

3 The Odia Political Subject and the Rise of the Odia Movement¹

The early life of Indian nationalism was inaugurated by local cultural politics. Histories of Indian politics have often seen this early phase as a precursor to more political and populist anticolonial nationalism of the twentieth century.² However, this taxonomy of Indian nationalism into early culturalism and later political agitation can sometimes be overdetermined.³ When we look at the history of cultural politics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we see that the argument for political rights was already immanent in demands posed by social organizations seeking to represent the interests of their constituencies. What is lost in the separation of early culturalism and later political activism is a denser history of transition in the development of politics in India. How does the cultural subject of early Indian nationalism turn into the political subject at stake in later agitational populism in India? If we accept that there are continuities between these two phases then we need to acknowledge that cultural identities fostered in the early phase do linger in the later definition of the uniform Indian citizen subject. This is particularly true of regional linguistic politics and its resolution with all-India nationalism in the 1920s. The subject at stake in movements for linguistic rights was turned into the Indian political subject during the 1910s and 1920s as discussions about regional boundaries, linguistic identity, and political franchise came to figure prominently in Indian national politics.

This chapter tracks how the emergent Odia public imagined by the anti-Bengali agitation of the 1860s and 70s and the literary canon debate

¹ An early article containing some parts of this chapter was published in Pritipuspa Mishra, “Practicing Prajaniti: The Odia Political Subject and the Rise of the Odia Movement”, in Madhava Prasad and Veena Naregal (eds.), *Language Movements and the Democratic Imagination in India* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, forthcoming).

² See, for instance, Ranajit Guha’s argument about Bengali language and the roots of nationalism in nineteenth-century Bengal, in Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Historiography of India: Nineteenth Century Agendas and its Implications* (Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi, 1987), pp. 41–3.

³ Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the age of Capital* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

of the 1890s is transformed into a recognizable political constituency in the early twentieth century. This does not mean that the actual Odia public was politicized into an agitational community that self-identified as exclusively Odia. Rather, this transformation is the history of the formation of a category – the Odia electorate – who would form the basis for the demand for a separate administrative province of Odisha. The life of this category was mainly institutional and came to be very influential in the 1920s and 1930s as the colonial state set about reformulating regional boundaries to create one of the first linguistic regions in India.

This transition occurs due to a set of unrelated but crucial shifts in Indian politics. First, the demand for linguistic and administrative rights for an Odia-speaking constituency in Odia organizations inadvertently produced an image of a cohesive Odia political constituency. Second, this surreptitious emergence of the notion of an Odia political constituency became entangled in the events leading to the introduction of wider franchise in India during the 1910s. As officials and the Indian political elite around the nation argued about the basis of constituencies of political representation, claims for territorial franchise based on language gained ground. Finally, these moves towards territorial franchise shifted the policy of the Indian National Congress from a reluctance to recognize regional linguistic politics to a linguistic classification of the Indian public based on the formation of Provincial Congress Committees constituted on the basis of common language. As a result of these shifts, a curiously paradoxical notion of regional and national political community emerged in Odia discussions about self-representation. While leaders argued for a separate Odia political constituency by citing that other linguistic communities like Bengalis or Biharis were “intermediary ruling races,” the Indian nation came to be defined as a sisterhood of different linguistic groups.⁴

At the center of these changes was the rise and fall of the Utkal Union Conference or the Utkal Sammillani, as it was known in the vernacular. A pan-Odia organization set up in 1903 to represent Odia interests to the colonial state and the Indian political elite, the Sammillani served as one of the earliest sites for a systematic articulation of a cohesive Odia community. We can trace the shifts that led to the gradual transformation of the Odia public of the 1890s into a political constituency of the 1910s through a history of the changing meaning of politics or *rajaniti* in the Utkal Sammillani – from an early denial of politics to the eventual acceptance of it as central to the organization’s praxis. By 1920, as the Utkal

⁴ This phrase enjoyed surprising valency in Odia claims for regional unity. First introduced by M. S. Das in 1918, it was deployed in arguments for the separation of Odia-speaking areas from other regions in the early 1930s. See Memoranda to the Orissa Boundary Commission.

