the deep-felt religious convictions in tribal consciousness, Choudhury argues that a reduction of moral and religious fervor to a mere strategy for promoting personal or even collective needs of a political sort would be to misrepresent the rebel tribal consciousness. While a faith in the supernatural intervention did form a component of tribal consciousness, it however seldom precluded appropriate human efforts.

Choudhury acknowledges the "conscious assimilation"³³ by the Oraons of diverse cultural influences, thereby seeing the movement not as a "retreat into the past" and "nativistic"³⁴ (the unconscious assimilative process is left untouched in the article); but he does not try to show how these diverse factors moulded, changed or introduced a new pattern in Oraon life or traditional practices. He mentions fleetingly the Hinduising influences through itinerant

32. Ibid., p.55.

33. Ibid., p.34.

34. Ibid., p.34.

Vaishnava gurus, but the nature of the interaction, of acceptance and opposition, is ignored. Choudhury makes a point when he writes, "Influence of Hindu ideals is obvious" in the "prohibitions of animal food and intoxicating drink, resolution not to work as palki bearers...;"³⁵ yet, "emulation of Hindu beliefs and rituals did not make the Oraon part of the Hindu caste system... it was not a part of the usual social mobility movement... the Oraons... were not keen on any redefinition of their status in the Hindu caste system...".³⁶ The immense potentialities of this statement however are not considered. Nor is there a discussion of the other influences of the outside world through the interaction with Chaukidars, law courts, Missionaries, Islam etc. which influenced Oraon culture deeply. Equally incomplete is his analysis of the forces leading to the movement. While he admits that economic forces did not wholly determine the cause and objectives of the Tana movement, his stress remains on the economic aspects.

B.B. Choudhury's article is a definite advance over that of K.S. Singh's in that he sees the "organic" relationship between the religion and politics of the Oraons. However, these two were not distinct, disparate

35. Ibid., p.44.

36. Ibid., p.35.

strands as Choudhury seems to argue. Rather, both were mingled in the same strand itself, being parts of the same intertwined process.

Similarly, while Choudhury refutes K.S. Singh's argument that the Congress provided the Tanas with an effective organization, his argument that agrarian issues soon receded into the background as the Oraons increasingly committed themselves to a purely anti-British stance, does not seem tenable. Even after forging links with the national movement the Tanas declared: "We will make the law, we will be the judges, we will populate the land and cultivate it... We will get Swaraj, our rent free land."³⁷ Clearly for the Tanas, the implications of Swaraj were different and did not conform to the nationalist notion of the term.

I will lastly consider The Coming of The Devi.³⁸ Hardiman in this monograph deals with an entirely different movement, but he discusses themes that are crucial to my dissertation. Hence an analysis of his framework has been included in this section.

DISS
322.44095412
D2607 Re



37. Singh, "Tribal Peasantry, Millenarianism, Anarchism and Nationalism", p. 48.

38. D. Hardiman, The Coming of the Devi (Delhi: 1987), p.6.

~~DISS
Y, 724471, 0
N2~~



TH-4270

Hardiman has discerned three stages in the Devi movement. In the first phase its concern was with socio-economic reforms, with cleanliness, vegetarianism and abstinence from liquor. In the second phase Salabai (the Devi) was heard telling the adivasis to take vows in Gandhi's name, to wear khadi cloth and to attend nationalistic schools. In the final phase the cult with its emphasis on non-violence and shuddhi, crossed the Gandhian phase, became increasingly militant and assertive, and advocated an attack on the urban sahumars and Parsis.

Through an analysis of the Devi movement and its changing character, from the "virtually silent"³⁹ government records, papers and a range of oral sources, Hardiman makes two fundamental points. A movement among the adivasis of Western India which sought to change the established way of tribal life through the command of the Devi was not the product of mere ignorance and superstition. The particular form this movement took was closely linked to the idioms of peasant consciousness. Hardiman has made a detailed study of the structures of the pre-colonial society, the impact of colonial rule and laws on this society, the manner in which the adivasis struggled against the harsh new social system,

39. Ibid., p.6.

and the method of the transmission of political messages amongst the peasantry. Through this he has sought to emphasise the close relationship between the Devi movement and the religiosity of peasant mentality. Religion, according to Hardiman, was an integral part of the tribal cosmology and structure. Hardiman's second purpose is to correct the prevailing historiographical approaches as outlined by the "nationalistic" and "socialist schools"⁴⁰ and "to provide a history of the people who have suffered grievances and prolonged injustices over the past".⁴¹

Although Hardiman fleetingly accepts the existence of non-*adivasi* elements within the tribal structure in the pre-colonial phase he paints a very idyllic picture of *adivasi* community life. All *adivasis* were united as a whole by common material circumstances and a common culture, the sense of community being fostered at various levels - the *faliya*, the village, the *jati* and the *adivasis* as a whole, and dances and ceremonies emphasising village solidarity. The *adivasis* being united "by common material circumstances" and a "common culture", the "similarities between such *jatis* and the corresponding contrast with the traders, moneylenders and artisans who made up the class of

40. Ibid., p.7.

41. Ibid., p.10.

'ujaliats' was only too striking".⁴² The influx of traders, moneylenders and landlords, he argues, established themselves under the protection of the colonial authorities taking advantage of the judicial system. Before the colonial period, these communities had remained free, or at least relatively free from the control of outside states. Such a depiction needs to be questioned.

A further point needs to be noted. Hardiman indicates a distinction between those adivasis who saw the cult as having no higher meaning, and others who saw it as a movement for permanent change. Certain questions however may be raised. How did this difference in the understanding of the Devi come about? Under the aegis of which section of the Dhodiyas did the propitiation cult assume a new meaning and form? How was the direction of the Devi movement determined? What was the relationship of the gaulas with the headman of the village? (Often the daughter of a prominent villager such as the headman was taken as the symbol of the Devi who was to be propitiated.) The answers to these questions would throw further light on the distinctions in the adivasi society itself. The "elite mass" distinctions which were bound to be present even in a subaltern society are not

42. Ibid., p.81.

commensurate with Hardiman's model of a homogenous subaltern group.

Lastly, Hardiman's critique of Sanskritization needs to be reviewed. For him, Srinivas' model with its goal of 'Brahmanical purity' is akin to a "very sluggish game of snakes and ladders";⁴³ it is incomplete since it emphasizes only the aspect of purification. Drawing from Dumont, Hardiman argues that relationships of power are integral to an understanding of adivasi rationale - "the adivasi programme combined adoption of certain high caste values with an attack on the power of the Parsis".⁴⁴ The values which they endorsed were those of the classes which possessed political power, and acting as they did they challenged that element of power which permitted the dominant classes to subjugate them. In this sense, the cult was a movement of "appropriation" and "assertion".⁴⁵ Here Hardiman presents a simplistic understanding of Sanskritization and "appropriation", and of the Srinivasian model. Besides "appropriation" need not lead merely to an "assertion"; it has within it the structure of denial and acceptance, rejection and emulation. In other words, a

43. Ibid., p.158.

44. Ibid., p.159.

45. Ibid., p.165.

complexity is there that needs to be more clearly analysed. Further, rather than 'appropriating' and thereby 'asserting', one can also invert the very logic of higher caste values and adopt an anti-structure in place of the existing structure.

Hardiman sets out by challenging the existing historiography for its excessive obsession with the national movement. And yet paradoxically, he falls into the same trap. The relationship of the nationalists with the adivasis remains the crucial theme of 'The Coming of the Devi'.

In my dissertation, I will focus on various aspects of the Tana Bhagat movement to understand the wholistic nature of a tribal society, the specific mode of Tana interaction with the wider forces and the existing Oraon practices, and the movement's relationship with the non-cooperation movement. I emphasize the need to study the cultural categories which structured this interactional process.

The Tanas, it needs to be pointed out, were not an undifferentiated group, nor were their responses to outside forces uniform. The purpose of this dissertation will be to show how in the period 1914-22, the Tanas set about to

reorder the Oraon world and create a distinct identity for themselves.

The dissertation will have an introductory part with a narrative of the movement, a consideration of certain historiographical approaches (Chapter I) and an analysis of the different forces with which the Oraon society came into contact (Chapter II). In my next part, I will be dealing with the cultural vision of the Tanas (Chapter III), the complexities of the Tana Movement (Chapter IV) and a brief conclusion on the nature of the impact of different forces on the movement (Chapter V). I will lastly take up for discussion the relationship of the Tana Bhagats with the non-cooperation movement (Chapter VI).

CHAPTER II

THE GRAONS AND THE OTHERS

Jatra was arrested in 1914 for his insistence that his followers were no longer to work as coolies or labourers for the government or for the zamindars; they were not to pay rent to the landlords.¹

God was supposed to have distributed leaflets to Sibū in 1919 on which were written:

It is no longer the Raj of the zamindars. The earth belongs to pious men. Nobody should give any rent or chowkidari tax.

The banias must not attend bazars. They rob the men. Marwaris sell cloth at high rate and cheat religious men. Marwaris, may your cloth be burnt to ashes. Musalmans, may you perish! The vagabonds and their prostitutes will perish as soon as Phalgun (the time of the Holi festival) comes.

Brahmans, Rajputs, Rajas and zamindars had nothing to eat when they came here, but now they have become so powerful as to beat the Oraons and Mundas.

Christians are the lowest class. God says so.²

1. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 54 of 1925.
2. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

In 1921, Turia Bhagat and Birsa Bhagat flatly declined to pay rent or chaukidari tax and said openly that they would not give up their land even if deposed.³

The above statements refer to the non-Oraon elements -- Hindus, Rajputs, Brahmins, Rajas, Muslims and the British state -- against whom the Tanas expressed their opposition. In a greater historical process that spread over centuries, the Oraons were in continuous interaction with elements of the non-tribal world, placed as they were within a larger society. In this Chapter, I will seek to study the history of the Oraons: the different influences that penetrated into their land, the cultural forces that shaped their socio-religious universe, and the process through which they gradually lost their rights on the soil. Against a background of this understanding, the Tana Bhagat movement can be placed in its historical context.

There is a singular lack of reference to developments in the Chotanagpur area in the early period. The history of the Oraons in this phase is shrouded in obscurity. It was during the medieval period that 'Jharkhand' which was coeval with modern Chotanagpur emerged as a distinct historical region. Yet the sources of information on the history of -----

3. Ibid.

Bihar in the medieval period are also extremely fragmentary and Bihar does not have any separate regional history either in Persian or the Indian languages.⁴ The first mention of the word 'Jharkhand' and one of the earliest descriptions of its people was made in Shams-i-Siraj Afif's Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi.

In this wilderness are found savages who have never set their eyes on civilized men. They cannot understand the language of the civilized people, nor can the latter comprehend their speech (of the Savages). Their dress consists of peacock feathers, and their food the flesh of the buffaloes; the trees are their dwellings, and leaves and feathers their bed; their drinking bowls are the palm of their hands with which they sip water from streams by day and night. They are nude and barefooted men, devoid of all human sentiments; they shun the haunts of man.

In chronicles that primarily dealt with the history of emperors and their dependents, the forest 'savages' found little space. Clearly this description contributes little to an understanding of Oraon history and settlements in Chotanagpur. Legends preserved in tribal memory⁶ with their

-
4. S.H. Askari and Q. Ahmad (eds.), The Comprehensive History of Bihar, Vol.II, Part I (Patna: 1983), p.2.
 5. K.S. Singh, "Medieval Tribal Bihar" in Askari and Ahmad (eds.), The Comprehensive History of Bihar, p.256.
 6. These have been recorded in J. Reid, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Ranchi 1902-10 (Calcutta: 1912); S.C. Roy, The Oraons of Chotanagpur: Their History, Economic Life and Social Organization (Ranchi: 1915) and M.C. Hallett, District Gazetteers of Ranchi (Patna: 1917).

own elements of mythic time, space and events provide some evidence for recreating this history. These are at times supported by insufficient archaeological, linguistic and literary evidences.

I

THE COMING OF THE DIKUS

The Oraons were originally immigrants from the Deccan as philological evidences indicate. According to their own tradition, in the course of migrations they were driven out from their stronghold in Rohtas by the 'Mlechchas'. They were thus forced to enter Ranchi where the Mundas, the original reclaimers of the land, received them in a friendly manner.⁷ In the Oraon-Munda land a number of outside elements came who were collectively denoted by the term 'dikus'. In this Section, I will be dealing with the penetration of these elements, their encroachment on the land and the channels through which they established linkages with the Oraon society.

The earliest external presence in Chotanagpur was of the Nagbanshi Rajas. The origin of these Nagbanshis with whom the Oraons and Mundas came into contact is uncertain.

7. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.312-3.

The traditions of all three suggest that the Nagbanshis were originally Mundas. The Oraon and Munda communities, as their legends point out, were originally regulated by the Parha Council headed by the Parha Raja in the case of the Oraons, and the Mankis in the case of the Mundas. These Rajas and Mankis elected one among them, the Manki of Sutiambe as the Chief Manki. From him descended the family of Nagbanshis. These Nagbanshis gradually acquired the position of overlords and reduced the Oraons and Mundas to a subordinate position.⁸

Against this theory of origin, K.S. Singh has advanced a more historically grounded perception. "The Chotanagpur historians... have not shown any understanding of the role of the Nagbanshis in central India from the 10th to the 14th century both in Bastar and Kawardha where they survived as a political power till the early 15th century... Notwithstanding the spurious genealogy of the Chotanagpur Nagbanshis tracing their arrival to the 1st century AD, their definitive history begins only in the 14th to 15th centuries." The Kawardha Nagbanshis were overthrown by the Gonds in the fourteenth century and appear to have emigrated to Chotanagpur. The relationship of the Kawardha and Chotanagpur Nagbanshis is underlined by the fact that both

8. Hallett, District Gazetteers of Ranchi, pp.21-4.

share the phani (serpent) symbol. Further the Central Indian background of the Nagbanshis is evident from the Nagpuri language that they patronised and from the influx of the Chattisgarh (Rautia) communities who came into Chotanagpur under their rule.⁹

Fortified by mountains and jungles and the fastness of the Kokrah, and at a distance from central control, the Nagbanshis did much to introduce outsiders into the tribal lands. As the family prospered, they intermixed with the Rajput families of Pachete and Singhbhum and acquired the status of high caste Rajputs. Rajputs, Brahmins, Barouks and others were induced to settle in Chotanagpur and liberal grants of villages were made as payments for services rendered. Thus the system of Jagirs was introduced. These Jagirdars gradually began to appropriate the land which they called the 'Rajhas' lands or 'the Raja's share'. So effectively did they operate and impose their control that the Mundas and Oraons were reduced to the status of mere cultivators. Originally Mundas and Oraons had given to their chief gifts and supplies from the land and a small subscription of a few rupees (chanda). The new jagirdars forced them to pay rent in cash, in kind (rakumats), and levies or cesses (abwabs) of various sorts. Landlordism thus

9. Singh, "Medieval Tribal Bihar", pp. 280-1.

made its entry and the foundations of agrarian discontent and trouble were laid.¹⁰

The Mundas resisted and emigrated. The "comparatively docile"¹¹ Oraons succumbed to the new domination. But they persistently made the claim that Chotanagpur was their "raj", and that they were not liable to pay rents for lands which their ancestors had cleared.¹² Land rights belonged to the Bhuinhars, not the 'dikus', the foreigners. "Our fathers cleared the forest. Singbonga sends the rain and gives us the harvest. What have these 'dikus' done that they should own the land."¹³

II

VAISHNAVISM AND ISLAM

Oraon contact with the above outside groups brought with it a structure of domination-subordination and a relationship of opposition. There were other levels and forms of contact with the outside world. From medieval times a

10. Hallett, District Gazetteers of Ranchi, pp.25-7.
11. F. DeSa, Crisis in Chota Nagpur (Bangalore: 1975), p. 37.
12. Reid, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement, p. 14.
13. J.B. Hoffman, Encyclopedia Mundarica, Vol. II (Patna: 1930), p. 515.

number of cultural movements found their way into Chotanagpur. Vaishnavism left an indelible imprint on 'Jharkhand' and Chaitanya was believed to have passed through this region on his way to Mathura as mentioned in the Shri Chaitanya Charitamrita.¹⁴ Vaishnavite influence among the Oraons did not however percolate through any organised movement but rather through the preachings of itinerant Vaishnava vairagis, who periodically visited the Ranchi district from Gaya and Shahabad in search of a livelihood.¹⁵ It was not a devotional Vaishnavism that was expounded but rather a mixture of epic and Puranic themes, backed by a message of simple ethical conduct. A more widespread impact among the Oraons was made by the Kabirpanthi saints or followers of Kabir who came from the Raipur and Bilaspur districts of the Central Provinces and toured this area.¹⁶ The Bhagat cults - Bachhidan, Nemha, Kabirpanthi and Vishnu Bhagat cults - were all influenced through these contacts. In the nineteenth century reformist groups like the Arya Samaj sought to draw in the Oraons into their fold through the 'shuddhi' ceremonies.¹⁷ The

14. K.S. Singh, Birsa Munda and His Movement: 1874-1901 (Calcutta: 1983), p. 1

15. Roy, Oraon Religion, p. 317.

16. Ibid., p. 327.

17. Ibid., p. 327.

relationship of the Oraons with all such forces was more complex and marked by ambiguities. There was no simple appropriation or rejection of influences. The world view of the Oraons was largely structured in relation to these forces. An indepth analysis of the nature of interaction with cultural movements has been dealt with in Chapter V of the dissertation.

Islam reached Chotanagpur with the agrarian colonization of the region under the sultans and Mughals. The Mughals particularly encouraged the reclamation of land and the extension of cultivation in the tribal belt, and colonies of Muslims came up. The Nagbanshi Rajas also invited Muslim peasants to settle in this region in view of their presumed ability to generate agricultural surplus better than the tribal population. Islam was thus associated in popular tradition with the history of colonization and displacement of tribal rights. Muslims find mention in Tana tenets particularly during Sibu's leadership in the 1919-22 phase.

III

THE LOSS OF BHUINHARI

Elements of transformation were witnessed in the pre-British period as the Chotanagpur was gradually opened up

through conquests, settlements and the penetration of cultural influences. The nineteenth century however marked a major change with the coming in of two forces - the colonial state and the missionary organization. The Britishers sought to shift "the basis of rural power from control of people to control of land."¹⁸ And the changes which they brought about through the establishment of a communication system that linked distant regions and integrated markets, the delienation, fixation and recording of land rights, the alteration of property relations, the setting up of courts, the police force and an extensive colonial bureaucracy, were all geared towards this direction.

In the colonial period land relations in Oraon society were re-structured. British notion of property and the colonial perception of the existing customs shaped agrarian relations. The attempt by the state to infuse the principle of private property into agrarian society entailed the conversion of communal property into individual tenures thereby making it saleable. The record of rights of such tenures was important since these records were admissible in the proceedings of the court and other government institutions. The state also attempted to incorporate some

18. G. Prakash, Bonded Histories: Genealogies of Labor Servitude in Colonial India (Cambridge: 1990), p.99.

local customs into its agrarian arrangement. These customs were codified but in the process they were also redefined. In the changed context, they now expressed not the diverse dimensions of traditional relations but a new set of tenurial equations as constructed by the state. The redefinition of these customs touched upon the socio-religious life of the Oraons since land was not merely a secular means of material prosperity for them but one which contained a whole gamut of other complex relations. For the British officials who sought to historicize the agrarian relations prior to their intervention as one characterized by tension, dispute and chaos, the introduction of land tenurial regulations was a step towards alleviating tension, resolving conflicts and establishing order; in actuality, these measures, I will argue, heightened the contradictions by introducing new determinants like the record of rights in a written form and the law courts, and further opened new arenas of conflict.

The conflict in the Oraon society veered mainly around land. Land and land-related issues like claims of ownership of land, control over land tenures, the enhancement of rent and the imposition of praedial services generated a confrontation between the Oraons and their landlords. The infiltration of the thikadars, the assumption of cultivable

land by them and the extension of the landlord's authority had progressively eroded the rights of the Oraons. Constructing the history of the conflict before the intervention of the state, the British officials stated that the initial dispute between the Oraons and the landlords concerned the status and expanse of Bhuinhari land. I elaborate below the character and changes in property rights in Chotanagpur.

T.S. Mcpherson wrote in 1905:

To comprehend rights and customs in Chotanagpur... the most important requisite is to discard completely all ideas of land tenure acquired in other parts of Bengal... the unit in Chotanagpur being frequently not individual tenants, but a community and the landlord being not owner of the soil, but merely receiver of a charge called 'rent' and having no direct relation with the cultivator.

Thus, inspite of the permanent settlement that upheld the rights of the zamindars and tenure holders, there existed in the district of Ranchi a much older tradition of customary and community rights over land. The origins of these rights may be traced to the foundation of the villages that took place through the reclamation of the jungles and

-
19. Final Report on Survey and Settlement Operations in Porahat Estate, 1905-07 (Calcutta: 1910), p.14, quoted in P.P. Mohapatra, "Class Conflict and Agrarian Regimes in Chotanagpur, 1860-1950", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.28, No.1, 1991, p.7.

wastelands. The polarization of the customary and community rights on the one hand, and that of absolute property rights can be seen in the contrast between the bhuinhari villages and the landlord's land (manjhihas). The bhuinhars were the descendants of the original founders of the village and held a certain portion of the village land rent-free or on payment of a fixed amount of labour services. The rest of the village land was held directly by the landlord (manjhihas) or else, periodically enhancible rent was paid to the landlord (Rajhas). As the new raiyats settled and land was opened up with the expansion of agriculture, the total village rent was periodically adjusted. It was the headman who played the role of intermediary between the landlord and the village in the payment of rent.

The features of the village communities and of the forms of customary tenures were the points of controversy between the landlord and the bhuinhar. In their bid to increase control over the village land, the landlords tried to limit the area of bhuinhari land except in a few of the oldest villages and increase the area of the ordinary rent-paying land (rajhas) or land under their direct control (manjhihas). The bhuinhars on the other hand, claimed larger tracts of land as bhuinhari and frequently added to their existing lands newly reclaimed areas. They of course paid no

additional rent for these lands. Thus ensued an endemic conflict between the landlord and the bhuinhar from the early nineteenth century.

It was through the thikadari system that the landlords made a direct attack on the 'customary tenures' of the bhuinhars. With the coronation of Jagnath Shahdeo in 1822, writes Cuthbert, the rent-farming system entered Chotanagpur when a new set of middlemen were granted indiscriminate rent farming leases:

These men were Mussalmans, Sikhs and some others, who came to the country as horse dealers, and shawl and brocade merchants, fetched enormous offers for their goods from the Nagvansi chiefs and obtained forms of villages instead of cash, of which the later chief were always in want.... They proved their yoke to be galling indeed and made the very name thikadar in Chotanagpur infamous.²⁰

Inspite of colonial intervention, the process of the dispossession of bhuinhari land in the more open areas of the district continued unabated. By the 1850's the system was strengthened by the entry of the mahajans and merchants who penetrated into the interiors of the Oraon land. The attack on bhuinhari by the use of professional thikadars was

20. Report of S.T. Cuthbert, Collector of Ramgarh, cited in Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers (n.d.), p.43 in Mohapatra, "Class Conflicts and Agrarian Regimes in Chotanagpur", p.28.

often collectively resisted and counterattacks on the landlord were frequent particularly after 1857. The Kol insurrection of 1832 had also been against thikadari oppression. Bhuihars, especially Christian bhuihars, refused to perform 'begari' or forced labour. The Sardar Agitation similarly had as its basis the belief that the Oraons being the original settlers on the land were the actual claimants of the whole of Chotanagpur Estates. In the petitions submitted in 1887 to the Government of Bengal, Government of India as well as to the British Parliament, they stated:

Every nation has its own Government: Only we Mundas and Oraons have not. As every child inherits his father's rights, so we wish to have the rights of our forefathers.

The British state thus appeared as the appealing agent for the sardars. The tradition of regarding the state as the 'ma-baap' can be seen here. This was later reflected in the ambiguous attitudes of the Tanas towards the British. Appeals were made to the state and its institutions, often in the form of memorials, for justice and intervention; at

-
21. Petitions of Sardars to the General Conference of German Lutheran Missionaries, cited by C.C. Stevens, Commissioner of Chotanagpur, in Government of Bengal, Judicial, 12-14, January 1888, cited in Mohapatra, "Class Conflict and Agrarian Regimes in Chotanagpur", p.31.

the same time, there was a marked resistance and opposition to the state in the Tana attitudes.

It was to "settle the disputes authoritatively and finally" the colonial officials stated, that "Act II of 1869 (The Chotanagpur Tenures Act of 1869) was passed by the Bengal Council".²² Special commissioners were appointed according to this Act to survey and demarcate the privileged lands of the tenants (bhuinhari) and the privileged lands of the landlords (manjhihas). The commissioners also had the power to restore land to the possession of persons who had been dispossessed of their bhuinhari or manjhihas tenures at any period within twenty years before the passing of the Act. The record thus completed in 1880 was declared to be final and conclusive. The bhuinhari tenancies were to comprise of all the lands recorded in the bhuinhari register prepared between 1869 and 1880 under this Act.

One of the most significant provisions of the Act was instituted with the intention of protecting the rights of the Oraons as well as to remove a cause of conflict with the landlords. This pertained to the incorporation and codification of the 'Oraon notion of customary rights' in

22. Reid, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations, p.35.

bhuinhari land. Different forms of bhuinhari lands confirming the integral link between land and the religious belief and practices of Oraons were identified by the commissioner. The following 'cognate tenures' of the bhuinhari land were recorded in the Act -

- 1- 'Bhutkheta or devil's acre' - the term was applied to lands which were believed to be haunted by evil spirits or which were dedicated to the worship of the village spirits (bhuts).
- 2- Pahnai and dalikatari - these lands were held, in the opinion of the colonial state, by the village Pahans (priests) for the performance of certain specified sacrifices.
- 3- Panbhara - these lands were held by the Pahans' assistants for the performance of certain duties such as carrying water, and cooking during the performance of sacrificial ceremonies.
- 4- Mahatoi - these were service tenures held by the headmen, i.e. the Mahatos.

Thus, the 'Oraon notion of bhuinhari tenure' was partly incorporated in the stipulations of the Act of 1869.²³

23. Ibid., p.97.

What was obscured from the colonial vision was that the mode of redefinition which accompanied the very incorporation of these customs into the Act, altered the nature and meaning of these customs. The Bhuinhari lands were no more to be carved out by the Oraon community but were to be sanctioned by an Act which could not even evolve a criteria for defining this land. More importantly, this arbitrary demarcation was to be 'final and conclusive' and no court was to entertain any appeal against the written verdicts of the Act. Further, the significance of the customary rights also underwent changes in the process of codification. The bhuinhari lands owned and donated by the village community to the Pahan and other religious practitioners in their succeeding generations were divested of their inalienable communal nature and transformed into the individual properties of the concerned religious functionaries. The local courts, oblivious of the communal nature of the Pahnai lands "allowed them to be sold in auction in satisfaction of decrees for debt obtained against the Pahan, and in this way many of the tenures have been lost to the village communities."²⁴

Finally, I will be arguing here that although the tenurial regulations implemented by the British aimed at

24. Ibid., p.97.

resolving the conflicts between the landlords and the raiyats, these regulations actually created new spheres of dispute. The contradiction between the interests of the landlords, the retinue of thikadars and other outside elements on the one hand, and that of the Oraons on the other, was certainly present in the society long before the encroachment of the colonial state. The colonial state however, by introducing new variables speeded the process of pauperisation of the raiyats. For example, written evidences were used to substantiate the claims of ownership, and the law, rather than the community, was empowered to adjudicate in agrarian disputes. The Oraon oral evidences and references to tradition under the circumstances had little weight against the documentary evidences of their opponents. Similarly the chaukidari institution was another means of exploitation rather than being a system that aided the Oraons. Infact, landlords were often Magistrates who furthered coercion on the raiyats as several cases indicate. I will be offering a brief analysis of the Chotanagpur Tenures Acts of 1869 and 1908 to substantiate the above argument.

The Act of 1869 attempted to demarcate the bhuinhari and manjhihas land to record the rights of the Oraons and the landlords in order to alleviate the conflict in the

agrarian structure. The property rights of the Oraon raiyats who cultivated the 'rajhas' lands (landlords' lands leased to the tenants) still continued to be treated as 'non-occupancy tenants'. This enabled the landlords to easily evict the tenants because tenancy rights had to be substantiated by written documents which were rarely available with the Oraons. The process of ejection was mediated through the law courts. Thus the barriers of community restraint were removed by the court whose authority was now unchallenged. The system of courts failed to improve the condition of the Oraons and Major Mannyngton reported:

In Chotanagpur the bhuinhari lands which exist in every village have been exposed to the rapacity of the middlemen, aliens who are hated by the people, and who, to obtain these lands, spare no species of force or fraud. Against these our courts do not offer any facile remedy and the day may be not far distant when the people goaded beyond endurance may take the law into their own hands.²⁵

It was not surprising therefore that the largest number of objections filed during the settlement operations conducted by J. Reid between 1902-10 related to the possession and transfer of land. The table given below shows

25. Hallett, District Gazetteers of Ranchi, p.39.

the nature and percentages of the different objections filed.²⁶

	Number of disputes	Percentage of total number
Possession	26,410	66.4
Rent	4,996	12.6
Status	1,596	4.0
Title	1,624	4.1
Trees	2,905	5.3
Remeasurement and Miscellaneous	2,222	5.6

The eviction of the tenants and large scale transfer of the tenurial land was sought to be curtailed by the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (Act-VI) of 1908. Transfer by raiyats of their rights in their holdings for any period exceeding five years was prohibited, but a raiyat could enter into a bhugut bandhak mortgage for any period not exceeding seven years.²⁷ Secondly, the Act introduced the principle of 'settled raiyats' on the basis of 12 years' occupation of a land, thereby instituting some checks on the arbitrary enhancement of rent and the ejection of tenants.

26. Reid, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations, p.74.

27. A bhugut bandhak mortgage was one in which the loan was repaid by the profits arising from the tenancy during the period of the mortgage.

5

The Act of 1908 which had been a failure "as far as transfers in raiyati lands are concerned"²⁸ strengthened other vistas of exploitation. Some checks prevailed on the arbitrary enhancement of rent. However, it did not touch on the most crucial aspect of the agrarian agitation in Ranchi district, namely, the question of the proprietary rights of landlords. In the making of the legislation, several concessions to landlords against tenants were granted. The most crucial of these were with regard to the 'bakast' land. The practice of salami which was prevalent in the Oraon society even earlier provided the main channel of exploitation and facilitated the influx of the outsiders. Salami was taken by every landlord for the settlement of 'bakast' land with the tenants. From the beginning of the twentieth century these lands were given by the landlords to persons who paid the highest salami, even if they happened to be outsiders. This was against the local custom which enjoined that an Oraon was to be given preference over others in the settlement of 'bakast' land. The infiltration of these outsiders through the payment of salami was considered by Mansfield, a settlement officer in 1932, to be the

28. F.E.A. Taylor, Final Report on the Revisional Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Ranchi (1927-1935) (Patna: 1940), p.72.

primary reason for the rise of the Tana Bhagat movement.²⁹ Further, it firmly established the landlord's proprietary rights in extensive areas of wasteland and forests (though these were limited by the customary rights of tenants); these areas had been a source of conflict between landlords and tenants throughout the late nineteenth century.

From the second half of the 19th century, various forms of credit existed in Chotanagpur. Not all credit was based on the security of land; in the land market too there were outright sales, mortgages and leases of various kinds. In Ranchi however, in the period 1883-1913, land had not become an easily saleable commodity. Moreover, those who made significant entries into the tenure market were the zamindari amlahs, urban professionals and petty government officials. Mortgages however increased over this period. Roughly 12 per cent of the total registered mortgages of the division were recorded in the Ranchi district. During the Survey and Settlement Operations (1902-10), the total raiyati land which was mortgaged in Ranchi district amounted to less than 1 per cent of the total cultivated land with the raiyats. But the mortgaged don (rice) land constituted 2.75 per cent of the total raiyati don land. On the other hand, roughly 8 per cent of the bhuinhari and mundari

29. Ibid., p.50.

khuntkatti don land was found to have been mortgaged. Fixed rent, higher level of security and statutory recognition to the buinhari rights made these lands an attractive security for credit. This was reflected in the security value of mortgaged bhuinhari land being 20 per cent higher than the value per acre of the ordinary raiyati land. A noticeable feature of the mortgages in Ranchi district was that it tended to be concentrated in the more open and cultivated areas rather than in the remote jungle tracts. The value of mortgages, similarly, was higher in the former area than in the latter, and rural debt was higher in the more accessible areas of the district. Sahun and banias, the professional moneylenders and village merchants appear to have been the main mortgagees.³⁰ The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908 failed to improve matters. The immediate impact of the passing of the Act was a great decline in the number of registered transactions in both sales and mortgages. The figures for the latter however picked up immediately afterwards. Restrictions placed on mortgages were rendered ineffective by various loopholes in the law. "As a matter of fact", it was reported in the Ranchi District Gazetteer, "experience has shown that the raiyat seldom demands to be in possession and often agrees with the moneylender to

30. P.P. Mohapatra, "Land and Credit Market in Chotanagpur, 1880-1950", Studies in History, 6, 2, 1990, p.179.

execute a second mortgage for a period of five years."³¹ Instead of direct sale, there now arose the practice of collusive transfers by formally surrendering the land to the landlord who then settled the land with the transferee. In these concealed sales a large part of the purchase money was given to landlords as salami.³² Keeping in view the role of the banias and money-lenders in the entire process, the Tana opposition to these elements as proclaimed particularly by Sibū becomes intelligible.

IV

'APOSTLE OF THE ORAONS'?

The last major force that I shall be discussing is the entry of the Christian Missionaries in Chotanagpur -- the Lutheran, Anglican and Roman Catholic Missions. In the year 1845 came the first missionaries of the Lutheran Church, and thus began the progress of Christianity among the Oraons in a climate that was particularly suitable for missionary enterprise. The population was backward, illiterate and economically exploited. Thus from the outset, the cultural and religious impact of Christianity went hand in hand with

32. Mohapatra, "Land and Credit Market in Chotanagpur", p.187.

the attempt to enable the Oraons to resist the oppression of landlords and moneylenders.

Faced with the rapacity of the landlords on the one hand and the incomprehensible courts on the other, the missionaries for the Oraons acquired the role of saviours. Oraons were advised about the intricacies of the law and encouraged to use the legal means to obtain justice. Thus the agitation for bhuinhari land assumed a significant dimension particularly due to its link with the Church. It was because of the success of the Christian converts in the law courts regarding bhuinhari land that the impression spread that to become a Christian was a surer way to fight the landlord. As Dalton, the Commissioner of Chotanagpur reported in a letter dated March 25, 1855,

It has been commonly remarked that when matters came to issue between 'the simple Kol' and the zamindar or foreign farmer, the Kol had no chance and indeed he appeared to think so himself for he seldom sought distress; but the Kols who embraced Christianity imbibed more independent notions and in several instances successfully asserted their rights. From this the belief unfortunately spread through the District that when the Kols go to court as Christians, they are more uniformly successful than those who have not changed their religion.³³

33. The Calcutta Review, XLIX, 1869, p.125, quoted in DeSa, Crisis in Chota Nagpur, p.81.

The movement for Christianity thus became intimately linked with the agitation on the land question and 'natives' came to the missions in "whole families and whole villages".³⁴ Christians were particularly emphatic in their refusal to perform 'beth begari' for the landlords. Regarding 'begari', Dalton wrote,

I have not heard that any portion of the people complain against it, except the Christians, and I do not consider they should be encouraged in the spirit of opposition³⁵ to their landlords that they have lately shown.

The oppression of the landlords on the Christian converts arose out of these causes, and repeated instances occurred of the landlords mistreating them.

The missionary, E. Schatz, in an oft-quoted letter, dated Dec. 2, 1856, gives a 'diary' of the oppression:

Oct. 18 - A native Christian from Patergani had his house burnt down, saving nothing but his life and the clothing he wore.

Oct. 22 - The daughter of another Christian was forcibly dragged to the house of the zamindar, made out to be a witch, and maltreated by his servants.

Oct. 25 - A Christian dragged forcibly away from his house and severely beaten.

34. Ibid.

35. The Calcutta Review, XLIX, 1869, p.126, quoted in DeSa, Crisis in Chota Nagpur, p.82.

- Oct. 31 - A Christian cutting his rice is beaten, his sickle and clothing taken from him.
- Nov. 1 - The crops of native Christians cut by the servants of the zamindar who is judge, and the father and mother of one of the Christians dragged to the house of the judge and there beaten and imprisoned.
- Nov. 6 - Crops of Christians cut and taken away.
- Nov. 7 - The same done in some other villages of the Christians.
- Nov. 12 - All the cattle of a Christian forcibly taken away; in another village crops stolen and so on every day, so that many Christians have nothing left whatever from their crops.
- Nov. 17 - At Murphu, the house of a native Christian is plundered, all his corn cut down, and his wife, watching in the field, plundered of clothes and ornaments to the amount of Rs. 20. A native Christian from another village comes to us for refuge with his child, the people having maltreated him and threatened to kill him; during his absence his house was pulled down, and his mother and child forcibly thrust out of the village.
- Nov. 19 - All Christians in Tulgave fined Rs.80, having been falsely accused of having cut the corn from the fields of the zamindars; two of the accused were not even in the village at the alleged time. They will now have to appeal.³⁶

The second wave of proselytisation occurred in the 1880's under Father Constance Lievens and the Jesuit

36. The Calcutta Review, XLIX, 1869, p.132, quoted in DeSa, Crisis in Chota Nagpur, p.84.

Missionaries when no fewer than 70,000 'tribals', mainly Mundas and Oraons were received into the Roman Catholic Church. Lievens' method for conversion was unique - he agreed to help the people in court cases if the whole village came over to the Roman Catholic Church. A written agreement was often taken from the villagers that if any one of them changed their minds, a fine would be imposed on the entire village. So strong was the missionary contribution to the fight of the Bhuinhars against the landlords that the latter complained to the government against the missionaries for "inciting rebellion and sedition". The period 1889-90 was marked by a controversy in which the government and the missionaries were placed at contending ends.

Besides contributing to the local level conflicts over rent, 'beth begari' and landlord encroachment on bhuinhari, the missionaries were equally concerned with other aspects of the religio-cultural world of the Oraons. Through the activities of elders, catechists and teachers, Christian ideas spread to the interiors. Oraons were asked to renounce liquor, dancing, revelries, their belief in witches, 'devils' and demons' etc. and attend the hymn-sessions and Sunday Mass of the Church. To make the ideas acceptable, Christian ideas were often grafted on to Oraon customs by the missionaries. For example, thanks-giving was introduced

during the harvesting season. Boys and their guardians brought the first produce of their fields for offering to Christ which they otherwise might have offered to the spirits.

The missionaries at the outset would preach in the Bazar, villages, roadsides and even in the houses of individuals if and when the opportunity was available. Free medicines were distributed to draw in the crowds and schools were set up for children and adults where they were taught alphabets and told Biblical stories. As missions were gradually organized and activities carried out in a planned manner, the number of converts increased phenomenally touching over 10,000 by 1867.³⁷ A High School and a Girls school, along with an industrial school, a training school, a Lace school for women and a Blind school were set up at Ranchi, boarding schools were established at outstations and native pastorates, and a Leper Asylum and Home for Incurables at Lohardaga. Co-operative societies were started for the economic benefit of the Oraons. Thus, the impact of the missionaries on the Oraons was multi-dimensional and it penetrated into the social, religious and economic spheres of Oraon lives.

37. Hallett, District Gazetters of Ranchi, p.226.

The attitude towards the Christians was however marked by an ambiguity, as I have elaborated in Chapter V. There were many reasons for the gradual withdrawal of a large section of the Oraons from the missionary fold. As visits into the villages by European Christians gradually decreased, they used helpers - elders, catechists and teachers from the Oraons themselves to propagate Christian ideas. Usually the elders of the villages were chosen to be the elders among the Christians. The controversy arose particularly in cases where the Pahans (village priests) became Christian converts. Pahnai lands which were part of the community holdings were given temporarily to the Pahans for their services. Once the Pahans became Christians, the missionaries sought to appropriate this land as Church property. Thus they began to encroach on community rights and village lands. Further, in an effort to make the mission economically self sufficient, missionaries instituted the practice of donation of lands for the Churches and Chapels. Church tax was also to be paid by Christian families. This was widely resented since such a tax was regarded as akin to the demands of landlords. Thus a trend of opposition to the Church was also becoming increasingly prominent during this period. Converts began to shift away from Christian doctrines once the Church failed to deliver their aspired

dreams and meet their requirements. In the Tana movement an opposition to Christians was a marked trait.

Thus, over the centuries, a variety of diverse forces penetrated Chotanagpur. The socio-cultural vision of the Tanas and their opposition to the landlords, Rajputs, Banias, moneylenders, the British state and the Christians need to be placed against this background. The nature of the Tana Bhagat movement, its shifting attitudes towards 'outsiders', becomes meaningful in this context.

PART II

CHAPTER III

THE CULTURAL VISION OF THE TANAS

One of the most important legends preserved in the Oraon memory was as follows: Under a king of their own, the Oraons before their migration to Chotanagpur lived in comparative affluence and ease on the Rohtas plateau, further to the north-west. Their religion, at this stage, comprised of a belief in the existence of, on the one hand, the spirit of good embodied in Dharmes, the Sun-God and Creator, and on the other, the forces of evil manifested in the 'evil eye' (najar-gujar) and the 'evil mouth' (bai-bhak). The ancient Oraons, it was asserted, knew no bhuts or spirits nor ate beef or other unclean food, but were more clean in their habits and even wore the 'janeu' or sacred thread.

In a moment of weakness when all their adult male population were senseless with drink on the day of their annual festival, a hardier tribe attacked them. These 'mlechchhas', it is to be noted, had tried to capture the Rohtas fort even before but had always been successfully repulsed. Dislodged from their residence and chased beyond the river Sone into Chotanagpur, the Oraons in order to elude the enemy, were forced to take shelter in the houses

of the Mundas who they found in occupation of the country. The Oraons concealed their own identity by discarding their sacred threads and taking to the unclean food and habits of the Mundas, and adopting as their own the deities and spirits of the Munda pantheon.¹

The crux of the narrative which shows the Oraon view of their own history is as follows. It was only after they came into contact with the Mundas that the host of spirits and the sacrifices needed to propitiate them were assimilated into the Oraon religion. Their original high status was ritually polluted because of a tragic episode in their history, a forced eviction which necessitated the adoption of the practice of the unclean Mundas. The purity of the 'Kurukh Dharam' or "the real religion of the Oraons"² was henceforth lost. The Tana drew from this original Oraon faith, shorn of later importations. Tanaism was, therefore, called 'Kurukh Dharam'. In this chapter, through an analysis of the hymns sung in Tana gatherings in 1915,³ and the

1. Roy, Oraon Religion, pp.312-3.

2. Ibid., p.341.

3. S.C. Roy has recorded thirteen Tana hymns, and songs with their English translations (Ibid., pp.371-93) and a detailed narrative with English translations of certain of their compositions which refer to the origins, history and tenets of the Tana faith (Ibid., pp.353-71).

minutes of certain meetings available in Government documents in the period 1914-19,⁴ I have tried to understand the essentials of the Tana faith. I will be arguing that an explicit counterposition between Dharmes and the spirit-world, and an implicit one between religion and magic was made by the Tanas. Thus for Tana religion that was to be in its untainted and pristine form, the spirit-world and magic needed to be purged. An austerity, abstemiousness and ceremonial purity accompanied their movement for religious purification, along with a recodification of the Oraon norms and patterns of behaviour.