Sammillani was no longer able to sustain its apolitical stance, it became increasingly clear that the nature of the negotiations between the Sammillani and the colonial state had undergone fundamental changes. The social and the political could no longer be isolated. The inability of the Sammillani to maintain its apolitical stance illustrates how the Odia political community emerged. Its ultimate espousal of politics was due to broader changes in Indian politics as much as it drew from the fallacy of the organization's original rationale that social and economic rights could be earned without political representation. This fallacy lay in the very terms that they invoked to justify their stance – *rajaniti* and *praja*. The leaders of the organization argued that politics was beyond the realm of its activities by defining politics as *rajaniti* or the ethics of rule. By posing themselves as *praja* or subjects, leaders had suggested that Odia subject by virtue of their subjecthood had no access to *rajaniti* as this was the ruler's domain. Paradoxically, as I will illustrate, these terms that were used to exclude the Odia public from politics escaped their narrow conservative definitions as younger, more radical politicians argued that there could be a *rajaniti* (politics) of the colonized *praja* (subject).⁵

Utkal Sammillani

The conditions of its inception as well as its largely elite membership, which included many of the historically loyal Odia native princes, made the Utkal Sammillani both fiercely loyal to British rule as well as the most significant site for the articulation of pan-Odia nationalism. These dual fulcra of the Sammillani created profound tensions in its self-image as a public organization. On the one hand, leaders of the organization safeguarded their loyalist stand by using language such as British *raja* and Odia *praja* and by limiting *rajaniti* or politics to British *raja*'s ethics of governance. On the other hand, the very act of arguing for the Odia community's rights to state resources and representation as a discrete community with specific interests opened up the possibility of the very anticolonial nationalist politics that they were seeking to avoid.

The Sammillani's agenda drew from earlier nineteenth-century cultural politics in urban Odisha. Beginning with Odia responses to the British management of the Odisha famine of 1866 as well as critiques of colonial salt and pilgrim tax policies, the demands made by the Odia intelligentsia posed linguistic rights as a means for the economic and

⁵ Even as this chapter traces the emergence of the Odia electorate as a category, it is also a narrative about the changing meaning of politics in India.

social development of the individual and the community,⁶ thus producing a community whose interests were at stake in the interests of language. Often in these discussions, language and development were linked as leaders argued that as the community's language developed the community would be better able to participate in the emerging Indian modernity. Not necessarily framed as a demand for regional autonomy, nineteenth-century public debates centered on two important objectives – the need for a more dedicated state machinery to cater to Odia interests by amalgamating all Odia-speaking areas under a single administration and the need to ensure that the Odia language, literature, and textual production kept pace with the other advanced languages of India.

This linking of language and development produced a liberal rhetoric that hinged on an educational imperative. As a result of the public discussion about the need for Odia textbooks on which depended the possibility of retaining the use of Odia language in schools, a connection between the development of the Odia language and that of the individual Odia was forged. During the 1860s and 1870s newspaper articles and speeches often featured claims that linked the underdevelopment and economic backwardness of the community with the “impoverished condition” of the language.⁷ It was often argued that better educational resources in Odia would enable more Odias to become educated and to participate in governance and administration. This, in turn, would allow for better economic and social circumstances in Odia-speaking areas as they would be administered by Odias themselves. This liberal aspiration for social and economic progress that would result in a more responsible

⁶ For instance, in 1866, a serialized article entitled “‘Odiyamane Swabhavataha Nirbodha’ Ehi Prabada Jatharta Ki Na” (“‘Odias are naturally stupid’ Is this argument right?”), the author argued that even though it appears that Odias are less advanced than Bengali, this is not the result of Odia ineptitude, but the direct result of the underdevelopment of the Odia languages. The author posed: “The foundation of the land’s civilization is language. What was the English language in the past and what is it now? If we compare the English language from before the Saxon invasion with the ancient Odia language we see that there is a difference of day and night. Again, see that the development of the Bengali language is the result of concerted effort.” *Utkal Dipika*, March 25, 1866, in Sudhakar Pattnaik (ed.), *Sambadapatrare Odisara Katha Part 1 (1865–1882)* (Cuttack: Grantha Mandir, 1972), p. 11.

⁷ For instance, the debate of replacement of Odia with Bengali in schools of the Odisha division raised the question of language and its relationship with the community’s development. The argument for Bengali often made the case that Odia did not have enough speakers, school textbooks, and other resources. Hence, committing to education in Odia would limit the Odia speaker’s access to modern advances introduced through colonialism. The counterargument was that, rather than abandoning Odia, the government should contribute to its development just as it has for Bengali. See “Utkal Bhasara Unnati Prati Byaghata” (Attack on the Development of the Odia Language), in *ibid*, pp. 531–6.

class of British subjects pivoted on the development of Odia language.⁸ The linking of language and individual development in nineteenth-century Odia cultural politics tied the first knot in the linking of language and citizenship in India.

Even as language and progress came to be linked in liberal Odia aspirations, the Odia praja in nineteenth-century rhetoric was often referred to as a political community still early in its development. For instance, in an 1868 article explaining the need for greater participation in public associations, the author argued that:

Some people think that as India has been ruled by various rajas since the beginning, the need for public associations has never been felt. To such people we would only say that during the rule of Hindu rajas, the praja were in their infancy – rajas like Ramachandra and Yudhistira nurtured them with parental love and praja lived happily. After that, during the rule of Mussalmans, the praja entered a phase of early education because Mussalman kings ruled the praja with an oppressive discipline of a strict teacher. In both these conditions the praja were unaware of their own wants. In their infancy, they had no wants. Whatever the strict teacher-like raja stipulated they did. These days, under the rule of the English, the praja have attained their youth. Now, if they do not work themselves then they cannot survive. Therefore, the praja have to consider their interests as they work, if they do not then there is no doubt that they will suffer.⁹

Like many of its contemporaries, this narrative of the praja's development situates British rule in an oft-cited history of changing forms of rule in India – Hindu, Muslim, British.¹⁰ While the characterization of Hindu

⁸ In cautioning the government against introducing Bengali in Odia schools, newspaper articles often argued that this would dissuade people from sending their children to school. For instance, in an article titled “Utkal Bhasare Banga Bhasara Sikhya” (Education in the Bengali Language in Odisha), this anxiety about possible loss of students was posed as a foil to the colonial state's liberal mandate to educate as many people as possible – “Since the establishment of their rule, the British have educated people in a number of things by employing good governance practices. And they have expended resources in establishing schools in areas where even a single person was not educated so that they could incorporate the praja into their rule. However, those who are charged with education are attempting to make the language of the land extinct The government's desire is to educate all those who are under their rule and to remove all obstacles to this end. Only those who are charged with this task are unable to carry it out and are trying to save their jobs at all costs.” *Utkal Dipika*, January 4, 1868, reprinted in Bansidhar Mahanty, *Odiya Bhasa Andolana* (Cuttack: Friends Publishers, 1989), pp. 225–8. Clearly, these loyalist claims are couched as liberal aspirations for progress which are seen as the remit of colonial government. See also “Ganjamara Odiya Manankara Unnati Nahebara Dayee Kiye?” (Who Is Responsible for the Lack of Progress of the Ganjam Odias?) *Utkal Dipika*, March 4, 1881, in *Ibid.*, pp. 433–6.

⁹ Anonymous, “Samaj Unnatira Chesta”, *Utkal Dipika*, November 14, 1868, reprinted in Sudhakar Pattnaik (ed.), *Sambadapatrare Odisara Katha* (Cuttack: Grantha Mandir, 1972), pp. 97–8.