I

DHARMES AND THE CULT OF TANAS

At first the name Tana came into existence and then Tanaism came and is proceeding to the villages from the west.⁵

Thus began one of the hymns of the Tanas. Composed in rhythmical language, these 'bhajans' took the form of

4. The files I have seen are Government of Bihar and Orissa, Political Department, Special Section, File No. 1165 of 1916, 86 of 1919, 421 of 1919 and 54 of 1925. I have also consulted Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence for the years 1918 and 1919.
5. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.353.

stories, questions and answers, mantras, or a set of rules, prohibitions and instructions to be followed by the adherents of the faith. A reading of these compositions gives one an insight into the origins and history of the movement, its doctrines, practices and rules of conduct.

As the Tana cult moved in a westerly course, inhabitants of village after village would gather to learn the essentials of Tanaism and accept the faith. From the very outset it was a collective enterprise, consciously learnt and carried by word of mouth. Teachings were imparted by an "enlightened man" who became the "head teacher" and "who showed the way to all men."⁶ In other words, the notion of a precept, a Guru, was an integral part of the Tanas. It was he who taught the followers the doctrines, showed them the path to the 'True Religion' and who was believed to have a link with Dharmes, the Supreme God of the Oraons. The Tanas proclaimed that all teachings as embodied in the 'bhajans' were not thought out or deliberately composed. They appeared through divine inspiration to the Guru.

For initiation into the Tana faith, it was necessary to keep "carefully... good clothes on... stand... in a line with... faces eastward."⁷ The notion of cleanliness and

6. Ibid., pp.354-5.

7. Ibid., p.355.

purity was therefore a part of the Tanas as they prayed to the God with folded hands, meditation being carried out in the morning and evening. The principal God to whom they prayed was Dharme Baba or Bhagwan Baba and his name features in all invocations. A retinue of other Gods was however also mentioned in the course of the hymns and S.C. Roy writes that, "In the earliest years of the movement, every being known or heard of as the possessor of superhuman or supernatural power was invoked by the Tanas".⁸ For example, machines such as the steamboat, railway engine, motor car, bicycle and even bombs were invoked. The hymns which I have referred to record the names of the following Gods: Dharme Baba, Bhagwan Baba, Suraj Baba, Chandar Baba, Cunibani Baba, Tarigan Baba, Ram Baba, Lachman Baba, Bharat Baba, Satrugan Baba, Hindu Baba, Indra Baba, Brahma Baba, Ganesh Baba, Jagannath Baba, Hindu Siva Baba, Jodhaji Baba, Ganga Baba, Jamuna Baba and Mahadeo. The only female deity referred to is Dharti Ayo (Mother), also referred to as Sita Ayo. What is interesting is that in the Oraon pantheon, Sita Ayo is identified with Parvati (the consort of Siva) and is described as the wife of Dharmes. Clearly, many of the deities invoked had names of Gods from the Hindu pantheon of Gods and goddesses; what needs to be analysed is the meaning

8. Ibid., p.379.

that these Gods held for the Tanas. This I will consider in the conclusion.

What is significant is that it was Dharmes whom the Tanas had in mind in the course of their prayers, even when they referred to these various Gods. The following extract may be quoted:

And we meditate on [Thy] name; we invoke Thee by all [Thy] names, we pray to Thee by all Thy names,

O Dharme Baba, we call upon Thee; O Bhagwan Baba, we pray in Thy name, - Dharam, Dharam, Dharam; blessed, blessed, blessed art Thou.

In the hymns, Dharmes is most frequently mentioned, and his name heads the list when other gods are invoked. Further, prayers were conducted in Tana gatherings while facing the East, the traditional direction faced in the propitiation of Dharmes. Dharmes was to come from "heaven", from the "nether world", "from out of the clefts of the earth"¹⁰ to vouchsafe to the Tanas "religious consciousness... the happiness that religion brings... all

9. Ibid., p.373.

10. Ibid., p.379.

spiritual treasures... all things that enrich the soul... (and) enable (the Tanas) to lead a pious life."¹¹ Pure thoughts and speech, knowledge, wisdom, understanding, intelligence, strength and peace were sought by Tanas as virtues to be inculcated. Dharmes was all pervasive. Tanas asked him to visit their doors and yards, houses and families, cattle pounds, godowns and storehouses, their gatherings, meetings, congregations and assemblies, their fairs and festivals. He was to visit the kachhari (courts) and police station, he would come with the Tana when he was on the road and on a journey, when he was sitting and standing. Lastly, he would enter into their hearts and bodies, and even their bowels.¹² In other words, Dharmes was present not only in every nook and corner of the Tana universe, but even inside the devotees themselves.

Dharmes, then, would destroy the wicked men and sinners, the enemies of this world¹³ and terminate the Kali Yug, the age of sin. With his advent would begin the Sat Yug (The Golden Age)¹⁴

11. Ibid., p.390.

12. Ibid., p.395.

13. Ibid., p.390.

14. Ibid., p.374.

... Come, O Baba bringing
Thy golden shield...
golden symbols...
golden crown; come
Baba, bringing Sat Yug
(the Golden Age);
Come, Baba, bringing holy
rain, come, Baba ...
bringing [Thy] golden kingdom
and golden altar.

Come, Baba, bringing [Thy]
golden bench and golden
chair, O Baba, come with
[Thy] accoutrements complete,
Baba, come bringing [Thy]

golden castle, come, Baba,
for eternity..."¹⁵

II

THE PRECEPTS

What then was the path that the Tanas had to follow to bring in this 'Golden Age'? Ghosts and spirits were to be purged, along with Dains and Matis, the agents of 'sorcery' and 'exorcism'; sacrifices and all forms of violence and nonvegetarianism was to be abhorred. Austerity and abstemiousness were the hallmarks not only of religion but also of society. Exhuberant behaviour, either under alcoholic influence or as a part of socio-religious

15. Ibid, pp.372-3.

celebration (festivities, dances etc.) was discouraged. An alteration of the man-woman relationship reinforced this austerity. Pre-marital sexual unions were declared vices.

On the basis of an analysis of the Tana hymns and the proceedings in their meetings, I have tried to classify the precepts:

Spirits (Bhuts)/Ghosts (nad)

1. Ghosts (nad) and spirits (bhuts) have fled away.
2. To worship ghosts (nad) is sin.
3. The hungry ghosts (nadan) of our ancestors (pachbalar) should be driven away.
4. It is forbidden to take the names of the spirits of the dead (Pachbalar) and sprinkle water in their names.
5. The khuntant ghosts (nadan) of our tribe and race, and the ghosts of the household should be banished.
6. To make offerings in the names of spirits (bhuts) such as Mua and Malech, Darha and Deswali is forbidden.
7. The ulatguria ghost (nad) who dwells where three boundaries meet should be driven out.
8. The churil spirits shall be utterly destroyed.
9. The familiar spirits (bhuts) of the witches and wizards (dain bisahi) should be driven out.
10. The buffalo-eating, ox-eating, ram-eating, goat-eating, sheep-eating, pig-eating, fowl-eating, kid-eating, sacrifice-eating ghosts (nadan) are to be destroyed.
11. The rain-eating ghost (nadan) of this world should be driven away.
12. The wicked ghosts (nadan) of our dancing places (akhras) and sacred groves (jhakra) should be driven away.

Witches and wizards (Dain bisahi)/Practising Agents

1. The wizard and the witch (dain bisahi) should not continue to exist.
2. The mati, deonra and ojha should not remain.
3. Pull away the familiar spirits (bhuts) that are egged on by witches.

Sacrifices/Non-violence/Vegetarianism

1. It is forbidden altogether to take a life (jia) and to take it knowingly.
2. To whet a knife or an axe is wrong.
3. To sacrifice a buffalo, ox, ram, goat or pig is forbidden.
4. To ceremonially feed fowls and sacrifice them is forbidden.
5. Preparing the sacrificial rice boiled with meat (suri) and distributing it is forbidden.
6. Eating meat, fish and crab, the flesh of birds, hens, pigs and goats is forbidden.
7. To roast and eat birds, fish, mice and rats is forbidden.
8. Hunting excursions (sikar) have been done away with.
9. Children are not to be vaccinated.

Alcoholism

1. Liquor-beer drinking is a sin.
2. Eating the dregs (maya) of beer is wrong.
3. To buy or make the essential ingredient for the manufacture of beer (bichchi) and to distil liquor is forbidden.
4. Brewing, straining and distributing beer is forbidden.

5. To go to liquor shops and drink beer and liquor is forbidden.
6. If Oraons drink, they will go to hell (narak).

Festivities/Ceremonies/Dance/Music

1. All evil customs like performing the Danda-Katta ceremony is forbidden.
2. The sacred grove (jhakra) and the dancing place (akhra) have been done away with.
3. There should be no performance of any festival (parab) like the Sarhul, Kharia, Phagua, Khaddi, Magh, Chait, Jadura, Karam, Jitia, Dashara, Sohrai, Deothan, and dances of all sorts.
4. Setting in motion the grinding stone in the young men's Chandi Puja ceremony, in the full moon of Magh for purposes of election of headmen is forbidden.
5. Moving the grinding stone in the name of the Old Lady of the Sacred Grove (Chala Pachcho) for the election of the headman (Mahto) and priest (Naega) is forbidden.
6. The Amm Kharna ceremony, that is, the name giving of a child is forbidden.
7. Decorating the dancing place is forbidden.
8. Playing on musical instruments as the mandal, nagera and dhank drums is forbidden.

Relations between Sexes/Marriage:

1. The custom of common dormitories (dhumkuria) for young men and women is forbidden.
2. Young bachelors and maidens should not mix with each other without restraint.
3. Companionship of young men and women, joining hands, seizing one another and improper unions are forbidden.
4. For young men and women, to lie down with one another crouching under the balks in uplands and lowlands (as

they usually do) in the months of Aghan, Pus, Magh and Phalgun, when they go to collect cowdung taking parched rice with them (to eat) is forbidden.

5. To collect cowdung, to catch fish and crabs, to catch birds and dig out mice and rats in the months of Aghan and Poush are forbidden (licentious behaviour occurs on these occasions).
6. Making friendship of the Sangi and Guiya forms, and the laws and customs of our former marriage customs of Kali Yug are evil.
7. Employing a drum beater (Turi), singing marriage songs and weeping at marriages is forbidden.
8. Marriage dances are forbidden.
9. Mutual kissing and embracing, riding on one another of the Samdhi-Samdho (parents of bride and bridegroom) is forbidden.
10. Applying vermilion during marriage is forbidden.
11. Adultery is forbidden.
12. Wives should not be divorced.

Clothes

1. The use of par embroidery, jawa embroidery, coloured langotis, flat headdress, waist girdles, tatooing, perforating the ears, wearing sticks through the earholes, wearing ornaments and jewellery such as big earrings, nose ornaments, chandwa, glass beads, hansli, bangles, jhika Chilpi, soinko and ghughri is forbidden.

Behaviour towards one another

1. To quarrel with any man is forbidden.
2. To covet other's goods is forbidden.
3. Committing theft should cease.
4. To be dishonest is forbidden.

5. Committing sin is forbidden.
6. The ungrateful and wicked will be punished.

If all the precepts were followed, the ideal Tana society would be brought about. The utopian world that the Tanas sought to achieve is embodied in the following hymn:

Sat Yug is flourishing
 Tanaism is marching on
 Devotion to Ram is flourishing
 Religious instruction is being given
 God's grace is spreading
 Religious rites and devotion are being practiced
 God's commandments are being obeyed
 The Name of God is being accepted
 God's justice is beginning to reign
 The word of God is being spread abroad.¹⁶

III

CLEANSING THE WORLD OF SPIRIT AND MAGIC

Dharmes vis-a-vis the spirit world, and religion versus magic -- these two counterpositions stand out in bold relief when one surveys the tenets of Tanaism. It is against the backdrop of this dual theme that the rest of the tenets may be analysed. The spirit world was the primary focus of attack. The blame for having failed to alleviate the socio-

16. Ibid., pp.392-3.

economic conditions of the tribe was attributed to the "powerless entities"¹⁷ towards whom the Oraons had so long looked for help, and had accordingly propitiated through sacrifices. Thus for the Tanas, while the spirit world continued to be a reality, the attitude towards old bhuts changed. All spirits were considered to be evil, notwithstanding the former Oraon hierarchization of these as beneficent or maleficent spirits, higher or lower ones. Hence, they were to be abandoned and ousted from the Tana faith, and the Oraon land. "For the men of the good and true religion", it was proclaimed by the Tanas, "there are no spirits or bhuts."¹⁸ Dharmes was the supreme God invoked against the spirits :

O Baba, I think of Thee morn and eve;
do Thou drive away and expel the ghosts
which we so long cherished and worshipped...
They will be driven away to the bank of the
Ganges; they will be tied up in golden and
silver chains...

They will be cast down and swept away...
... Beyond the hills and mountains
they will be entrapped
in snares and they will enter
into gates and cages
For ever and ever, O Baba, they
will be tied up, they will be shut up.¹⁹

17. Ibid., p.341.

18 S.C. Roy, "A New Religious Movement Among the Oraons"
in Man In India, Volume I (Ranchi: 1921), p.313.

19. Roy, Oraon Religion, pp.376-7.

From the outset of the Tana Bhagat movement, this counterposition had been a marked trait. Jatra in 1914 had forbidden 'Matiao' (ghost finding and exorcism) and the belief in bhuts or spirits, proclaiming as he did that Dharmes had given him the necessary instructions in a dream to cleanse the Tana world. By 1915, divesting the Tana religion of spirits was a major feature. While all ghosts and spirits were to be cast away, of specific mention were the following: the Pachbalar or ancestor spirits, Chala Pachcho or the Old Lady of the Sacred Grove, the Khuntbhuts or tutelary spirits of the Khunts, the ghosts of the household, the Darha Deswali spirits, the Mua, Malech, Churil and Ulatguria bhuts, and finally, the familiar bhuts of the witches and wizards. One needs, at this point, to briefly touch upon the belief system of the Oraons and locate in it Dharmes and the spirits mentioned above.

Dharmes for the Oraons was the highest divinity, the Supreme Being and Creator of the universe. In extreme distress, when all deities or spirits failed, the Oraon offered prayers and sacrifices to Dharmes. It was believed that he punished offences against customary morality and looked into the activities of man and spirits. Dharmes was regarded by Oraons as anterior to the very creation of man (Oraon legends of genesis point to this) and the host of spirits and ghosts that infested his world. The exclusive

cereemony in his honour was the Danda-Katta. The supremacy of Dharmes over all other Gods and spirits was symbolized in all important ceremonies and festivals. Dharmes was offered a sacrifice and a libation of a few drops of water, before any spirit was propitiated.

Originally Dharmes was considered akin to the 'Sun God' and called Biri Bilas. This has made S.C. Roy comment that Dharmes was probably, in origin, a nature deity who expressed the Oraon awe and reverence for the spirit in the Sun.²⁰ While Dharmes later came to be disassociated from the Sun who came to be referred to as 'Suraj Baba', pointers to his earlier association persisted. White was the colour appropriate for Dharmes (the colour of the Sun was considered to be white), the fowl sacrificed in his honour was white, and the Oraons while offering prayers to him, turned their faces to the east (the direction of the rising Sun).

"The earth is full of spirits (as) the tree is full of leaves"²¹ -- thus goes one of the sayings of the Oraons which indicates that for them, the universe consisted of

20. Ibid., p.23.

21. S.C. Roy, The Oraons of Chotanagpur: Their History, Economic Life and Social Organization (Ranchi: 1915), p.107.

countless invisible spirits. When a person died, it was believed that his soul survived and continued to make claims on the living. Death was thus culturally denied; physical death only freed the soul from its body. The implicit understanding was that the spirit world was not separated from the living. They were both distinct, yet related parts of an organic universe. A cyclical flow between these two parts was a natural phenomenon that occurred continuously. The spirits once they passed into the realm of the dead or their regenerated life, were believed to acquire tremendous powers. They could see and predict things that the Oraons could not; they could thus also prevent the occurrence of a misfortune. Thus spirits were offered sacrifices in lieu of their powers over the living and because of their ability to act as barriers against evil. The spirits too depended on the Oraons for food and sustenance through the sacrifice, indicating a relationship of reciprocity between the two realms. If not propitiated on time therefore, they struck the Oraon through death, disease or misfortune revealing the maleficent part of their nature. When enraged, elaborate sacrifices were required for propitiation. Maleficence thus was also an important aspect of their character and was another factor that motivated the Oraons to offer timely sacrifices.

While all spirits were attributed powers not available to the living, they were sharply differentiated. With the more important spirits that could bring disease and death, the Oraon sought to enter into permanent and friendly relations, if possible; these spirits were propitiated in annual and life-cycle rituals. The others the Oraon dealt with when the occasion arose and circumstances required. Further, while some spirits could be perceived when they assumed visible shapes, the presence of others could be understood from the impact that they had.

It was this spirit world that the Tanas sought to oust through their chants and invocations, stressing on some of the powerful, important or popularly witnessed ones. The spirits were not seen as a part of a system that sustained the rules and norms of the community and protected it from evil. It was Dharmes who was raised to an all important position and emerged the sole appealing agent for protection, prosperity and abundance. By denying the relationship of reciprocity between the 'living' and the 'dead' and by refusing to accept the beneficent aspect of the spirit world, the Tanas marked a sharp break from prevalent Oraon customs. Thus they advocated a new regulatory mechanism of the world in which only Dharmes featured.

I proceed to give a brief description of the spirit world, emphasizing on the spirits that occurred in the Tana hymns. The narrative reveals the importance of sacrifices with all its elaborateness, the dual nature of the spirits, the powers which they were believed to have and the retribution that would follow if they were ignored, and lastly, an idea of the agents of propitiation who carried out the sacrifices/spirit-driving operations.

The ancestor spirits (Pachbalar) were placed in the highest position in the hierarchy of the spirit world. The soul of a deceased Oraon (except in cases of infants whose ears had not been perforated, pregnant women, women dying in childbirth etc.) entered into the community of ancestors on the annual Koha Binja (great marriage) or Harbora (bone drowning) day when bones of the dead were ceremonially deposited in the clan kundi. Sacrifices of a fowl or pig accompanied this occasion. This action marked the attempt of the Oraons to represent the dead in their new form of life. Though there was no special religious festival at which offerings and sacrifices were made solely to the ancestor spirits, these spirits were invoked and offerings made to them at every feast and on every suitable occasion. Ancestor spirits were concerned with the welfare of their descendants and kinsmen. They sometimes appeared and spoke to their living relatives in their dreams, watched over them in their

sickness and foiled the attempts of other spirits to do them harm. As a token of gratitude they needed to be regularly propitiated.

Deotas like Chala Pachcho or Sarna Burhia, and Bhuts or ghosts like Darha and Deswali comprised the tutelary deities and spirits of the Oraon village, to whom periodical sacrifices were offered by the Pahan on behalf of the village community. The most important ritual at the annual spring festival Khaddi or Sarhul was in honour of Chala Pachcho, when a number of fowls, besides a sheep, goat and pig were offered. The grove of sal trees, or the Chala or Sarna in every village was the sacred spot of Chala Pachcho. There was a taboo against cutting down any tree of the Sarna grove and such an act could be redeemed only through the offering of sacrifices to the deity. The attributes and functions of Chala Pachcho clearly indicated that she was in origin a nature deity, representing the spirit of vegetation and fertility. After the Sarhul festival, the village-priest inserted sal blossoms into the thatches of houses in the village in order that every family would be blessed with an abundance of food grains in the ensuing year. Although Chala Pachcho came into the classification of a spirit, she was referred to as a 'deota'. Darha-Deswali was believed to guard and protect the village from the incursions of spirits

from outside. It thus acted as the 'gate-keeper' and its seat was on or near the boundary of every Oraon village. Ordinarily Darha-Deswali did no harm. However, if the villagers did not provide the spirit with the proper sacrifices at the appointed time, it afflicted men and cattle with calamities. Dains could also incite these spirits to cause trouble.

The Khunt Bhuts or tutelary spirits of each different branch or Khunt of the original founders of the village looked after the health, crops and other belongings of their Khunts. The Oraon believed that when thieves or other mischief makers attempted to steal or damage his crops, these guardian spirits would resist them and foil their attempts. As the process of making clearances in the jungles for purposes of establishing villages involved a disturbance of the spirits residing there, these needed to be propitiated by the Bhuinhar families. Occasionally, the Pahan was called to offer sacrifices. If there was a delay in propitiation, the maleficent part of the spirit would emerge to strike the khunts through disease or misfortune. The non-Bhuinhar Oraons had in place of the Khunt bhuts their own guardian spirits of each separate household. Each family had to offer sacrifices to these spirits, even after the family was separated from the parent family. Retribution would follow if they failed in doing so.

Lastly may be mentioned the Mua (spirit of a person dying of hunger, starvation, strangulation, hanging or some other violent method) and the Malech, Churil or Ulatgonri (a ghost of a woman dying in pregnancy or childbirth or within a few days of it). These bhuts were essentially malevolent and particularly active in striking the Oraon; they needed to be exorcised away by the Mati, Ojha or Deonra. What is significant about these spirits is that they were the bhuts of those who had died unnatural deaths. This categorization reveals the crucial importance of the cultural classification of death in the ordering of the spirit world. An unnatural death was an uncontrolled event; it brought about an unexpected break in the natural cycle of life, death and regeneration. In contrast to the ancestor spirits for example who had died naturally, the very character of these spirits were distinctive. For example, the Churil was believed to be hankering after a mate and for the joys of life. Oraons proclaimed that this spirit carried a load of coal on its head, imagining it to be its baby and pursued any man passing by its grave. It is with the object of preventing such spirits from moving about, that the feet of women dying in childbirth are broken, turned backwards and thorns inserted on the soles of their feet".²²

22. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.97.

It was not merely a counterposition between Dharmes and the spirit world that the Tanas sought to make; the very nature of the spirit world in Oraon perception was changed by the Tanas who regarded these spirits only as 'evil'. The dual nature of beneficence and malevolence of the spirit world was thus transformed in Tana perception. The other distinction that may be inferred from Tana hymns is the one between 'Religion' and 'Magic'. Magic, along with magical objects and means, and practised by agents like the Dain, the Ojha and the Mati, all were to be swept away by the Tana cult. In other words, Tanaism was to consist of religion proper, and the strand of magic which coexisted, and at times overlapped with religion, was to be purged.

At this point, one needs to draw the line of distinction between religion and magic in Oraon perception. According to S.C. Roy, directly acquainted with the Oraons through his fieldwork and observations, while the two "are not unoften (sic) combined in actual Oraon practice,"²³ lines of differences may be drawn. Oraon religion dealt with the more important personal powers and beings of the supernatural world -- Gods and deities, the ancestral and certain other disembodied souls, and nature-spirits. The Oraon attitude here was one of reverential fear, dependence,

23. Ibid., p.1.

conciliation, propitiation and prayerful submission; supplications, prayers, offerings and sacrifices were the rites employed. Goodwill to bring about prosperity with regard to crops, cattle, health and progeny was sought. Magic, on the other hand, constituted the Oraon's ideas about and methods of dealing with, or rather, dodging, controlling or pressing into service the innumerable impersonal and lesser forces and energies that were confronted at almost every step. Bhagats or Sokhas, Matis, Deonras or Ojhas, and Bishahas and Dains, all came within the Oraon realm of magic. While the former (Bhagats or Sokhas) derived their power from daily prayers and offerings to the God Mahadeo, the Matis and others were believed to be aided by spirits like the Pagri bhuts. It needs to be noted that the Tanas were not against the Bhagats. Infact the ceremonial purity and austerity that characterized the Bhagat cult influenced the Tanas. Rather, Dharmes was invoked against the Mati, Ojha and Dain-Bishahas since these elements invoked the spirits for their powers and were in direct contact with forces which the Tanas considered to be evil in nature.

Briefly, witches (dains) in Oraon conception were born with the 'evil eye' and 'evil mouth' or acquired their art through a secret course of training. Generally regarded with

fear, they were believed to enter into communion with those spirits that received no sacrifice. These spirits aided them to execute their evil designs and were called Nasan-bhuts. The wizard or Bishaha similarly acquired a familiar spirit for his evil ends, and possessed the evil eye or learnt the magic art in secret. To counteract the Dain-Bishaha, the Oraon appealed to a Mati, Deonra or Ojha who once again fell back upon a familiar bhut or spirit (usually a bhula or tramp spirit, or some other minor spirit) whom he induced with his incantations to possess and speak through his mouth, or that of the person for whom he was performing the rite. The role of the mati in Oraon society however was not always considered to be evil. He was believed to have the power to cure diseases and find the witches and spirits which were causing harm to the Oraons. Collectively at times, a whole village would approach the Mati to conduct a sacrifice on their behalf. Magic accordingly, was not always maleficent.

For the Tanas however, the concern of magic was essentially a control, domination and use of spirits for evil purposes; its purging was therefore an expected corollary of the Tana drive to oust the spirits from their religious universe and propitiate Dharmes in his many forms. The counterpositions between Dharmes and the spirit world,

and religion and magic, need, therefore, to be seen in conjunction with each other, rather than as disparate and isolated. This will allow a more holistic understanding of the Tana tenets.

The dividing line between religion and magic it needs to be pointed out was not itself always a distinct one - the Mati in the course of his sacrifice may have invoked Dharmes and offered a sacrifice in his name, spirits like Darha were believed to be incited by Dains and yet were propitiated by the Pahan (village priest), Mahadeo was invoked by the Bhagat as well as the Pahan, etc. Perhaps the best example of the merger of religion and magic was symbolised in the Danda-Katta (tooth breaking) or Bhelwa Phari (Bhelwa-twig splitting) ceremony, the only ceremony in which Dharmes alone was invoked and in which a sacrifice was offered to him alone. The traditional Oraon legend of the origin of man and the genesis of the race refers to this ceremony as the original method of the Oraon's approach to supernatural powers for security from evil. Tradition asserted that this ceremony was prescribed by Dharmes himself and adopted by the Oraon when their first crops were injured by beasts and other pests. The Bhelwa twig used in the ceremony was believed to be potent against the evil eye. And the black charcoal powder, white rice flour and the red earth of the

hearth, with which a figure was drawn for the ceremony were supposed to represent the three primary colours of the rainbow, the largest "bow" and most potent weapon against the evil eye, mouth and spirits.²⁴ Significantly, it was usually a Mati who officiated in this ceremony and performed rituals akin to those conducted during a bhut-driving process. S.C. Roy thus has referred to the Danda-Katta as a "magical ceremony", the purpose of which was to break the "evil eye and evil mouth of evil minded persons, wizards, witches and malicious spirits."²⁵ The Danda-Katta ceremony, it is to be noted, was also denounced by the Tanas.

IV

OTHER TANA PRACTICES

What strikes one in the forms of worship of the Oraons was the importance of sacrifices, consisting of offerings of food and drink to the deities or spirits, whether offered on behalf of the entire village, the clan, family or individual by the Pahan, Bhagat or Mati. Sacrifices as mentioned before, were intended to evoke the aid of Gods and spirits

24. Roy, The Oraons of Chotanagpur, p.443.

25. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.24.

for protection from sickness, calamities or death; Oraon propitiation also aimed at keeping the spirits satisfied so that they would not strike maleficiently. Sacrifices then, represented an act that ensured the beneficence of the spirits. In another sense, sacrifices symbolized too, a bond between the spirit and deity on the one hand, and the Oraon family, clan and community on the other. The bond was forged as the worshippers and worshipped shared the same common meal.

There was yet another significance that a sacrifice had for the Oraons. It indicated God's need of man since it was on the sacrifices offered by man that Dharmes and the other Gods lived. The above may be inferred from the Oraon legend of genesis: Through a mistake of Dharmes, "all countries and all vegetation was burnt up" and no men could be found. Dharmes was then "dying for want of food" but "could not find rice" since he could find no man. It was only after the primeval brother and sister, the first Oraons undertook cultivation that Dharmes' hunger was assuaged.²⁶ Thus although Dharmes and the spirit world were placed above the Oraons, there existed between them a reciprocal bond of mutual obligations and interdependence. It was also this notion that Tanaism challenged when it ousted from its

26. Roy, The Oraons of Chotanagapur, p.466.

purview the practice of sacrifices. Sacrifices were usually an elaborate affair, amidst long chants, hymns and prayers when fowls, pigs, goats, oxen and buffalos were sacrificed. The blood of the sacrifices was in some cases sprinkled on the stone or other visible symbols representing the deities or spirits. Vermilion and oil were applied too.

The Tanas renounced the practice of sacrifice; whetting a knife or an axe for sacrificial purposes was strongly condemned and it was forbidden altogether to take life, either for sacrificial or for eating purposes. So strong was their commitment to nonviolence in the tenets that even the colour red was abhorred - red sag was not eaten because red was the colour of blood, vermilion was not to be used for devotional or marriage purposes since it was an integral part of the sacrifice, and red dhan, kokra and mirchai were to be avoided because of their association with the colour. Children of the Oraons were not to be vaccinated since their religion prevented them from seeing blood. Even hunting expeditions and the propitiation of the hunting spirit, Chandj, was banned. Similarly, drink which was used for ritual purposes in sacrifices was forbidden, and in keeping with this norm of ceremonial purity, the Tanas were asked to renounce liquor. Brewing, straining or distributing beer, and going to liquor shops was forbidden. What was advocated was a religion of devotion to Dharmes through hymns and

songs, and thus Tanas also called their religion the 'Bhakat' or Bhakti religion.

Besides the expulsion of old bhuts and spirits and the ban on sacrifices, liquor consumption and vegetarianism, Tana tenets dealt with other aspects of the Oraon customs, habits and usages; rules of conduct were codified for the adherants of Tanaism which were contrary to many of the norms and patterns of behaviour prevalent among the Oraons. Ceremonial purity was to be accompanied by a mode of life, austere, non-exhuberant and non-effusive. Moderation and restraint were advocated: dancing at akhras, holding jatras, bedecking their persons with jewellery, decorating their bodies with tatoo marks and wearing clothes with coloured borders were generally forbidden. The old Oraon customs and ceremonies with regard to name-giving, ear-piercing and eating the first rice were to be discarded altogether, along with important festivals like Sarhul, Kharia, Phagua, Khaddi, Karam, Sohrai etc. The same restraint was witnessed in the tenets that dealt with the relations between sexes. All occasions which could lead to sexual unions outside the bonds of marriage were to be avoided. For example, in the months of Aghan and Paush, when the Oraons went to collect cowdung and catch fish and crabs, there was a scope for such unions; these customs were therefore forbidden. Adultery and divorce too were condemned. Marriage customs became far

more simplified -- the old practice of demanding and paying bride price was forbidden, no musical instruments were to be played and marriage songs sung. Relations between the samdhi-samdho, or parents of the bride and bridegroom were not encouraged either. The ideal of a good man was one who did not quarrel with his neighbours, covet their lands, cattle, partners or other 'property', or indulge in theft and meddle with spirits and sacrifices, but on the other hand, maintained a pure, austere and restrained life.

An important qualification needs to be added as a final conclusion. The classifications I have made are more a heuristic device to aid analysis, rather than one that reflected the Oraon structure in which these categories overlapped. For example, rice beer was a necessary offering to the Gods and spirits at almost all religious festivals; it was distributed at marriages and community functions; it was served to guests when they visited, and was consumed by Oraons in liquor shops. Similarly dancing and singing at the village akhra for pure amusement took place in summer and winter nights from evening to midnight, and often much later; it was a part of important religious festivals and marriages; it also had attached to it a magical significance on certain occasions (a dance to invoke rains was believed to be followed by actual rain, stimulation of the forces of

nature through dances was believed to bring about abundance) and often Oraon girls were possessed, while dancing, believing that spirits had entered their bodies. Probably the Jatra or inter-parha dancing meetings best exemplified the interlinkages and overlappings of various practices of the Oraon society. On this occasion, rice beer was offered to ancestors, sacrifices made by the Pahan, there was singing and dancing to the accompaniment of musical instruments at the village akhra or on Jatra grounds throughout the night, pre-marriage sexual unions prevailed, there was a choice of partners for marriage from clans and villages other than their own, inter-parha differences and unsettled disputes were solved, and a successful Jatra like the Jeth was believed to indicate the abundance of paddy crops.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMPLEXITIES OF TANA POLITICS

The Tana identity of the 'self' was not merely informed by an appeal to Dharmes against the tribal spirits, and a recodification of the existent Oraon norms and patterns of behaviour; an integral aspect of this identity was their relationship vis-a-vis the landlord, the British state and other non-Oraon elements who had penetrated into the Oraon land. The latter was, in a sense, a corollary of the former for the Oraons. The movement for self reform and the very act of self purification was, for them, only one aspect of identity construction; it was accompanied by a subversion of the signs of subordination and a refusal to accept the existing power relations in the socio-cultural, economic and political spheres. A redefinition of the domination-subordination syndrome amidst which the Oraons were placed is thus evidenced in the Tana attempts at inverting many of the relations deemed inviolable until then: landlord/tenant, high caste/low caste, British state/Oraons etc. In this way, the Tanas sought to challenge the images and relations through which the 'outside elements' had perceived them. The challenge led to a recreation of these images by the Tanas, the recreation becoming a part of the Tana identity.

AGAINST RENT AND TAX

Opposition to the payment of rent to the zamindars and chaukidari tax to the state were the two main planks of the protest of the Tanas to the outside forces. Of these, anti-landlordism was the dominant trend. For the Oraons, land was more than an economic asset; it was the fundamental basis of their heritage and identity. Reid, referring to this writes, "The pride with which a Munda or a Oraon tells one that he is a descendant of the original founder of the village is unmistakable. The aborigines in fact cling with remarkable tenacity to their homes and fields. It is not uncommon to find that a Munda or a Oraon will persist in cultivating the ancestral fields long after he has been ejected from them by the courts, and I have known numerous cases in which individual aboriginals underwent imprisonment five or six times for persisting in their attempts to get back to the ancestral lands."¹ For the Tanas, writes S.C. Roy, an appeal to Dharmes against the spirits and a recodification of the existing norms and patterns of behaviour was combined with "a still stronger desire for delivery from the burden of

1. Reid, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations, pp.9-10.

what they regarded as an oppressive and iniquitable land-system and land-laws."²

From the outset, the programmatic thrust of the Tanas was marked by anti-landlordism. While Jatra's chief emphasis was on the reconstruction of the Oraon society and religion (ridding it of ghost finding, idol worship, sacrifices, nonvegetarianism and alcoholism) he was insistent that his followers were to do no work for the zamindars or pay rent to them. The servants of the zamindars too were harassed, refused any assistance, beaten and turned out of the jungles when they went to cut wood.³

This pattern continued through the years 1915-17 as a part of the programme of community cohesiveness which was predominantly emphasized in the nightly gatherings, meetings and hymn sessions. 1918 witnessed the emergence of a new leader, Jura Oraon, under whom the protest against the payment of rent to the zamindars continued. The form that it had assumed however was a new one. A memorial on the subject was submitted to the government, marking an appeal for the intervention of the state on behalf of the Tanas on their own accord. The memorialists claimed the right to hold their

2. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.340.
3. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

lands rent free as descendants of the original settlers who had cleared the jungles, reclaimed it, and brought the land under cultivation. Jura Bhagat stated that he had filed a case before the government, claiming the ownership of the Parganas Khokhra and Deesa, and appealed to the Tana Bhagats for subscriptions at the rate of Rs.17 per village to help fight the case. If successful, he promised, the holdings would be free of every sort of payment. Hundreds of typed copies of the petition were prepared and circulated. Most of the Tana residents of Dana Kera Police Station on Lapsung refused to pay rent to the Maharajah of Chotanagpur on the grounds that the land was all Lakhiraj.⁴

Clearly, the claims on land that the Tanas made were far more explicit, and traditions of their land rights were drawn upon as a justification for their demand. Yet the medium employed by Jura was a 'memorial', a petition before the government which represented the incorporation of an idea that was alien to the Oraon concept. The state here was the arbiter, its legal institutions the altar of judgement, and the procedure (i.e. the Memorial) a medium of appeal.

4. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VII, Patna, 27th July, 1918.

A similar case of appeal to the Britishers occurred in June 1919. A certain number of Tanas, tenants of the Kairo Estate, went to Mr. Hansen, the Manager, and handed him a copy of the petition which was submitted by Jura to the Lieutenant Governor. The Kairo Thakurs, they claimed, had originally usurped their right to the property, and now they hoped the new proprietors would not take rent from them.⁵

A different course was however adopted by Jura and his followers in late 1919 where in place of an approach of appeal, the Tanas took justice, defined in their own terms, into their hands. Mangu Mahloi and twenty-six others, all Tanas, had been accused by Bucha Singh of Semradih P.S. Lohardaga, in September 1919, of having looted his master's crops. Tenants of Rai Bahadur Baldeo Das Birla who had recently obtained possession of the village, these Tanas had stated that they had obtained possession of the Raj. They had in fact cut the crops on the Bakast lands with the cultivator's consent, claiming it on behalf of the Rai Bahadur. As proof a copy of Jura Bhagat's petition to the government was produced with the order stating that the case had been referred to the Revenue Department.⁶ Similar cases

5. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VIII, Patna, 14th June, 1919.

6. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

were reported elsewhere.⁷

"It is no longer the Raj of the zamindars. The earth belongs to pious men. Nobody should give any rent..." This was Sibu's message which he said had been given to him through divine letters written by Dharmes. Sibu was by far the most prominent leader of the Tanas in the 1919-21 phase, and as the Tanas gradually developed an organizational network, anti-landlordism assumed far militant dimensions. Pamphlets were widely circulated which elaborated Sibu's ideas: "Zamindars realise taxes and keep dancing girls, they should be turned out and no tax should be paid to them". Such booklets were distributed even at police stations.⁸ Cultivation of land was to be given up by Sibu and his followers on the grounds of cruelty to cattle or Lachmi, cattle let loose and the store of rice and paddy thrown away.⁹ God would feed the Oraons, proclaimed Sibu, and when the Inspector asked him how he was going to eat, Sibu replied: "How do you eat?" Threats were delivered to the landlords Jagdeo Nand Tewarry and Jagjiwan Nand Tewarry,

7. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VIII, Patna, 25th October, 1919.

8. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

9. Roy, Oraon Religion, pp.400-1.

and Sibū stated that the "hands and legs of all the people except Oraons" would be cut off. The fear that Sibū invoked is clear from the statement made by Van Hoeck, Father Superior of the Roman Catholic Mission at Ranchi: "The non-aboriginal classes in Ranchi are said to be exceedingly nervous and are making exaggerated statements."¹⁰

Sibū was subsequently arrested. Yet the movement did not flag and Turia emerged as the new leader to take control of the mantle. Claiming to be a follower of Sibū, Turia consistently followed Sibū's path. A refusal to pay rent was accompanied by a demand for 'rasad' from the zamindars. The demands made in writing legibly specified the amount of rasad demanded: for the German paltan, 200 maunds of Arwal chawal, 20 maunds of dal and 2 maunds of spices were required.¹¹ Ironically therefore, the zamindars were to provide the means for sustenance for an anti-zamindari campaign! So strong was the faith of the Tanas in the rightness of their demand that they felt they could appeal to that very force which they were opposing through their movement. The Tanas however, did not insist upon compliance of these demands. Further, the Tanas expressed their

10. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

11. Ibid.

disinclination to perform "Begari",¹² or to work as labourers or carriers. As a plea they put forward the point that while the Oraons formerly were accustomed to pay at a rate of 4 to 8 annas for cultivation, they now had to pay Rs.2.¹³ Any job which depressed their status, or indicated a change in their conceived traditional modes of payment, was challenged.

Meetings were held throughout 1919 where the same proclamations were repeatedly made. We find many instances of the Tanas refusing to pay rent, and cases being registered against them. At Usku Serun, in addition to the anti-rent campaign, it was decided to claim half of the produce of the Majhihas land and 8 maunds of paddy from the zamindars of Tusmu.¹⁴ Under Turia, not only were the crops of zamindars cut, the zamindar of village Chetar, P.S. Kuru was assaulted.¹⁵ What is significant is that while the Tanas

-
12. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VIII, Patna, 13th May, 1919.
 13. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VII, Patna, 23rd March, 1918.
 14. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VIII, Patna, 26th November, 1919.
 15. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

declined to pay rents to the zamindars, they said they would allow the latter to cultivate the land on "bataia".¹⁶

The two other trends that dominated the Tana movement along with anti-landlord tendencies were a refusal to pay chaukidari tax to the British state and a strong disinclination to perform any tasks for the government. Jatra, for example, was imprisoned for his insistence that his Tana followers were not to work as coolies for the construction of a local school. Similarly, he was opposed to the Tanas doing any work as coolies for the government¹⁷ since this involved a degradation of status and social stigma. It was necessary to reverse, or at least protest, therefore, against this practice. The superintendent of police reported in 1918 that the villages of Raghunathpur, Koko, Jaupur, Sons and Chunko had decided point blank not to pay chaukidari; they had threatened to kill anyone who came to realise it. They would also no longer work as government coolies.¹⁸ The Tanas of P.S. Kuru too threatened to maltreat the chaukidar tahsildar in case he came for purposes of tax

16. Ibid.

17. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 54 of 1925.

18. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VII, Patna, 25th May, 1919.

collection.¹⁹ Similar meetings were held throughout in 1919 as reported by the Sub Inspector of Chandwa²⁰ and in Sibu's and Turia's meetings, resolutions chiefly pertained to a refusal to pay chaukidari tax.²¹

II

THE COMING OF THE SAVIOR: THE GERMAN BABA

Anti-chaukidari tax coupled with a refusal to work for the government indicated on the part of the Tanas an anti-British feeling, and represented to a certain extent, a clear understanding of the Britishers as an alien element within the Oraon structure. Chaukidari tax was accordingly opposed. A totally different discourse of protest against the British state may be traced in the Tana conceptualization and notion of the "German Baba", a discourse that was grounded occasionally in an unclear, hazy perception, but one in which was implicit an anti-Britishism. In the Tana perception of the German Baba, there

19. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

20. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VIII, Patna, 12th May, 1919.

21. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

was no uniformity -- for some, it was purely a deity who came to be understood in accordance with their notions about the Gods and spirit of their pantheon; for others it symbolised an external, powerful agent who represented a source of power against those elements who had reduced the Oraons to a position of degradation; yet, for others, the Baba was a more concrete reality, and keeping in mind the war situation, represented a force whom the British would regard as a power to be reckoned with.

It needs to be recollected that the inception of the Tana Bhagat movement in 1914 coincided with the outbreak of the First World War where Germany and Britain were placed at opposing ends. And right upto 1919, the enmity between the two nations found expression in the spate of rumours that engulfed the district of Ranchi: Germany had mobilized 16,000 troops for reasons unknown;²² the Germans were going to land troops in India and all steps taken to guard ports and important posts were out of a fear of this attack;²³ the Germans were marching on the frontier and the police would

22. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VIII, Patna, 10th March, 1919.

23. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume III, Patna, 5th September, 1914.

be withdrawn to defend it;²⁴ the Government of India had called upon the local government to send as many European and Anglo Indian Officers to the front as soon as possible and had suggested even the conscription of Indians;²⁵ Germany was to be successful in the war at first but subsequently would be defeated;²⁶ when the enemy did attack, there would not be much resistance.²⁷ As the Superintendent of Police, Ranchi, reported, "The armistice has not been received everywhere as news of victory for the Allies. Some people are doubtful as to which side has won, while others look upon it as a compromise...".²⁸ They find it incredible that the published terms should have been imposed upon the Germans in spite of their success in every

-
24. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VII, Patna, 27th April, 1918.
 25. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VII, Patna, 27th April, 1918.
 26. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume III, Patna, 5th September, 1914.
 27. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VII, Patna, 27th April, 1918.
 28. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VII, Patna, 30th November, 1918.

theatre of war.²⁹ There was a great belief that true information was not being circulated but only information in favour of the British was given out.³⁰

The local authorities suspected the Lutheran converts who called themselves 'German', and the German missionaries for this anti-British, pro-German propaganda. "No one but a German would have instilled into the minds of the people fantastic ideas of the might and power of the German nation... The only Germans who were in a position to do so were the Lutheran missionaries of whom a large number were working...".³¹ A similar view was held by the Political Agent and the Superintendent of Police, Ranchi. The latter wrote: "It is significant that the impression of German power continues to be so strong in a district where a large German Lutheran Mission existed."³² It was rumoured that the German Mission boys were teasing the boys of other Missions that the Romans Christians would be turned out, and that the

29. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File No. 421 of 1919.

30. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume III, Patna, 5th September, 1914.

31. Singh, "Tribal Peasantry, Millinarianism, Anarchism and Nationalism", p.40.

32. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 421 of 1919.

Kaiser would make all the people of Chotanagpur "pukka Christians".³³ The feeling of the English community against the Germans as a result of all this was reported to be strained, and a meeting was held at Ranchi Club to protest against the lenient treatment of the Germans by the Government. The German missionaries were being accused of advising ryots in the mufassal not to pay rent, and attempts were made to get authentic details of their activities.³⁴

In 1916 we get the earliest reference of the German Baba among the Tanas. During the spirit-driving operations in that year repeated invocations were made: "German Baba Madad de".³⁵ In 1916, the Oraons predicted "a big battle" between the Germans and the English in which the Germans would win and come to India; the 'German Badshah' was on the other side of the Koel bringing gold.³⁵ In 1918,, lectures were given describing how, with the advent of German rule in India which would be signalized by the appearance of an

33. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume III, Patna, 3rd December, 1914.

34. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume IV, Patna, 14th June, 1915.

35. Tea District Labour Association, Hand-Book of Castes and Tribes, p.28.

36. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 1165 of 1916.

angel from the sky, the Oraons would come into their own, i.e. have a kingdom of their own with their own king etc.³⁷ In 1919, rasad was demanded to feed the "German paltan" and it was believed that the German raj had come and "all power had passed from the British and the zamindars...".³⁸

Here then, in the case of some Tanas, do we see a classic example of the higher tradition assuming a partly comprehensible, partly garbled form, when it reached the Oraons through the various layers of mediation. Incorporation of ideas from the greater society (in this case the ideas prevalent in Ranchi) are always accompanied with modifications suiting the tribal perceptions and understanding, in consonance with their religion and belief system, and through the matrix of their social relations. The idioms and motifs of the Oraon patterns of life, therefore, provided the cultural filter through which ideas penetrated and thus the notion of the German Baba, elevated to the ranks of the Oraon omnipotent and benevolent Gods like the Sun and Moon Gods, came to be born. The following extract best exemplifies this reaction:

37. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VII, Patna, 26th October 1918.

38. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

Sometime in May, some Oraons of Mahuadand lost a bullock and went to look for it at night in a river bed into which they thought it might have fallen, taking a lantern with them. When they were coming down into the river bed, there were a number of Oraon Bhagats who had met there, and were performing their manhas. Seeing the light in the distance coming down into the river bed, they thought it was the Germans coming to help them and came up towards them calling out 'German Baba save us. We are suffering'.³⁹

There was, however, no uniform meaning attributed by the Tanas to the Baba. S.C. Roy's contention in this context that the incorporation of the German Baba was "due to ignorance rather than sedition, for in those days the earlier victories of the Germans in the European war were everywhere talked about and these important enthusiasts took German Baba -- or the German God as one more unknown mighty power,"⁴⁰ may be questioned. The very choice of the "German" Baba indicated for some a conscious decision. German victories against the English had shattered the notion of the permanence of the British dominion, and Germans were therefore invoked for help to establish the Oraon Raj. The notion of Germany was somewhat clear in the minds of certain Oraons as the "Judgement in the Oraon Case" proves. "Two or three Oraon witnesses have told us that the export of tea

39. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 1165 of 1916.

40. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.250.

from the garden was stopped for a time in December, and they heard from the manager that it was because there was a war between the English and the Germans. And when the price of salt and food grains rose in the markets, the modis and mahajans also told them that it was due to the war with the Germans. So it appears that the new Oraons are deliberately invoking the head of the king's enemies as if he were a God...".⁴¹ The form of German intervention was however unclear. Some Tanas stated that the Germans would wage a war. Other felt they would distribute gold among the Oraons. Still others expected the Germans to teach the Oraons how to read and write.

III

AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMATION

And yet while the no-rent and anti-chaukidari campaigns represented essentially secular demands, the idioms of expression of the Tanas, the symbols and the language that they used, and the very legitimization of their authority was along religious lines. The source of authority for the leaders was Dharmes or Bhagwan; the leaders' belief that they had a direct link with him made them confident of their

41. Choudhury, "The story of a Tribal Revolt in the Bengal Presidency", p.45.

own power, it served as an inspiring force, and in turn, moulded and shaped their acceptability by the followers of the faith.

Jatra proclaimed that he had received in a dream the divine message from Dharmes that he was to be the spiritual and temporal leader of the Oraons. It was this that made him claim a status of a deity himself, Jatra refusing to obey anyone other than himself and Dharmes. The mantras and songs through which he preached too were said to be of divine origin, rather than deliberately composed.⁴² Litho's initiation into the faith followed similar lines -- she too had had a vision of the Deity before acquiring the status of a leader and was found in a "semiconscious state of spiritual exaltation" uttering the words Bom-Bom-Bom, in reverence to Mahadeo.⁴³

The derivation of authority from Dharmes became even more marked under Sibū, since Bhagwan was said to be communicating with him in a form more direct than with Jatra. While Dharmes had appeared before Jatra in a dream, he used to send Sibū letters on the subject of reform of the world. Pieces of foolscap upon which practically undecipherable

42. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 54 of 1925.

43. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.343.

Hindi had been written were produced by Sibū. Inscribed in these pages were Divine orders. Bhagwan had told Sibū that he was destined to become the leader of the world, that the 'Raj' would return to them shortly, and that a great change in the order of things would take place after the Holi festival which was then approaching. Accordingly, Sibū was to leave his family and move about in the world to reform the people.⁴⁴ Under Sibū the Tana programme assumed a far more militant proportion than it did under Jatra. Thus in the Tana Bhagat Movement, greater militancy was sanctified by a more vigorous claim on the source of the community's strength -- a link with Dharmes.

This link between Dharmes and the Tana leaders led to the latter claiming extraordinary powers for themselves. Particularly significant was the retribution that was supposed to follow if they were disobeyed. Jatra's link with God was reinforced by his appropriation of miraculous powers for himself; he could cure fever, sore eyes and other diseases. His followers would be rewarded for supporting him: "All his followers would share his kingdom and be Rajas too". Those Oraons, who did not join Jatra, would by divine

44. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

justice, be struck dumb.⁴⁵ Sibū, similarly, had the power to predict death, and when he pronounced that Sukra would die soon, and that actually took place, he became a "Bhagwan". Sibū, however, claimed greater powers for himself than did Jatra. While God was to deliver justice in the time of Jatra, Sibū appropriated for himself the power to dispense justice. Sibū warned that the hands and legs of all the people except the Oraons would be cut off.⁴⁶

The encampments of the Tana leaders were distinctive, marking a distance and separation of their identity from the rest of the Oraons and from that of the Tana followers. The house of Maya Oraon, for example, had been surrounded by a mark in the form of a square, a plastered ground about three feet wide. In front of the house was a white flag. Some huts had been erected and white-washed and about a thousand earthen pots and 'chulhas' made in a neighbouring grove to accomodate the seven hundred or eight hundred Oraons of the Tana persuasion who gathered from several thanas in the district, from Chandwa and Balumath in Palamau and Ramgarh in Hazaribagh. Similarly, Dhonwa Oraon of Gamharia, P.S.

45. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.342.

46. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

Burmu, who became the Guru of the local Tanas lived outside the village, away from the residences of the other Oraons.⁴⁷

The extraordinary claim to leadership by the Oraon Bhagats and what their followers thought of them, it needs to be pointed out, were projections of the existing patterns of popular beliefs about the worship of the worthies in rural India. William Crooke observed in The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India that the deification of such 'worthies' was based, among other things, on the purity of the life they had led and on "approved thaumaturgic powers".⁴⁸ Sibū's prediction of Sukra's death, for example, fitted in with the existing stereotype of "strange occurrences". The miraculous powers which the leaders attributed to themselves, and which they believed in, largely shaped the perception of their followers, their faith and devotion towards their leaders. "On being asked what they were doing, the Oraons only pointed to their leaders, Maya Oraon and Sibū Oraon." No power was mighty enough to challenge their authority, or confine them against their will. "Unless", reported the Deputy Inspector General,

47. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

48. W. Crooke, The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India (London: 1896), pp.183-96, quoted in S. Amin, "Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-2" in R. Guha (ed.), Subaltern Studies III (Delhi: 1989), p.29.

Crime and Railways, in April 1919, "the movement receives a check and the followers are made to realize that their so-called leaders are not Bhagwans (Gods) and incapable of being punished, I fear a serious spread of the movement." In December it was reported that "They (the Tanas) believe that he (Sibu) will return to them and that the world belongs to him, and the British Government will give the Raj up to him." So strong was the Tana faith in their leaders that instead of abating with the arrest of Sibu, the movement had actually recorded an increase in the strength of Tana followers (as reported by the Sub Inspectors of Lupang, Kuru and Lohardaga). Even as late as June 1919, the Tana gathering at Murma continued (Sibu had been arrested in March), the number fluctuating daily from thirty to hundred. In November, fifteen Tanas were still at Murma, while the meetings on Thursdays continued.⁴⁹

What marked a shift from the 1914 phase was the organizational network of the Tanas that had developed by 1919, resulting in a more stable and self-sustaining movement that did not flag even in the absence of its chief leader. With the arrest of one, a fresh group of leaders were thrown up, a hierarchization of authority having come

49. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

about. The arrest of Jatra had led to the temporary collapse of the Tana Bhagats in 1914; Sibū and Maya's arrests were however followed by a new group of leaders taking over -- Naya Oraon of Murma, Sukra Oraon of Kuru, Singha Oraon of Mandar and Debia Oraon of Mandar. Further, as the Tana gathering at Murma gradually diminished, by October 1919 a new encampment of Tanas was set up at Tikri under the leadership of Turia Bhagat who claimed to be a follower of Sibū. Turia similarly had followers like Hoplu and Birsa Oraon, who in turn had a following of twenty. We also get references of minor leaders like Dhonwa Oraon and his followers Etwa and Naya Oraons, of Chedi, Anta and Maisa Oraons, and of Soma and Gosain Oraons. A pyrammidical structure of authority had developed clearly. The leadership had also been institutionalised and it was for this reason that Sibū, after his release, resumed his former position as the chief leader till 1921, while Jatra, inspite of the warm welcome accorded to him by his 'chelas', faded into oblivion.

IV

AMBIGUITIES OF TANA PRACTICES

The means of communication between the leader and follower in the Tana movement was one that displayed three

prominent trends, all interlinked -- a continuation of certain Oraon customs and practices, an adaptation, moulding and restructuring of these, and an incorporation of certain elements from the high culture borrowed in the process of interaction with 'outside elements'. In the process, tribal culture too was transformed, the Tana Bhagat movement expressing this transformation. It is on this aspect that I would like to focus upon.

One of the chief aims of the Tanas had been to divest their faith of spirit worship and the use of magical practices, these being denounced as later accretions into the tenets of the 'Kurukh Dharam'. And yet, paradoxically, the modus operandi adopted by the Tanas to expel the bhuts and certain other old practices was not a new one, but an adaptation of the old process of exorcism adopted by the Oraon Mati in cases of spirit possession. This marked therefore an Oraon-Tana continuity. For example, the Tanas in their spirit-driving acts of 1915 would sweep the ground, brush each stone and bush with their tamarind twigs to drive out the bhuts.⁵⁰ This was akin to the Mati's action of passing a broom over the patient's body from head downwards to the feet several times, and then on all sides of the body

50. Tea District Labour Association, Handbook of Castes and Tribes, p.28.

to get rid of a disease-causing bhut.⁵¹ Similarly, the disease-driving operations of the Bhagat leaders was similar to the old method of exorcising disease-spirits by the Mati.⁵²

What is striking about these operations is the element of performance, an integral medium of Oraon religion and magic. Performances provided the medium through which the objectives of the Tana movement were disseminated among the followers, making it acceptable to all. The vigorous energetic movements of the leaders and followers during the spirit ousting drive, the running and shouting, the arrangement of the Tanas in a circle and their singing, the choice of a visible article as an emblem of the bhut, all emphasized the importance of the visual impact that reiterated Tana ideas and imprinted them in the minds of the followers. The elaborate rituals like collective singing of hymns and bhajans fostered a feeling of community cohesiveness, and depended for their effectiveness on an alert and appropriately motivated organization. Propagation of the new code involved at every stage the participation of the Oraons of several villages, and an increasing number of Oraons came to be bound by the common faith. It was largely

51. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.206.

52. Ibid., p.369.

as a result of this form of organization that the Tana movement gained such a wide following spread over an extensive area. Similarly, the hymns sung by the Bhagat leaders in the form of questions, answers, stories, injunctions were part of the Tana mode of performative pedagogy. The method of propaganda followed by Sibū of moving about in the village ringing bells and blowing the conch⁵³ served the same purpose.

Spirit worship while being purged was also a part of the Tana faith. Ancestor worship was integral to Oraon religion, and ancestor spirits were accorded a high position in the pantheon of Gods and spirits. Ancestor graves thus served as centres for mobilization, and we get a reference to the following practice under Turia Bhagat: "There is a grave near the encampment at Tiko and the Bhagats pour water on this daily, alleging that it is the grave of an Oraon who was killed in a massacre of Oraons by zamindars hundred years ago and they are now receiving the spirit of their forefathers."⁵⁴

To ensure a following the Tanas resorted to magic, the usage of the concept of witchcraft. Firm believers in

53. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

54. Ibid.

witchcraft, the Oraons, as mentioned before, regarded the dains or witches with fear. Often they put to death persons suspected of witchcraft. The killing of witches had behind it a social sanction and community support, and the purging of witches was regarded as a means of purifying society. It was this notion that the Tanas drew support from and strengthened. "The Bhagats coerced the non-Bhagats by declaring their women to be Dains. In Chainpur, they have declared one woman in each non-Bhagat house to be a Dain-Bisahi."⁵⁵ The Ranchi district reported in 1915 no less than twelve cases of murder of persons suspected of practising sorcery, "some of which appear to have been fostered by the unrest among the Uraons". One case was described as follows: "a meeting of Uraons was in progress at which Mantras were being recited and considerable religious excitement prevailed. The deceased who had previously been charged with practising witchcraft, was beaten to death in her house in the presence of her husband. The culprits when they joined the assembly were seen to be carrying pieces of the woman's brain which they licked from time to time."⁵⁶

55. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 1165 of 1916.
56. R.T. Dundas, Report on the Administration of Police in the Province of Bihar and Orissa for the year 1915 (Patna: 1916), p.12.

Many of the denunciations of women as witches occurred in the course of the spirit-driving operations. The following case outlines the procedure of its occurrence. During the bhut-ousting sessions of 1915, one of the Tanas claimed that he was possessed; the rest then began to beat him with tamarind branches to oust the spirit. As he ran towards his basti, the crowd pursued, yelling that the bonga had run back. "Cornered in his house, and in terror when the brushings began again, he stated that the spirit had left him and entered into his wife - an old woman then standing in the courtyard. The crowd turned on her and beat her to death".⁵⁷

The former narrative brings to focus some of the beliefs of the Oraons with regard to witches. A witch who was a woman was believed to have entered into a compact with spirits; hence the acceptance of the fact that the spirit had left the man and entered his wife. The killing of the woman would thus oust the spirit and at the same time, purify Oraon society of an evil. The Tanas, then, resorted to a well established practice -- a denunciation and killing of witches to cleanse their surroundings by purging evil forces. The collective acceptance of the act is expressed in the crowd frenzy which accompanied the action.

57. Tea District Labour Association, Handbook of Castes and Tribes, p.28.

It needs to be emphasized that all the above practices mentioned were largely in conformity with the pre-existing patterns of Oraon popular belief and ritual action though these practices were adapted in the process of being incorporated. Paradoxically, therefore, there was the apparent contradiction of rejecting the spirit world and magic, and yet accepting these. This is however, understandable. A movement which seeks to change certain practices of a society, is born out of the same society. Hence the practices and ideas of that society cannot be completely discarded, they are adopted in the process of being discarded. For the Tana followers too, the message could be imbibed only in a form that was intelligible to the Oraons, and in a language to which they could relate.

However, while certain practices were adopted from the Oraon structure into Tanaism, pointing to an Oraon-Tana continuity, each practice underwent a process of transformation, leading to a change in the very nature of the practice itself. Jatra's installation as the Guru by Turia was significant. Jatra was installed as the new Guru by Turia after a white goat had been sacrificed to Dharmes.⁵⁸ A sacrifice to Dharmes marked in the Oraon life every

58. Das, The Tana Bhagat Movement, p.68.

important event; Jatra's formal appropriation of powers thus assumed the same form in consonance with Oraon belief, giving it an acceptability in the eyes of his followers. However, the nature of the sacrifice itself underwent a change and the sacrificial meat that was cooked, instead of being eaten by the people, was scattered in the four directions by Jatra.⁵⁹ Denunciation of the killing of animals for sacrificial purposes, or for eating, it is to be noted, was one of the principle tenets of Tanaism.

TH-4270

Similarly, in the spirit-driving operations, Dharmes was invoked to oust the bhuts from the Oraon land. In the Oraon pantheon, it was Dharmes who was accorded the highest position above the other deities and spirits. The Tanas however added a fresh dimension to the Oraon understanding of Dharmes when he was promoted from being the 'most important God' to the 'sole God', to whom all prayers were to be directed.

The same trend was noticeable in the patterns of leadership of the Tanas. The austerity maintained by Sibu in person, and the decoration of his encampment, added to the aura of religiosity that distinguished the Bhagat leaders from their followers and other Oraons. Most huts in Sibu's

59. Ibid., p.68.



encampment had been whitewashed and the flag in front of his house was white - white, significantly, was the colour of Dharmes. The flags (bairakhi), plain white, red, blue or multi-coloured, on the other hand were important totemic symbols, regarded almost as deities and living powers, and carried by each village to the Jattras. To the flags were offered a sacrifice of a chicken and a libation of rice beer by the village priest; stories were told among the Oraons of the supernatural help rendered by its 'bairakhi' to some village or other.⁶⁰ For Sibū, however, these 'decorations' that pointed to the austerity and religiosity of his person were also symbols of power that marked his distance from the rest. The same desire to maintain distance and display his power was noticeable in Sibū's adoption of a practice, new amongst the Oraons: "Sibū has been going about on a cot over which bamboos had been twisted to form a kind of canopy. He calls it his Jahaj".

The postulates and practices of the Tana Bhagats were not informed only by the Oraon society but were also mediated by their interaction with the outside world -- the state and its institutions, landlords, money lenders etc. One can see in the Tana movement therefore, an adoption of means that had features totally alien to the traditional

60. Roy, The Oraons of Chotanagpur, p.342.

Oraon society. Appeals were made for example, by Jura to the government through memorials which claimed the Oraon rights to rent-free land as descendants of the original settlers of the soil. The 'memorial' or petition to the government, represented an acceptance of the presence of the state, its instruments (its legal institutions) and the procedure laid down by it (the appeal through memorials).⁶¹ The importance of the written word that Dharmes' messages to Sibru revealed, in addition to proving the latter's link with the former, is another pointer to the generalization of a new sensibility. For the Oraons, there was a strong link between control over writing, and the exercise of power. The spread of education through Mission Schools, the enactment of the Tenancy Acts, the manipulation of records by the zamindars and moneylenders, the written appeals to the law courts, all sought to imprint in the Tana mind the importance of the written word.⁶²

61. Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, Volume VII, Patna, 27th July 1918.

62. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

ON LEADERS AND BHAGATS

We need, finally to look into the social background of the newly emerging leadership. For this we need an understanding of the traditional forms of leadership in the Oraon society, particularly that of the practising agents of Oraon religion. The Mahato, the Baiga or Pahan, and the Pujar or Panbhara were the three village officials of the Oraons. The Mahato or headman dealt with the relations of the Oraons with the outside world. The Pahan was concerned with the Oraon pantheon of Gods and spirits, to them he offered sacrifices on behalf of the community. The Pahan necessarily belonged to the hereditary Pahan Khunt or was a Bhuinhar. The Pujar or Panbhara belonged to the Pujar Khunt or was a Bhuinhar. He was the Pahan's assistant in public religious festivals. Both were granted land by the village as payment for their functions.