¹⁰ Partha Chatterjee illustrated how this narrative of rule was implicated in the nineteenth-century nationalization of Hinduism. See his account of school textbooks on Indian history

kings as kind fathers and Muslim kings as oppressive teachers is familiar, the discussion about British rule is striking. The only feature that seems to characterize British rule is one of happenstance. The British have come to rule India when the Indian praja happens to have come of age. This carefully loyalist narrative that is just shy of arguing that the Indian praja can no longer depend on a paternal state implies a progressive alienation between raja and praja in India – from father to teacher to outsider. While the narrative of the praja’s development from children to engaged subjects sounds distinctly liberal, the article’s silence on whether there is something about British rule that necessitates this engagement underlines its loyalism. This concurrence of loyalism and liberal aspirations was one of the hallmarks of moderate politics of the nineteenth century. In his reading of moderate politics in the Indian National Congress, Sanjay Seth has argued that loyalism was not simply a tactical choice that limited criticism of colonial rule. Rather, it “provided the very ground from which criticism became possible.”¹¹ That is, moderate criticism was possible because the moderates could argue that the British rule was failing to live up to its own promise. Clearly, such a claim was founded on a loyalist commitment to British rule. We need to see Odia demands for unification within the context of loyalist liberalism.

The moderate demands for the union of Odia-speaking areas became increasingly insistent towards the end of the nineteenth century as proposals to change the official language of the Odia-speaking Sambalpur district of the Central Provinces from Odia to Hindi were posed in government circles in 1895.¹² In the face of vocal opposition to the change amongst the Odia intelligentsia in the Odisha division of the Bengal Presidency, Sambalpur district in Central Provinces as well as the Odia-speaking Ganjam district of the Madras Presidency, the government decided to retain Odia as the official language of Sambalpur. The Sambalpur language agitation set in motion a process that would eventually lead to the partition of Bengal. As a result of the initial Sambalpur language agitation, the question of territorial redistribution of the massive Bengal Presidency was raised in colonial circles. In 1903, the Risley Circular, detailing the plans for the breakup of the Bengal Presidency,

from nineteenth-century Bengal from Mrityunjay Vidyalankar in Partha Chatterjee, *Empire and Nation: Selected Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

¹¹ Sanjay Seth, “Rewriting Histories of Nationalism: The Politics of ‘Moderate’ Nationalism in India, 1870–1905”, *American Historical Review* 104, no.1 (1999), 95–116.

¹² See S. C. Patra for an account of demands for the unification of Odia-speaking areas between the 1870s and 1900. The demand for amalgamation was particularly intense in outlying areas such as Ganjam in the Madras Presidency, and Sambalpur and Sareikela in the Central Provinces. S. C. Patra, *Formation of the Province of Orissa: The Success of the First Linguistic Movement in India* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1979).

was published. While the plans for partitioning Bengal included the controversial issue of East and West Bengal, they also suggested that all Odia-speaking areas be brought together under a single province.

The push towards territorial reorganization by the government also received some impetus from Odia local organizations such as the Utkal Sabha and the Ganjam Hiteisini Sabha. The Utkal Sabha, set up in 1882 under the auspices of Madhusudan Das, allied with colleagues in Calcutta to organize a Bengal Provincial Conference, which was to discuss issues of provincial importance as opposed to issues of national importance that were discussed in the Indian National Congress. However, the Bengal Provincial Conference was unable to include Odia representatives from other British provinces. Hence, it could not serve as a pan-Odia organization. In early 1903, an organization called the Ganjam Jatiya Samiti met for the first time in the Odia-speaking Ganjam district of the Madras Presidency and called for the need of a pan-Odia organization. As a result of this meeting, it was decided to establish a public organization representing Odias from various British provinces. While the preparations for the Utkal Sammillani were underway, the Indian National Congress met in Madras to discuss the proposed partition of Bengal. While the partition of Bengal was severely critiqued, the delegates of the Congress also resolved that the proposed transfer of the Odia-speaking Ganjam district from the Madras to the Bengal Presidency was unnecessary as the Odias were given special consideration as backward classes.¹³ With scant support from the Indian National Congress, the establishment of a loyalist pan-Odia organization that would lobby for the amalgamation of Odia-speaking tracts seemed to be the only viable choice left for the Odia leaders such as M. S. Das.