Besides the Pahan and the Pujar was the Bhagat with his tutelary deity Mahadeo, who was also an important religious figure among the Oraons. A Bhagat normally avoided mediumistic and other occult practices, and acquired his powers through the grace of Mahadeo after a spiritual discipline involving prolonged meditation. All Bhagats -

Bhuiphut, Nemha or Vishnu - lived a life of austerity and maintained ceremonial purity in personal habits, diet and devotional practices. With the exception of ancestor spirits, all other spirits were considered evil and were to be shunned. Fowls, pigs and oxen were taboo for him, and he could sacrifice only goats to his deities. Bhagats often accepted as spiritual guides degraded Brahmans or Gosains, or in some cases Vaishnav itinerant Vairagis belonging to the lower Hindu castes. Most Bhagats, particularly Bhuiphut Bhagats, came from the hereditary families of Bhagats and were possessors of land often given as grants in recognition of their power.

The Tana Bhagat movement was partly built on the Bhagat cult. The leaders adhered to a life of religious purity, active devotion, ceremonial cleanliness, abhorrence of violence and sacrifice, abstinence from liquor and nonvegetarianism, and a general austerity in attitudes. And yet, it differed considerably from the Bhagat cult with regard to its origins and orientations. The Tana movement set itself far broader objectives than the earlier Bhagat cult; it was a collective enterprise aiming at the cultural and moral regeneration of the whole of the Oraon tribe and was a part of a wider social protest movement. The Bhagats, on the other hand, were marked off from the rest of the

Oraons and cared little to spread their faith; in fact their extreme rigour precluded the growth of this elite group.⁶³

What particularly distinguished the Tana Bhagats was the social background of their newly emerging leadership. The hereditary, traditional families of prominence among the Oraons from which the Bhagats and Pahans had come was significantly absent, and the new leaders came from socio-economic backgrounds that were obscure and outside the orbit of importance. Jatra, for example, was originally a 'mati' who was involved in the practice of those very magical powers which the Tanas were keen to oust. Unlike the Pahan or Bhagat who appealed to the higher Gods and spirits, the Mati used the aid of the lowest of spirits, and commanded little respect in the Oraon society. Sibu's profile was equally unexceptional. A mere lad of twenty, he was the son of Riba Oraon who had for his cultivation only 1¹/₂ Pawa of land. Formerly, he worked as a Dhanger in village Batkuri and Supa.⁶⁴ Even the men who were possessed during the spirit-driving operations were ordinary Oraons of obscure origin. The educated among the Oraons did not participate in

63. Choudhury, "The Story of a Tribal Revolt in the Bengal Presidency", p.33.

64. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

the movement; and in fact denounced it. About the Tanas, Bandi Ram Oraon, an educated leader of the Oraon-Munda-Siksha-Sabha, a contemporary organization, deprecatingly wrote in a pamphlet (the translation is mine): Now-a-days, because of the Tanas we have landed in problems... The Tanas have stopped cultivating their land and paying rent to the zamindars... This leads to the auctioning of the cultivator's land. We should not get involved in these affairs as these would only result in our loss...".⁶⁵ Most of the Tana leaders had a minimal education, or were illiterate, and were in fact opposed to schools. "True education was to come from heaven, and children were prevented from going to schools. A flourishing Mission School at Chainpur had to be closed down and another at Sale."⁶⁶ 'Modernity' was resisted in many spheres, the movement largely being a protest against the institutions that went against the grain of the traditional Oraon structure -- schools, law courts, chaukidars etc. The Deputy Commissioner commented about the Tanas in 1922: "The Tana Bhagat Movement is a fanatical religious movement

65. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 50 of 1921.

66. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 1165 of 1916.

organized by ignorant men, and entirely illogical and reckless in its methods."⁶⁷

Lastly, the bias in favour of men was marked in the movement. Out of the many leaders in the period 1914-21, only one (Litho Oraon) was a woman. Men would participate in the anti-bhut hunts of 1915, while women would remain behind the party. The macabre cases of witch-killings also point to the Tana attitudes towards women. Father Van Hoeck reported that he had learnt through his preachers that the Bhagats under Sibu had decided in 1919 that women were not necessary in their present numbers. They were to be therefore massacred, only a few being retained to continue the race.⁶⁸ The lack of importance given to women in the Oraon society can be gleaned if one observes the composition of deities in their religio-magical world. Dharti Mai, Sita Mai or Parvati, one and the same, is the sole female Goddess, but she acquires her significance only as the consort of Dharmes. Similarly, in the pantheon of spirits, except for Chhalo Pachcho or the Spirit of the Sacred Deity who merited great importance, the other female spirits were tramp spirits or bhula bhuts like the Churil, Ulatgoria etc. all

67. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 449 of 1922.

68. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 1165 of 1916.

relegated to the lowest fringes of their supernatural world, and requiring merely to be ousted by the Mati rather than propitiated through sacrifices by the Pahan. Women, however, played an important part in the acts of possession. S.C. Roy writes,

Indeed spirit possession or rather the ecstatic state which is believed to prelude it is a not uncommon phenomenon in some of the Oraon dances. In many a nightly dance at the Oraon village Akhra, as dance and music get more and more energetic, I have witnessed the interesting phenomenon of some young woman or other among the dancers gradually losing self consciousness and shaking her head from side to side with increasing vehemence and then getting into what ⁶⁹ is believed to be incipient spirit-possession.

69. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.187.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Tana movement for cultural regeneration sought to transform Oraon society in many far-reaching ways. Ceremonial purification and cleanliness were advocated in a religion that purged ghosts and spirits, sacrifices and elaborate rituals. An austerity was reflected in every aspect of Tana life which led to a renunciation of dancing, music, festivities, alcoholism and non-vegetarianism. Simplicity was expressed even in marriage customs, community meetings and ceremonies. Mutual assistance was laid down as a duty; knowledge, honesty and purity of thought were upheld as virtues to be acquired.

Clearly Tanaism was a break in many ways from Oraon religion that believed in Gods, spirits, magical practices, elaborate sacrifices, alcoholism and non-vegetarianism, dances and community feasts.

Over the centuries the Oraons had been in constant interaction with the greater society. Brahmanical ideas had been advocated by itinerant Gurus. Islam had found its way into Chotanagpur. Christianity was a prominent force under missionary influence. Placed thus vis-a-vis these forces,

Tanaism naturally drew upon new ideas. In my conclusion to this, I would like to comment on the nature of some of those cultural influences that shaped Tana tenets, the means through which cultural penetration occurred and the consequences of the process.

I

For centuries the Oraons had lived with castes like Ahirs, Lohars, Kumhars and Ghasis, sharing the everyday ideas and practices of their neighbours. This resulted in a steady interaction of ideas and a constant borrowing of cultural elements that silently and unobtrusively influenced Oraon life and thought. There were also a number of cultural movements in Chotanagpur from medieval times. Itinerant Vaishnav Vairagis who came from the class of degraded Brahmins and Gossains visited Ranchi and accepted Oraon bhagats as their disciples. The Kabirpanthi saints came in the same period. In the 19th century, reformist groups like the Arya Samaj made efforts to win the Oraons into the Hindu fold by means of 'shuddhi' ceremonies.

Brahmanical formulaic images, cliches, cultural forms and values thus can be found in many Tana tenets. Dharmes Baba was the only Oraon God whom the Tanas appealed to; all other Gods were borrowed from the Hindu pantheon -- Indra,

Brahma, Siva, Mahadeo, Ganesh, Jagganath, Parvati and Lachchmi. Figures like Ram, Lachman, Bharat and Satrugan from epic poetry were defined as 'Babas'. Drawing upon the same cultural tradition, some Tanas declared in 1925 that their names were Ram Bhagwan, Dasarath, Hari and Lachman.¹ References to the Kali Yug, Sat Yug and Narak, the use of Tulsi leaves dipped in water for purificatory purposes, the practice of having a ritual bath before and after important community ceremonies, the wearing of the 'Janeu' or sacred thread, the use of the appellation of 'Bhagwan' while referring to Dharmes, the replacement of vermilion by sandalwood paste, the denunciation of the spirit world as evil, the desire to purge Tanaism of ghosts, spirits and dains -- all represent varying degrees of incorporation into a Brahmanical conceptual order. In the context of vegetarianism, Tana hymns repeatedly mentioned fowls, cows, calves, oxen, buffaloes, ram, goats and pigs; these are motifs important in the Brahmanical faith. Mice, rats and other birds which were considered to be delicacies in the Oraon diet² were referred to only once in the course of the hymns.³ Similarly, the cow which occupied a sacred place in

-
1. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 54 of 1925.
 2. Roy, The Oraons of Chotanagpur, p.165.
 3. Roy, Oraons Religion, pp.353-93.

the Brahmanical belief structure was revered by the Tanas. Lachmi was declared to be the goddess of the cow and in her honour, Thursday was declared as a day of rest. The tradition of cow-protection was incorporated when Sibuh forbade the ploughing of land on grounds of cruelty to the cow. Similarly Muslims were to be opposed because "they kill cows... their bones (therefore) shall be broken."⁴ The best indication of the reverence for the cow may be seen in the action of that group of Tanas who called themselves the Bachhidan Bhagats. These Tanas took the vows of Tanaism by touching the cow's tail and in some cases, even made gifts of cows or calves (Bachhi) to the Brahmins. The Tanas also sought to emulate Brahmanical norms and codes of conduct, while distancing themselves from the Kols. Tanas were to observe temperance, vegetarianism and cleanliness; adultery was forbidden, mixing without restraint and pre-marital sexual unions were discouraged. The Tana simplicity in worship, the ideas of active devotion, the belief in the oneness of man and God were Vaishnavite and Kabirpanthi influences. In fact the Tanas called their religion 'Bhakat' or the 'Bhakti' religion.

For many, the movement of purification may be seen as an attempt of the Tanas to stake a claim in the caste

4. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

hierarchy. "A 'low' Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, 'twice born' caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community."⁵ It would however be an oversimplification to argue that Brahmanization for the Tanas or an incorporation of certain norms and practices in vogue in the caste society indicated a desire for merger, or an upward movement in the same caste structure. The sharing of a symbol or a performance does not signify a dissolution of the identity of the borrower. The meaning of the shared practice or symbol may be entirely different for the two communities. For example, when Tanas began wearing the sacred thread, they uttered the name of Dharmes. There was no Brahmanical ceremony of investiture.⁶ While referring to the different Hindu Gods, the Tanas clearly stated that they were invoking Dharmes in his various names rather than giving distinctive identities to these Gods. The unique personality of the community came out in their opposition to the landlords, Brahmins, Rajputs and other high caste men. A rejection of those practices that

5. M.N. Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India (Bombay: 1972), p.6.

6. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.399.

implied their subordination can be seen in their refusal to pay rent or work as coolies for the landlords. The zamindars were denounced for keeping dancing girls⁷: paradoxically an upper caste ideal was utilized to deprecate a member of that very caste! It is to be noted that the Tanas, under Brahmanical influence were against the Oraon practice of dancing at Akhras. Further, Tanas, in order to maintain their identity as distinct from that of the 'Hindus' claimed that they were "brothers to the Hindus and Muslims".⁸ It was probably a similar point that Sibū sought to make in late 1919 when in a dramatic shift from his role as the protector of the cow, Sibū actually killed a heifer, cooked it and ate it along with his followers.⁹ In this case, while the cow as a symbol was adopted from the Brahmanical practices, the significance attached to it was entirely different. The sharp challenge to the Brahmanical structure is also indicated in the failure of the Arya Samaj to win the Tanas into the Samaj-fold. As Roy pointed out, "Enlightened leaders among the Oraons naturally fight shy of such propagandists under the reasonable apprehension that

7. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

8. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 54 of 1925.

9. Ibid.

orthodox official Hinduism with the religious and social exclusiveness of twice-born castes, would relegate aboriginal converts to a very low, if not the lowest, stratum in the hierarchy of Hindu castes".¹⁰ Thus, the relationship between Brahmanical influences and Tanaism was that of a cultural synthesis that had within it elements of both acceptance and rejection. Further, at times, even in the case of an acceptance, the meaning attributed to the symbol or an action could have had an entirely different implication for the Tanas. And thus in the process of acceptance, the action itself could have been transformed according to the Tana cultural filter.

II

From the middle of the nineteenth century yet another cultural force entered Chotanagpur which had a far reaching effect on the Oraon mind. This was the influence of the Christian missionaries. Quite distinct from the mode through which Brahmanical influences had disseminated among the Oraons was the organized, consistent and determined effort of the missionaries to make their presence felt in the Oraon land. The purpose of the missionaries was evangelization.

10. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.293.

The Gospel of Jesus needed to be spread to deliver the 'heathen aboriginals', and well thought out channels were adopted to reach out to the masses. Through an organized network that reached into the interiors, the missionaries spread their ideas through elders, catechists and teachers, all helpers chosen from among the native Christians.

Many of the ideas that the Christians spread were in consonance with Oraon practices, particularly of the earlier Bhagat cults. The Christian idea of faith and trust in God and the notion of a precept was similar to the ideas of Bhakti with which the Oraons were already familiar. Restraint and non-exuberance had already been preached before. Their dualistic doctrine of the spirit of Good and the spirit of Evil - God and the Devil - largely fitted in with the Oraon conception of Dharmes and the spirit world. The Christian notion of Hell was seen as conforming to the Hindu notion of 'narak'. Further the Christian missionaries did not intrude into certain customs of the Oraons like the observances of rites at harvest and sowing of paddy etc, which did not conflict with the cardinal tenets of the Christian faith. The help which the missionaries gave to the Oraons in their land disputes, court cases and conflicts with the chaukidars, along with their philanthropic activities like distributing free medicines, setting up of hospitals, etc. soon won for them a large number of

followers. I will briefly discuss the methods through which the missionaries spread their ideas and the doctrines which they preached as a background to understand how far Tanas drew upon Christian ideals and practices.

The means of instruction was simple and adapted to Oraon understanding. Converts gathered around their teachers every morning and evening in small groups to sing hymns and prayers and hear the preachings. If the Church was at a distance, the Oraon Christian would also hold the Sunday Mass. Ideas were spread through questions and answers, instructions and rules. For example, the catechist would ask, "Who created you? How many Gods are there?" and all would repeat the answers several times over to let the idea make a mark in their minds.¹¹ Visual medium was resorted to and coloured pictures would be displayed during instructions which played on the fears and hopes of the people.

I quote below an extract from the account of a service in 1868 described by Mrs Murray Mitchell, the wife of a Scottish Missionary, to present a picture of how the Sunday Mass was held.

Service began... conducted by Mr Pohlenz in Hindi which is the language adopted by the Mission for teaching and preaching, as it is generally

11. de Sa, Crisis in Chotanagpur, p.146.

understood by the different tribes... The service was conducted... the congregation made occasional responses and the whole joined in repeating the Lord's prayer and the creed... It was the most interesting service, solemn and impressive...

The Hindi verse sung was as follows:

Main Papi Jab Masih Ka Nam
Sache to Chhutata Bhay,
Wuh Yashu Hai Aur Uska Kam
Pap se Bachana Hai.

A code of conduct was prepared which had to be followed by the converts. The candidates were asked to renounce the open platform (akhra), music, dancing, revelries and witchcraft. Tribal dances and songs found their substitutes in religious processions, feasts and festivals, and congregational hymn-singing. No sacrifices were to be made to the 'devil' or 'demon'. Serious and deterrent actions were taken against drunkards. Education through mission schools was propounded. A community feeling was fostered in the hymn-sessions and in the collective responsibility given for the maintenance of church buildings and schools. Virtues to be inculcated were as follows: The converts were to speak the truth, avoid meeting injustice with injustice and pay their legitimate rents to the landlords.

An organized movement of such wide dimensions was bound to have an impact on the Tanas. In constant interaction with

12. Mahto, Hundred Years of Christian Missions, pp.72-3.

the Christians, they drew on many of the missionary practices and institutions and adapted them to their own ideas. Often a new reason would be attributed to a practice. For example, the Tanas adopted the Christian practice of burying the dead. The reason they cited however was that the smelling of the fumes of cremation during the burning of the dead body tantamounted to tasting or eating human flesh.¹³ Thursday was declared to be a day of rest for the Tanas. On this day they assembled and sang bhajans in chorus in local congregations under the instruction of their Guru. Clearly this was similar to the Christian Sunday Mass. The idea of collective singing of mantras or songs where the audience participated with the Guru in a common act of devotion was a break from the Oraon forms of worship. The Pahan, Bhagat or Mati conducted sacrifices and carried on worship in the presence of the community, but the community here was a silent observer in the act. The Tana rules of conduct were in many ways similar to Christian ideals. The notion of a precept who would give instructions, the nature of the gurus preachings in the form of questions and answers, the disciplined attitude of the followers -- all these remind one of the interaction between the catechist and the convert. A Tana was taken on as a probationer under strict

13. Roy, Oraon Religion, p.398.

observation by the guru for a period of three or six months or sometimes twelve months according to the life he had lived till then. This too is similar to the probationary period before baptism. Even Tana prayers were often of a form similar to the Christian hymns:

O Baba, destroy and cast
out the sinful enemies of this
world.
O Baba, do Thou vouchsafe
to us all the virtues, adorn us
with all good qualities
O Baba, do Thou bring and
establish Thy Holy Kingdom
O Baba, do Thou awaken in
us religious consciousness.
O Baba, do Thou vouchsafe
to us all spiritual treasures,
give us all things that enrich
the soul.

While Christian ideas and practices were drawn upon by the Tanas, at the same time there was a strong anti-Christian attitude that marked the movement. The Tana identity was placed on a pedestal higher than that of the Christian's. And Sibu declared, "Christians are the lowest class. God says so."¹⁵ Similarly, in the Tana refusal to let their children go to missionary schools lay an implicit opposition to the Christians. Even children of non-Tanas

14. Ibid., p.390.

15. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 86 of 1919.

were coerced into doing the same. As a result of this, Christian schools at Chainpur and Sale were forced to close down.¹⁶ In different phases of the Tana movement, time and again Christians asked for added protection from the government and extra police needed to be deployed in sensitive areas. Clearly then, the Tanas saw themselves in opposition to the Christians.

To conclude, the Tana Bhagat movement placed vis-a-vis Brahmanical and Christian influences displayed a process of assimilation as well as a rejection of these forces. Often while being accepted, ideals and practices were transformed, and restructured. The restructuring witnessed, at times, the integration of diverse influences in one and the same act that was imbued with a new meaning. For instance, Thursday was a holiday for the Tanas following the Christian practice of declaring Sunday to be the day of rest. The choice of Thursday was because this day was considered to be sacred for the worship of Lachmi, a Hindu goddess. Similarly, the Tana dead were buried but after the body was purified by sprinkling water in which tulsī leaves had been dipped. Once again in this can be seen the influence of Brahmanization and Christianity. What is significant here is that it was

16. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 1165 of 1916.

the cultural filter of the Tanas and not the unhindered external actors which mediated the mode of incorporation and modification of or resistance to the new ideas and institutions.

PART III

CHAPTER VI

THE TANAS, THE NON-COOPERATIONISTS AND THE STATE

By 1921, a fresh set of rules and practices became a part of Tana tenets, and a new expectation was woven around these. Tanas began to spin the 'charkha' and wear 'khadi', they became members of the Congress and attended its sessions. Panchayats were set up for the arbitration of cases. 'Gandhi's Raj' was believed to be coming in a year or two, and then the Oraons would again possess their own lands and not pay chaukidari or rent. At the same time, there was a continuation of earlier beliefs and practices and Tanas persisted in harbouring an anti-zamindari attitude and opposing the chaukidari tax. The third trend was an added emphasis that appeared in some of the earlier tenets like renunciation of liquor and meat.

1920 was the year which marked the Tana contact with the Non-cooperation movement. While the degree of contact varied over the years, there was a consistent attempt by the Congress till 1947 to draw the Tanas into a broad anti-government movement. It is the relationship between the Tanas, the Congress and the British state in the period 1919-22 that I will be seeking to study in this chapter,

against a broader understanding of how a tribal society functions when it is confronted by a non-tribal world.

I

CONGRESS MOBILIZATION

One of the earliest responses to Congress politics in Bihar was during the Rowlatt agitation in February-March 1919. The Khilafat issue had already brought the Hindu and Muslim leaders together; the peace terms fomented the discontent in Bihar, the resolution about non-participation in peace celebrations being unanimously carried through. It is against this background that the response of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee to the Calcutta session of the national Congress in 1920 is to be seen. The Bihar Congress responded to the national scenario by organizing mass meetings in various districts, appointing a sub-committee to give effect to Congress instructions, participating in the annual session at Nagpur, inaugurating the anti-liquor movement, collecting subscriptions, setting up national schools, advocating Swadeshi and forming local panchayats and 'Seva Samitis'. The specific programme to be adopted was as follows. The principal object was to discipline and instruct the raiyat community; all acts or words tending to excite violence were to be avoided; importance was to be

given to the work of organization. Civil disobedience was not a part of the programme of non-cooperation and all lawful orders of the government were to be obeyed; picketing, social boycott and any other form of pressure outside of moral persuasion were to be avoided. The activities of the workers were to be confined to the organization of sabhas and panchayats which would be instructed to decide all local cases, discourage the use of intoxicants, spread Swadeshi, raise a national fund and organize bands of local volunteers. Efforts were made to strengthen Hindu-Muslim unity and all cases of friction between the two communities were to be avoided.¹

In this early phase the important non-cooperation centres in Bihar were Patna, Bhagalpur, Shahabad, Tirhut, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Gaya, Monghyr, Champaran and Hazaribagh. Ranchi, significantly, had not found a place on the Congress map. Gulab Tewari was the only Congressman who had "shown marked activities in endeavouring to spread pernicious propaganda".² It was as late as end 1920 that the non-cooperationists made their advent into Ranchi. On 18 and 19 November, Padam Raj Jain, Bholu Nath Burman, Maulavi

-
1. K.K. Datta, History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar, Volume I (Patna: 1957), pp.309-10.
 2. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 50 of 1921.

Zakaria, Abdul Razak and Sunder Dutt Seobi arrived at Ranchi from Calcutta in order to attend the annual Pinjrapol celebration. Their arrival was marked with much enthusiasm. "There was a large gathering at the Railway Station to meet these persons and a procession was formed and moved to Upper Bazar. There was a hartal more or less successful in the town"³ that extended from 17 to 21 November, and between these dates several meetings, public and secret, were held. At one meeting 6000 people were said to have been present. All those who came spoke at various times advocating non-cooperation and abstinence from drink. Of the local people who addressed the meetings were Gulab Tewari, Nagar Mal, Muhammad Yusuf and Muhammad Ishak. By 22 November the whole party had withdrawn to Calcutta, leaving the local leaders Muhammad Alam and Ali Jan Saudagar, in addition to the above four, to carry on the propaganda.⁴

Before they left however, an organizational network had already been laid which gradually spread all over the district. Local office holders like the Secretary, President etc. were appointed to carry on the campaign, and an arbitration court was set up at Doranda. The institution earmarked for nationalist activities was the Anjuman Islamia

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

which housed Gulab Tewari, Ram Chandra Prasad and Ram Tahal Brahmachari, in addition to Maulvi Osman who was actively involved in the collection of funds. By 1921, District Congress Boards were set up and non-cooperation thanas established. National police officers with the titles of 'Sub-Inspector' and 'Tahsildar' were appointed for each police station of the district. Swaraj notes were circulated which attempted to copy the government organization while making appointments of local volunteers and national officers. The principal duty of the tahsildars was the collection of Muthia, while the staff of the national thanas confined themselves to propaganda work and the collection of money for Swaraj funds. Only a few cases were noticed where they effected arrests, carried out house searches, or otherwise usurped the functions of the police. This however was the ultimate effect of the scheme as was clear from Mr. Dip Narayan Singh's (a leading non-cooperator) proclamation that when Swaraj would come, the staff of the thanas would perform the work of the regular police and take over the existing police houses. In one or two cases, police stations were invaded by gangs of non-cooperators indicating the future trend of things.⁵

5. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 602 of 1921.

Once the non-cooperationists entered Ranchi, contact with the Oraons was only a matter of time. This occurred for the first time on 31 January 1921 when Gulab Tewari addressed a meeting in Ranchi town attended by about seventy Oraons. On 1 February, Maulvi Osman spoke at a general meeting of Oraons, Mundas, Bhuyans, Chasis, along with barbers, chamars and 'non-aboriginal' classes. Gulab Tewari and Ram Tahal Brahmachari also addressed the meeting. Speeches were on the subject of non-cooperation and abstention from drink, "and contained passages violently anti-European in tone." The speakers it was reported, succeeded in "arousing considerable excitement amongst their hearers."⁶ Meetings were also held at Chaghra and Madhukam in Sadar thana jurisdiction.

Non-cooperation propaganda among the Oraons was swift and intense. The movement spread rapidly and evoked government fears. From an extract of a report of the Superintendent of Police, Ranchi, for the period 31 January to 13 February, 1921, we find that in the space of a fortnight 15 meetings were held and 3 more were planned.⁷ This shows the intensity of nationalist activity.

6. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 50 of 1921.

7. Ibid.

After this, the frequency of meetings diminished, though throughout the year national leaders visited Ranchi and the areas in the interiors to establish contact. Amongst the leaders who visited the region were Rajendra Prasad, Swami Bishwanand, Swami Sumeswaranand, Imam Ali and Ram Rachhya Sharma.

In the Congress and Oraon meetings, non-cooperation and abstention from drink were subjects of discussion. While there was a repeated attempt to link up the specificities of the region with the struggle at the higher level, it was necessary for nationalist leaders to use local grievances and idioms, Oraon traditions, legends and myths of origin to make their appeal acceptable. Thus Brahmachari spoke in the local dialect to add to the comprehensibility of the masses: "the Indians were 22 crores of people and had nothing to fear". He told them that "they were the original Rajas of the country who had become coolies and if they followed his advice, they would become Rajas again". He attacked government liquor policy and advised boycott of the courts. Further, he said, "By giving up European things you people will keep 90 crores of rupees in the country and then you people will at once become Rajas and when all this happens the government will go on its own accord. Each of you people here must tell ten more people all this."⁸ The appeal to

8. ibid.

give up drink, at one level, merged with the purificatory attempts of the Tanas, the demand being a part of the Tana faith from the very outset. At the same time, it was an integral aspect of Gandhian precepts. The programme of 'giving up liquor' acquired an anti-imperialist colouring when to this demand were added others: the boycott of foreign food, the attack on the government policy about liquor shops and the boycott of courts. Similarly, the courts symbolized for the Tanas an institution little understood but operationally significant in tribal life and one of the greatest instruments of control in non-tribal hands. The economic critique of imperialism is emphasized through the reference to the outflow of "ninety crores of rupees". There is thus a constant attempt to relate local grievances to the national ones: the true enemy is identified as the British state rather than the landlords against whom the Tanas had expressed their anger. The nationalist message had to be spread amongst the Oraons and mobilization was to take place through verbal communication.

II

THE LINK WITH THE CONGRESS

Fears about the link between the Oraons and the non-cooperationists were repeatedly expressed in the official

correspondence of this period.

If the agitators seriously mean business in stirring up the Oraons and Mundas, they will not trouble them with the sort of speeches they make elsewhere but will work on their ignorance and superstition... The temperance movement will also be a lever in the agitator's hands for when the aboriginal ceases to drink, he always looks for trouble elsewhere.

The statement reveals the stereotype of the Oraons in British perception. These "aboriginals" were "simple minded", "superstitious", "harmless" and "ignorant"; yet they were "easily excitable" and easily "influenced", and therefore could be "led in the direction of opposition to the government" and aroused "into a state of savage frenzy".⁹ The underlying logic was that the Tana movement under nationalist propoganda would be resuscitated and directed against the government, thereby loosing its anti-zamindari focus.

The Tanas were drawn into the fold of nationalism, imbibed its programmes and ideas and showed the utmost devotion to the nationalist cause -- such was the image of the Tanas as painted by Rajendra Prasad, one of the leading non-cooperators in the area. In a sense the stereotype of the Tana in his mind was similar to that portrayed in

9. Ibid.

government documents. Tanas in their simplicity and ignorance showed the greatest of fervour and enthusiasm in their urge to obey the dictats of the nationalist leaders, and in the process were exploited by unscrupulous elements. In his own words,

They carried the idea of non-violence to the extent of abjuring eating anything red, because blood was red. When they heard that Mahatma had arisen and was asking the people to stick to non-violence they felt that the rearing of goats, which would ultimately go to the slaughter-house was against the creed of non-violence and therefore, drove out their goats from their houses to the jungles and abandoned them not knowing that they would become victims to wild animals and to men who were even wilder. These goats were captured by people who traded in them and sold to butchers. The result was that these people lost their money without being able to save their goats. They gave up red chillies, because they looked red. The song which they sang had the refrain that even an ant has life just as a man has and so should not be hurt.¹⁰

It needs to be noted that most of the ideas in this passage reflected continuities with the 1914-19 phase of the Tana movement. The abhorrence of the colour red in view of its link with the colour of blood that resulted in the avoidance of kokra, mirchai, red dhan and sag had occurred as early as 1916; the importance of life (jia) and the creed of non-violence, along with the abjuration of sacrifices had been expressed and reiterated over the years in Tana hymns;

10. R. Prasad, Mahatma Gandhi in Bihar (Bombay: 1949), p.131.

the Tanas had driven out their goats into the jungles in 1919 under the instruction of Sibbu. Rajendra Prasad's view that these actions were the result of the infiltration of Congress ideas is clearly a misunderstanding as the history of the Tana movement indicates. The Tana Bhagat movement did not merge into the Non-cooperation movement, their relationship was more complex. On the one hand, there was a continuity from the earlier phases and many of the precepts propounded were a part of the earlier Tana tenets. The Tanas did become a part of the Congress organization and imbibed some of its programmes and ideas. However, the incorporation of nationalist ideas was always accompanied by a process of acceptance, modification or resistance, through a cultural filter that reflected tribal perceptions and understanding. Thus though symbols adopted were often similar, the meanings attributed to these were entirely different. Further, there was often a subversion of nationalist ideas as is revealed in the Tana preoccupation with land which marked a continuity from the earlier phases, and continued to be an essential feature of Tana protest. I would, lastly, like to make another point. The Tanas were never an undifferentiated group, and thus their responses to the Non-cooperation movement, its symbols and leaders, had differing significances for them.

The Tanas were definitely drawn into the organizational network of the Congress. They came into Ranchi to hear lectures on non-cooperation and their leaders were in touch with the Congress leaders.¹¹ They became four-anna members of the Congress, donned Gandhi caps and carried the tricolour. Panchayats were set up in thanas with Presidents and Secretaries as office bearers where circulars from the Congress were discussed. Bhuka, Tetwa, Goan, Madho and Bhual Bhagats collected subscriptions in their respective areas and deposited them with Bhuka Bhagat at Mander who was the President of the Mander panchayat.¹² Support was also given by the Tanas to the non-cooperation thanas and national police.¹³

The connection of the Tanas with the Congress continued even after the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement. The post-1922 phase however was marked by a shift in Congress activities, an emphasis being laid on the constructive aspects. The spinning of 'Khaddar', the collection of funds and the upholding of Hindu-Muslim unity received primary emphasis.

11. Government of Bihar, Freedom Movement Papers, File No.51 of 1921-23.

12. Das, The Tana Bhagat Movement, p. 129.

13. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 602 of 1921.

Tana participation in Congress meetings was exemplified in their attendance at the Gaya Congress. The Searchlight reported on the 'Congress week at Gaya' on 21 December, 1922: "About 60 persons of Oraon and Munda sections of the aboriginal tribes being in a backward tract near the jungles of Chotanagpur have arrived here to attend the Congress. It is understood that nearly 400 of their kinsmen will be reaching here tomorrow after walking the whole distance of 200 miles."¹⁴ The sixty had reached there in a lorry under the leadership of Gulab Tewari and Bhuka Bhagat; the rest were seen proceeding through Ranchi town crying 'Gandhi Maharaj Ke Jai'.¹⁵

On their return to Ranchi, the Tanas began to hold "meetings to draw up a programme"¹⁶ Contributions were made to the Tilak Swaraj Fund,¹⁷ a hartal was organized, and a procession was formed in honour of Motilal Nehru.¹⁸ In the

14. Government of Bihar, Freedom Movement Papers, File No.51 of 1921-23.

15. Government of Bihar, Freedom Movement Papers, File No.51 of 1921-23.

16. Ibid.

17. J.C. Jha, "The Tribals of Bihar and the Indian Freedom Movement", in Indian Historical Review, Vol.13, 1985, p.287.

18. Government of Bihar, Freedom Movement Papers, File No.51 of 1921-23.

National week organized in April 1921, the Tanas played a prominent role.¹⁹

The adoption of the 'Charkha' among the Tanas was another indication of their following the programmatic trend of the Congress. Gandhi in 1925, commented on the Bhaktas:

They are believers in Khaddar. Men as well as women ply the Charkha regularly. They wear Khaddar woven by themselves. Many of them had walked miles with Charkhas on their shoulders. I saw nearly four hundred of them all plying their Charkhas most assiduously at the meeting I had the privilege of addressing. They have their own Bhajans which they sing in chorus. (Young India, 3rd September, 1925; 'Bihar Notes').²⁰

Certain ideas preached by the non-cooperationists were also inculcated by the Tanas. One of the best examples that indicate Tana appropriation of nationalist ideas is provided by the radical shift of Sibhu from his previous anti-Muslim stance. Throughout 1919 he had proclaimed a hatred for the Muslim creed; it was the same Sibhu who under Congress influence was reported in 1921 to have had food cooked by Muslims to indicate that "the people of India were one irrespective of caste and creed". The Congress idea of Hindu-Muslim unity had had its effect. Similarly in an

19. Ibid.

20. K.K. Datta, Writing and Speeches of Gandhiji Relating to Bihar. From 1917 to 1947 (Patna: 1960), p.182.

exposition of the creed of non-violence which assumed a visible form, the Tana Bhagats threw away the meat of the butchers of Sons bazar on 14 February 1921.²¹

III

THE TANA 'SWARAJ'

There were thus certain issues from the Congress programme that were brought into the Tana agenda, adding to the complexities of Tana integration with non-cooperationist politics. Yet what stands out throughout in this phase was the adamant refusal of the Tanas to compromise on issues of land, this being in continuation of the politics of the 1914-19 phase. The repeated cases veering around the land question points to the primacy attributed to this. The Tana idea of Congress goals, its leadership and symbols were understood in the context of land. 'Swaraj' would mean 'rent-free land'; Gandhi as a leader too was conceived as one who would address himself to this Tana ideal. The 'Gandhi-Maharaj-ka-Raj' was expected to bring in the millennium. All rumours that grew around Gandhi added to the image of a messiah who would achieve for the Tanas their goal of rent-free tenures. It is to be noted that this was

21. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 50 of 1921.

in direct contravention to the mandates of the Congress and its leaders for whom a disciplining of the raiyat community was a necessary aspect of non-cooperation.²² Even the government officials admitted this : "Two other instruments of non-cooperation, viz., non-payment of rent and non-payment of revenue, may be dismissed in a word, for in this Province at any rate, this part of the programme has not been put in operation."²³ Elsewhere, when the zamindars complained that the Tanas had adopted a defiant attitude "under evil influences exerted upon them and having been misled by some mischievous persons", the Sadar S.D.O. reported that the non-cooperationists had told the people "to live at peace with the landlords".²⁴

The arguments of the Tanas reflected their conception with a long history. They believed that the lands which were jungles before had been cleared up by their own ancestors and villages established long before the ancestors of the present landlords came to the country, and thus rightly belonged to the Tanas. The zamindars were more or less "impostors... the landlords have rights neither to 'Khas'

22. Datta, Freedom Movement, p.309.

23. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 144 of 1921.

24. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 517 of 1921.

cultivation nor to rents or other impositions... the Tanas were determined to die rather than pay a farthing to the landlords whom they regard as usurpers... they have now decided not to pay more than 2 pailas of dhan to the zamindar...."²⁵ S.C. Roy, based on his intensive communication with the Tanas, suggested to the government that it should

buy up the landlords' rights in their villages and settle the villages with the respective aboriginal village communities on a fixed rental... The villages inhabited by this class of extreme Tanas will be at the most fifty, and the total cost of buying up the villages will, I believe, not exceed two lacs of rupees at the utmost... the peace and contentment likely to result²⁶ from such a measure is well worth the expenditure.

The superintendent of police, Ranchi, reported for the week ending 5 March 1921 a case in which the Tana Bhagats refused to permit a civil court peon to approach land which had been sold for non-payment of rent in village Chigari. When visited by the Deputy Commissioner, the Tanas refused "point blank" to pay rent even though it was "Sirkar-ka-hukum". Turia the leader said that Bhagwan was speaking within him that the land first was theirs. No amount of

25. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 50 of 1921.

26. Ibid.

persuasions could induce them to come to terms with their maliks. A similar case took place with Birsa Bhagat of Patuk and Mangal Bhagat of Sons. The Tanas did not hesitate to even forcibly plough the field as the case of 7 February, 1921 instituted by Janki Dusadh of Kolhsundi against Tarkan, Jharia, Leton, Etwā, Dimba and Bundhu reveals.²⁷

Even in Tana meetings it was the issue of land that was primarily discussed, unless the threat of force specifically warned them against this. The Sesai Sub-Inspector, for instance, warned that if the Tanas discussed the question of non-payment of rent to zamindars, he would report against them. They thus restricted themselves" to the usual topics, eg. abstention from drink."²⁸

In this context, I would like to comment on the Tana understanding of Gandhi. Only some Tanas had met Gandhi and the other nationalist leaders in person. For most others, Gandhi was not a leader in flesh and blood who was at the helm of the non-cooperationist struggle. Rather, he featured in their dreams of an utopian world, a dream which envisaged a messiah who would lead them to a perfect ordered world, a dream which expressed many aspirations that were undefined,

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

unclear and yet powerful. And thus while they had attributed to Gandhi the role of the saviour and believed that his Raj would come in a year or two, the notion of Gandhi was still vague in their minds. McDowell, the Inspector of Police reported, "People are asking who Gandhi is that he should be permitted to wage war against the government".²⁹

Others incorporated Gandhi into the Tana pantheon of Gods. He was to be propitiated in a manner similar to that adopted for the worship of other Gods. Gandhi was accepted as a divine force, a benevolent superior power who would intervene on their behalf and thereby give the movement a greater force. The father in each family would collect some rice and divide it into three packets for Gandhi, Durga and Kali. The Tana leader Jatra Bhagat was supposed to have been reborn in the person of Gandhi.³⁰

Similarly the Tana understanding of 'Gandhi's Raj' and 'Swaraj', both showed the Tana connection with land. Often their ideas, their millenarian ideals, were expressed through rumours. Rumours were afloat that the Tanas had asked Gandhi to visit them and that 'Gandhi's Raj' would come in a year or two. Some "unscrupulous" elements, utilizing this rumour were said to have sold to the Tanas

29. Ibid.

30. Das, The Tana Bhagat Movement, p. 127

exclusive land-rights in their village with effect from a date two or three years hence, with the assurance that these sales would be recognized by 'Gandhi's Raj' when it was established. It was believed that when 'Gandhi's Raj' would come, there would be no need to pay any kind of tax.³¹

The non-cooperationists themselves often added to this vagueness in the Tana notion of Swaraj. In a meeting held on the occasion of the National Week, Dr. P.C. Mitra concluded the meeting by announcing that Rs. 17/6/6 had been collected during the procession and 1/2 seer of rice. This 1/2 seer was put up to auction and Dr. Mitra induced a very high bidding saying that the purchaser would buy 'Swaraj'. An "ignorant" Tana Bhagat purchased it for Rs. 110/- and became the object of much respect among Tanas.³²

Probably the following quotation is one of the best instances that point to Congress - Tana interaction. The symbols adopted reveal Congress influence, yet the usages attributed to them are unique. Congress workers repeatedly emphasized 'Charkha' as the symbol of the constructive aspect of non-cooperation. For the Tanas, however, 'Charkha'

31. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 50 of 1921.

32. Government of Bihar, Freedom Movement Papers, File No.51 of 1921-23.

had assumed a different role. It was a 'means' of attack which would enable them to achieve their final goal -- "Swaraj" or rent-free land.

We are plying the spinning wheel which sounds san san. The spinning wheel has become the cannon, the spade has become the spear. The spinning needle has become a cup. Kill the army with bullets while they are sleeping. The Ganga will flow in every house and we will play with spears in every village. We will bring about independence. We will take control of the whole world. We will not be afraid of handcuffs or of jail, and we will jump on to the gallows. We will get Swaraj, our rent-free land.³³

I will, lastly, take up the role of the panchayats among the Tanas to elaborate upon the central idea of this chapter. I narrate below an episode in which the Tana panchayat decided to deliver justice according to their own norms and practices, though elements from the outside world too may be seen in their understanding.

It was believed that Sukra Oraon had injured a bullock of Antu Bhagat, a Tana; Antu convened a panchayat of Tanas and a fine of Rs.200/- was imposed on Sukra. Sukra declined to pay and was severely beaten and confined in a house till Jibhu arrived and stood surety for Sukra. The case was registered and when the Inspector and Sub-Inspector visited

33. Singh, "Tribal Peasantry, Millenarianism, Anarchism and Nationalism", p. 48.

Jibhu's house, they found a mob of 30 Tanas armed with 'lathis', who had come to realise the money from Jibhu. In front of the police, when Sukra denied having injured the bullock, the Tanas wanted to beat him again and were restrained with difficulty. About 40 Tanas assembled at the Sesai police station under Antu, Ledu and Sibuh Bhagat the next day and asked the investigating officer what action he proposed to take with regard to the case. When the constables advanced to make arrests from among the gathered Tanas, they attacked the constables with 'lathis' and 'balwas'. The police promptly charged and after a brief encounter the Tanas fled leaving three of their members on the ground. Amongst other weapons they left behind a 'balwa' and a sword stick. Three of the Tanas were later arrested in the house of Lalit Mohan, pleader of Gumla, a leading non-cooperator who had gone to jail in that connection.³⁴

So far as the establishment of panchayats as an instrument for arbitration in local cases was concerned, this definitely was a non-cooperationist idea. The position the panchayat held was however, in a sense, similar to the role that the 'Panch' as an indisputable decision-making body had in the traditional Oraon society. The punishment

34. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 316(a) of 1922.

that the Tanas decided upon, a beating of Sukra, was tangential to non-cooperationist ideas and showed that as a means of delivering justice for a wrong, violence or 'beating' was not to be precluded. Once the judgement of the panchayat was decided upon, its decision had to be obeyed, and the Tanas did not hesitate to attack the police-station at Sesai to prove this point. The fine of Rs.200/- that the Tanas levied, and an appeal made to the police after the latter intervened, were however alien modes of punishment that were incorporated by the Tanas in the process of their interaction with the outside world. Here, I would like to make another point. Three of the Tanas had been given shelter by the non-cooperationist leader, Lalit Mohan. This probably indicates that, at times, the local Congress leaders had to accept the political practices of the local level which did not always converge with the ideals held by the national leadership.

Non-cooperation did not however have much appeal for the rest of the Oraons who were still loyal to the authorities. For example, the Oraon-Munda-Siksha Sabha at Ranchi passed formal resolutions appointing honorary supervisors of loyalty and cooperation in some of the Oraon thanas of Ranchi. S.C. Roy's conversation with a group of Oraons near Lohardaga is a more pertinent indicator. Mistaking him for a non-cooperator, the Oraons were "at

first unwilling to wait and listen... but at once began to say 'we have given up drink and meat, and all that'." Later on, after discovering Roy's identity, they confessed that they had not been able to give up drink, and their poverty prevented them from drinking as often as they would have liked to.³⁵

IV

THE TANAS AND THE BRITISH STATE

I would finally like to discuss the notion of the British state in the Tana vision. It was the aim of the non-cooperationists to shift the movement of the Tanas from one against the zamindars to one that was against the state. The British officials in turn were aware of the possibilities of an adverse influence that the Congress could have had, and thus adopted their own means to counteract the propaganda. Oraons on the payroll of the government like Mr. Panna, Oraon well wishers like S.C. Roy and officials like the S.D.O. toured the Oraon land to spread some of the ideas through which the British state sought to subvert non-cooperationist ideas. One of the recorded speeches of

35. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 50 of 1921.

Aikath, a government official, was as follows:

I told them how people were cruelly treated by the former rulers, how the wives and daughters were dragged out of the houses of innocent men and insulted, how whole villages were burnt down for no fault of the inhabitants... how the British Government have left everyone to follow his own religion and how the people of the country are being brought up with foster care and taught to learn the science of agriculture, the science of medicine and the science of hygiene so that the people may live in better sanitary conditions free of diseases and produce better crops by scientific way of cultivating the lands and how the enactments of British government have always sought to put a stop to abuses like the Satidaha and sacrifices of living children in the torrents of rivers and helped the ignorant mass to live peacefully and happily and pass ever peaceful nights in their happy homes no longer afraid of robbers and the Bargis (Marhatta Sipahis) who always troubled the helpless raiyats in former days... The raiyats of Chotanagpur have special advantage over the raiyats of other districts in as much as the Tenancy Act which is a special Act for Chotanagpur has made their land not salable and how the term zerpeshgi is now limited to five years only and how the settlement operations have brought them so much good by defining their rights and privileges and making illegal exactions from them by landlords as in the past as absolutely impossible..."³⁶

The above dialogue between the British and the Tanas took place in the traditional setting of the Oraons, the Akhra or dancing ground, and this in a sense demarcated the context and the parameters in which the debate between them was ensconced. The purpose of Aikath's speech was to uphold

36. Ibid.

for the state the stereotype of the 'ma-baap' who would deliver justice to the helpless and ignorant people of Chotanagpur. The former rulers of Chotanagpur were represented as backward looking and barbarian in contrast to the British state, which was presented as humanitarian, beneficent, scientific, rational and modernizing. Aikath's discourse which represented that of the state was in a sense alien to Tana understanding; it had used ideas and motifs, many of which the Oraons were not acquainted with and which for them had no meaning. It was the traditional concept of payment prevalent in their conceived past that the Tanas thus referred to and since chaukidari tax lay beyond the realms of tradition, it was to be opposed. "They would not hear anything and they say they will not pay more than three pailas of Dhan as chaukidari tax... years of oppression by zamindars, Darogas, Chaukidari Tahsildars, Sipahis and Chaukidars have rendered them very poor -- the lands which they had prepared (their ancestors) by clearing jungles -- have been taken away...."³⁷

A similar attitude was expressed by the Tanas through a case in which land was forcibly cultivated by them under the orders of their guru Bundhu Uraon Mahto. "The Guru would not reply to any question put to him by the sub-inspector. He

37. Ibid.

talked of cow-worship, dharam and so on and made disconnected references to France, Germany and Hindustan."³⁸ Land was an inalienable right of the Oraons and the basis of an exclusive Oraon identity and no outsider had the right to probe or question them on this issue, whatever be his status or position. Such was the Tana belief. In the face of their inability to resort to a more tangible means of opposition, silence, avoidance and "disconnected references" were made by them.

However, in case chaukidari tax was forcibly extracted from them, the Tanas did not hesitate to even resort to violence as a means of redressal. The following case may be cited. At 6 P.M. on 29 September 1921, Baldeo Prasad, chaukidari tahsildar of Mander Police Station reported that he had gone to Chigri and attached a pair of door leaves belonging to Turia Bhagat of the village and a utensil belonging to Bishun Bhagat in execution of the distress warrant issued for the non-payment of chaukidari tax, in the absence of these men. After an hour, when the Tahsildar was seated in the house of Sankar Sai Baraik, Turia, Cherwa, Narayan, Bishun and Hembo, all Tanas, went to him and asked him to return the attached property. Turia went to the verandah of the house and aimed a 'lathi' blow at the

38. Ibid.

Tahsildar but missed him. Turia then struck chaukidar Situ with a 'lathi', Hembo and Bishun struck chaukidar Harakh and Narayan Bhagat, chaukidar Mahrung. The villagers assembled whereupon the accused persons took to their heels.³⁹

Significantly, an anti-chaukidari campaign was not a part of non-cooperationist ideas.

Official words were often re-framed. Orders prohibiting Tana actions were transformed into statements legitimating Tana activities. In 1921, the Tanas had issued orders in the Palkot market by beat of the drum that rice would be sold at 16 seers per rupee instead of 8, paddy at 32 and cloth at half the price. The S.D.O. warned them against this. When the Tanas returned to their village however, they reported that the S.D.O. had told them that the present Raj was over. If they went to meet him in a day or two, the S.D.O. would give over the charge to them.⁴⁰

An opposition to the state through a refusal to pay the chaukidari tax or through other means reflected however only one aspect of the Tana understanding of the state. Their attitude was indeed an ambiguous one. The state was also

39. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 517 of 1921.

40. Government of Bihar, Freedom Movement Papers, File No.51 of 1921-23.

considered to be placed above the Tana society and was an institution to which the Tanas appealed to for redressal of their grievances and for arbitration in cases against the zamindars. The appellation of 'ma-baap' which they attached to it represented this attitude since the Tanas were aware that the "Sirkar-ka-hukum" was a force that could be used in their favour against the landlords. In the Tana perception, it was the Hindu and Muslim incursions rather than the British entry into Chotanagpur that had marked the moments of change in the "pure" Oraon structure. For the Tanas, there was a clear difference between the zamindars and the government, and the main reason of their resentment against the latter was because they were exploited by the zamindars without any redressal from the authorities. It was this indifference and apathy of the authorities which the non-cooperationists could play upon, according to S.C. Roy.⁴¹ Hence it was the state's failure to protect the community's interest that could also lead to its opposition. This was particularly detrimental to the interests of the government since the Tanas had already begun to accept the membership of the Congress and adopted many of the non-cooperation programmes. Further, their notion of the 'Gandhi Raj' too, however vague, symbolised an anti-state attitude.

41. Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section, File 50 of 1921.

Definitely the non-cooperationist agitation sharpened the grievances of the Tanas against the British state. Fears were repeatedly expressed by government officials that the Tana movement was being led "in the direction of opposition to the government" as anti-state tendencies became increasingly prominent. But, throughout this phase, along with anti-government tendencies ran another strain -- the frequent appeals to the state for redressal and arbitration, appeals to the police officers for intervention and justice. What is significant is that this contradictory perception of the state was informed by Tana ideas and motifs. The Non-cooperation movement had tried to incorporate the Tanas into a broad structure of an anti-government agitation. For the Tanas, however, the Congress was yet another one of those forces that had entered into their land like the Hindus, Muslims, British officials and missionary bodies before it. The non-cooperationist ideas placed within a greater historical process of interaction between the Oraon and the non-Oraon worlds were thus not accepted by the Tanas in an unqualified manner.

CONCLUSION

The restructuring of land relations was an integral part of Tana effort to reorder the Oraon world. Land symbolized the undifferentiated domain of the Oraon belief structure and social being. It was a repository of the material and religio-cultural ethos of the Oraons. Land also encompassed the whole range of diverse and conflicting linkages structured vis-a-vis the outside world. The demand for land therefore did not only lead to the subversion of the bonds of subordination vis-a-vis the zamindar or other external forces. It was also accompanied by a construction of the Oraon identity through a redefinition of religious rites, social customs and cultural symbols. The closely interwoven realms of secular and religio-cultural practices in the Oraon life were unambiguously reflected in the programmatic thrusts of the Tana movement. For example, the attack on the Sesai police station in 1922 was followed by a refocusing on the regulations and code of conduct prescribed for the Tanas. Their duties were codified in religious books, bhajans were composed afresh and old habits of dancing in Akhras, holding jatras, consuming liquor, going on hunting expeditions etc. were deprecated. The shift to religious revitalization in the course of the Tana Bhagat movement thus does not amount to a 'retreat' within the

movement. Nor can this be fitted into any schematically distinct division of stages in a tribal movement through categories such as 'agrarian' or 'millenarian'. Rather the religio-cultural orientation of the Tana Bhagat movement, along with the cry for land, constituted parts of an integrated process of reordering the Oraon society to reverse the existing configurations of domination and subordination.

The Tana initiative in re-arranging the land rights and religio-cultural domain of the Oraons was not one of autonomous origin. The Tana perception of the self was contoured in response to the diverse forces from within and outside the Oraon tradition. It was this perception of the self which acted as the cultural filter mediating the process of Tana interaction with the Oraon tradition, the 'dikus', the British and the Non-cooperation movement. The integration of various influences in the Tana tenets was thus not a simple process but one that was marked by qualifications, restructuring and even rejection. Here it should be noted that the Tana perception of the self was not a monolithic construction nor was their response to other agencies uniform. Yet an identity can be posited within the differing Tana approaches.

Finally, I have argued in the dissertation that the Tana redefinition of Oraon practices and their incorporation of wider influences marked a continuity as well as a change within the Oraon world.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

PRIMARY SOURCES

A. UNPUBLISHED

1. Archival Records

1. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Government of India, Home-Political Department, A and B Proceedings, 1914-1925.

Freedom Movement Papers.

2. Bihar Central Records Office, Patna

Bihar and Orissa Government, Political Department, Special Section Files, 1914-25.

Bihar and Orissa Government, Police Department, Abstract of Intelligence, 1914-20.

Freedom Movement Papers.

B. PUBLISHED

1. Government Publications

Annual Report on Survey and Settlement Operations for the Year Ending 30th September 1913 (Patna: 1913).

Annual Report on Survey and Settlement Operations for the Year Ending 30th September 1914 (Patna: 1914).

Annual Report on Survey and Settlement Operations for the Year Ending 30th September 1916 (Patna: 1916).

Census of India, 1901, Part I by E.A. Gait (Calcutta: 1902).

Census of India, 1911, Part I by L.S.S. O'Malley (Calcutta: 1913).

Census of India, 1921, Part I by P.C. Tallents (Patna: 1923).

District Gazetteers of Ranchi by M.G. Hallett (Patna: 1917).

Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Ranchi by J. Reid (Calcutta: 1912).

Final Report on the Revisional Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Ranchi, 1927-35 by F. Taylor (Patna: 1940).

First Decennial Review (1912-22) of the Administration and Development of the Province (Patna: 1923).

Report on the Administration of Bihar and Orissa, 1912-13 (Patna: 1914).

Report on the Administration of the Police in the Province of Bihar and Orissa by R.T. Dundas (Patna: 1913 till 1921).

II. Ethnographic Accounts

Archer, W.J., The Blue Grove: The Poetry of the Oraons (London: 1940).

-----, "Notes on Two Oraon Marriages", Man in India, Vol.20, 1940.

-----, "Folk Poems: Nine Oraon Poems for the Sarhul Festival", Man in India, Vol.22, 1942.

-----, "A Short Anthology of Indian Folkpoetry: Twenty Oraon Poems of Ranchi", Man in India, Vol.23, 1943.

-----, "An Anthology of Marriage Sermons", Man in India, Vol.23, 1943.

-----, "Festival Songs", Man in India, Vol.24, 1944.

Crooke, W., The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India (Delhi: 1968).

Dalton, E.T., Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal (Calcutta: 1960).

Dehon, P., "Religion and Customs of the Oraons", Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol.1, No.9, 1906.

- Hoffman, J.B., Encyclopaedia Mundarica, Vol.II (Patna: 1930).
- Mitra, S.C., "Riddles Current in Bihar", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society of Bombay, Vol.20, 1901.
- Oman, J.C., Cults, Customs and Superstitions of India (Delhi: 1972).
- Roy, S.C., "The Administrative History and Land Tenure of the Ranchi District under British Rule", Calcutta Review, 1911.
- , The Oraons of Chotanagpur: Their History, Economic Life and Social Organization (Ranchi: 1915).
- , "Birth and Childhood Ceremonies Among the Oraons", Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Vol. 1, 1915.
- , "Probable Traces of Totem Worship Among the Oraons", Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Vol. 1, 1915.
- , "A New Religious Movement Among the Oraons", Man in India, Vol.1, 1921.
- , "Exorcism in Chotanagpur", Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Vol. 9, 1923.
- , Oraon Religion and Customs (Calcutta: 1928).
- Ruben, W., "The Asur Tribe of Chotanagpur: Blacksmiths and Devils in India", Man in India, Vol. 20, 1940.
- Sachidananda, "An Abstract of the Annals of Nagbansi Raj Family of Chotanagpur", Man in India, Vol. 8, 1925.
- , "Marriage Customs of the Oraons", Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Vol. 12, 1926.
- , "Death and Its Attendant Ceremonies Among the Oraons", Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Vol. 13, 1927.

-----, "Primitive Religion in Chotanagpur", Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Vol. 14, 1928.

Tea District Labour Association, Handbook of Castes and Tribes (Calcutta: 1924).

Tiger, A., "Proverbs of the Oraon", Man, 1913.

-----, "Customs of the Oraon", Man, 1913.

III. Newspapers

The Bihar Herald (Bankipore), 1914-1920.

SECONDARY SOURCES

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Aiyappan, A., "Some Patterns of Tribal Leadership," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.17, No.2, 1967.

Arnold, D. (ed.), Imperial medicine and Indigenous Societies (Delhi: 1989).

Askari, S.H. and Q. Ahmad (eds.), The Comprehensive History of Bihar, Vol.2, Part 1 (Patna: 1983).

Beteille, A., Six Essays in Comparative Sociology (Delhi: 1974).

Bhadra, G., "The Mentality of Subalternity-Kantanama or Rajdharm", Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Occasional paper, No. 104, 1988.

Bose, N.K., Hindu Samajer Garhan (Calcutta: 1965).

Burke, P., Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe (New York: 1978).

Carstaire, G.M., Death of a Witch (England: 1980).

Chandra, B., Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India (New Delhi: 1987).

-----, India's Struggle for Independence (New Delhi: 1988).

- Chartier, R., "Intellectual History or Socio-cultural History? The French Trajectories", Lacapra and S. Kaplan (eds.), Modern Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives (New York: 1982).
- , "Culture as Appropriation : Popular Culture Uses in Early Modern France", S.L. Kaplan (ed.), Understanding Popular Culture (New York: 1984).
- Chattopadhyay, G., "Some Changes in Oraon Marriage Customs", Journal of Asiatic Society. Vol.24, No. 1, 1958.
- Choudhury, B.B., "The Story of a Tribal Revolt in the Bengal Presidency: The Religion and Politics of the Oraons, 1900-26", A. Chakraborti (ed.), Aspects of Socio-Economic Changes and Political Awakening in Bengal (Calcutta: 1989).
- Cohn, B., An Anthropologist among the Historians and other Essays (Delhi: 1990).
- Darnton, R., The Great Cat Massacre and other Episodes in French Cultural History (New York: 1984).
- Das, A.N., "A Scheme of the scientific analysis of the Oraon Social System", Vanyajati, Vol.9, 1961.
- Datta, K.K., History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar, Vol.1 (Patna: 1957).
- DeSa, F., Crisis in Chota Nagpur (Bangalore: 1975).
- Dhan, R.O., These are my tribesmen: The Oraons (Ranchi: 1967).
- Diwakar, R.R., Bihar through the Ages (Patna: 1954).
- Douglas, M., Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (Harmondsworth: 1970).
- , Implicit meanings: Essays in Anthropology (London: 1976).
- Dube, S.C., Tribal Heritage of India, Ethnicity, Identity and Interaction, Vol.1 (Delhi: 1977).
- Dumont, L., Homo Hierarchicus: An Essay on the Caste System (Chicago: 1970).

- Edward, J., "Leadership and External Relations in Tribal Community of Middle India", L.P. Vidyarthi (ed.), Leadership in India (Bombay: 1967).
- Eliade, M., Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy (London: 1964).
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande (London: 1937).
- , The Nuer (London: 1940).
- Elwin, V., Maria, Murder and Suicide (Delhi: 1943).
- Freitag, S., Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India (Delhi: 1990).
- Fuchs, S., Rebellious Prophets (Bombay: 1965).
- Geertz, C., Interpretation of Culture (New York: 1973).
- Geertz, H., "An Anthropology of Religion and Magic I", Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 1975.
- Ginsburg, C., "Witchcraft and Popular Piety: Notes on a Modernese Trial of 1519", C. Ginsburg, Clues, Myths and The Historical Method (London: 1990).
- Hardiman, D., The Coming of the Devi (Delhi: 1987).
- Hobsbawm, E. and T. Ranger (eds.), The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: 1983).
- Iliffe, J., Tanganyika Under German rule 1905-12 (Cambridge: 1969).
- Illich, I., Limits to Medicine (London: 1973).
- Inden, R., Imagining India (Cambridge: 1990).
- Jay, E., "Revitalization Movement in India", Anthropology Tomorrow, Vol.5, No.1, 1956.
- Kakar, S., Shamans, Mystics and Doctors (Delhi: 1982).
- Kaplan, S.L. (ed.), Understanding Popular Culture (New York: 1984).
- Levi-Strauss, C., The Effectiveness of Symbols (New York: 1963).

- MacDougall, J., "Agrarian Reform versus Religious Revitalization: Collective Resistance to Peasantization Among the Mundas, Oraons and Santals, 1858-95", Contribution to Indian Sociology, Vol.2, No.2, New Series, 1977.
- Mahato, S., Hundred Years of Christian Missionaries in Chota Nagpur Since 1845 (Ranchi: 1971).
- Malinowski, B., "Magic, Science and Other Essays", R. Redfield (ed.), Magic, Science and Other Essays (England: 1925).
- Marriot, M., "Little Community in an Indigenous Civilization", M. Marriot (ed.), Village India, Studies in the Little Community (Chicago: 1963).
- Marwick, M. (ed.), Witchcraft and Sorcery (England: 1970).
- Metcalf, T.R., Modern India: An Interpretative Anthology (London: 1971).
- Mohapatra, P.P., "Land and Credit Market in Chotanagpur 1880-1958", Studies in History, Vol. 6, No.2, New Series, 1990.
- , "Class Conflict and Agrarian Regimes in Chotanagpur 1860-1950", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1991.
- , "Some Aspects of Arable Expansion in Chotanagpur: 1880-1950", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.26, No.16, 1991.
- Nandy, A., The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism (Delhi: 1983).
- O'Flaherty, D., The Origin of Hindu Mythology (California: 1976).
- Orans, N., "A Tribe in Search of a Great Tradition: The Emulation-Solidarity Conflict", Man In India, Vol.39, No.2, 1959.
- Pandey, G., The Construction of Communalism in Colonial India (Delhi: 1990).
- Prakash, G., Bonded Histories: Genealogies of Labor Servitude in Colonial India (Cambridge: 1990).

- Prasad, R., Mahatma Gandhi in Bihar (Bombay: 1949).
- , Autobiography (London: 1967).
- Roy, E., "Revitalization Movements in Tribal India", L.P. Vidyarthi (ed.), Aspects of Religion in Indian Society (Meerut: 1962).
- Sabeen, D., Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany (Cambridge: 1984).
- Sachidanand, Cultural Change in Tribal Bihar (Calcutta: 1964).
- , Profiles of Tribal Culture in Bihar (Calcutta: 1965).
- , "The Bhagat Movement in Chotanagpur", S.C. Malik (ed.), Indian Movements (Simla: 1978).
- Sahay, B. N., "Trends of Sanskritization Among Oraons", Bulletin of Bihar Tribal Research Institute, Vol. IV, No.2, 1962.
- Singh, K.S., "Tribal Land-Organization in Chotanagpur and its Development", N.K. Choudhury (ed.), History of Socio-Economic Change in India: 1871-1961 (Simla: 1969).
- , "State-Formation in Tribal Society: Some Preliminary Observations", Journal of Indian Anthropological Society, Vol.6, 1971.
- (ed.), Tribal Situation in India (Simla: 1972).
- , Birsa Munda and His Movement, 1874-1901: A Study of Millenarian Movements in Chotanagpur (Calcutta: 1983).
- , "Tribal Peasantry, Millenarianism, Anarchism and nationalism: A Case Study of the Tana Bhagats in Chotanagpur 1914-25", Social Scientist, Vol.16, No.11, 1988.
- Sinha, S., Some Eminent Bihari Contemporaries (Patna: 1944).
- Sinha, S., "State Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India", Man in India, Vol.42, 1962.

- , "Tribe-Caste and Tribe-Peasant Continua in Central India", Man in India, Vol.16, No.2, 1965.
- , "Tribal Solidarity and Messianic Movement", Contribution to Indian Sociology, New Series, No.11, 1968.
- Sinha, S.P., "Nationalist Movement Among the Tribes of Chotanagpur", L.P. Vidyarthi (ed.), Gandhi and Social Sciences (Bombay: 1969).
- Thomas, K., Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England (London: 1971).
- , "An Anthropology of Religion and Magic II", Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 1975.
- Turner, V., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual (London: 1967).
- Vidyarthi, L.P., Cultural Configurations of Ranchi (Calcutta: 1964).
- , Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar (Calcutta: 1964).
- , Leadership in India (Bombay: 1967).
- , Aspects of Religion in Indian Society (Bombay: 1972).
- Wallace, A.F.C., "Revitalization Movements", American Anthropologist, Vol. 58, 1956.



1960