In December 1903, the first session of the Utkal Sammillani met in Cuttack. Almost half of the founding members of the Utkal Sammillani were princes of the Odisha princely states. For instance, the thirty-two out of sixty-two members of the 1903 Standing Committee in charge of social reforms among the Odia-speaking people were native princes. A large number of the remaining thirty members were university-educated government employees. The demographic of the other standing committees was very similar.¹⁴ Closely reflecting the demographic of the erstwhile leadership in the Odia public sphere, this membership was fundamentally loyal to the colonial state. In the case of educated-government employees, this loyalty was enforced. Days before the first meeting of the Sammillani,

¹³ Pritish Acharya, *National Movement and Politics in Odisha* (New Delhi: Sage, 2008), p. 28.

¹⁴ The resolutions of the first meeting of the Utkal Sammillani, including the record of founding members, is reproduced in Debendra Kumar Das (ed.), *Utkal Sammillani (1903–1936)* (Rourkela: Pragati Utkal Sangha, 2005), pp. 29–38.

government employees were barred from participating in the proceedings and some of the members on the organizing committee had to resign. The order was rescinded when the Sammillani assured the Commissioner of the Orissa division that there would be no political agitation on the Sammillani platform. Only matters of social, educational, and industrial development were to be discussed.¹⁵

Under these circumstances, at its very inception, the organization declared that “all discussions on Political and Religious subjects and criticisms of the actions of Government and Government Officials are strictly prohibited.”¹⁶ In its published statement on the objectives of the Sammillani, the organization declared that the Odia people were not ready for political revolution, being less developed than other communities in India. The statement argued that:

Before committing to political agitation, we need to find out if the Oriya people are ready for political discussion. In order to have political discussion we will have to think about the inadequacies of others or of the colonial State. However, if we pause to think about the present circumstances of the Oriya people then we see that before stepping out to reveal other people’s inadequacies, we have to resolve our own inadequacies and learn to develop self-reliantly.¹⁷

In this vein, religious discussion was to be avoided as this would cause discord among the diverse groups of people who identify as Odia. The function of the Sammillani was to be able to achieve its social and economic ends without engaging in political or religious discussion. While subsequent politics of the Sammillani reveals that religious discussion did slip into the Sammillani’s activities, politics in its very disavowal continued to haunt the organization until the fateful split in its ranks in 1920 when politics was included in the organization’s praxis.

While religion and politics were barred from the Sammillani, it repeatedly addressed questions about popular education, female education, industry in Odisha, and social reform. Madhusudan Das, the founder of the organization established two firms that would help develop native crafts – a silverworks and Utkal Tanneries. Utkal Tanneries was a commercial as well as a social experiment. The company offered employment to lower-caste workers who were traditionally involved in leatherwork due to taboos against their involvement in “cleaner” professions. Das’ aspiration was to engage the lower-caste groups in the commercial mainstream and, consequently, assimilate them into the liberal economy of colonial India.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 27. ¹⁶ Ibid, p. 29. ¹⁷ Ibid, p. 43.

The Sammillani's abstinence from politics (which, in this context, meant any critique of the colonial government), based as it was on a rhetoric of the unpreparedness of a young underdeveloped praja, allowed the organization to pose itself as a symptom of a preparatory phase in the development of Odia political subjecthood, thus also making a claim that it was contributing to the colonial civilizing mission. Its narrative of loyalism required both an insistence on loyalty to the crown and a commitment to the purported social aspirations of the colonial state – the commitment to the liberal progress of the individual and the community and the possibility of greater Odia access to modes of production and circulation of colonial capital. Odisha literally needed to be brought into the time of colonial capital before it could be politically engaged. The organization's attention to female education, industrial and commercial growth, alleviation of poverty, popular education, and social reform all tended towards creating a better Odia liberal subject who would remain just shy of citizenship as the organization situated itself in a time of preparation rather than action.

Raja, Praja, and Rajaniti

Despite explicit loyalism and a categorical denial of politics, the Sammillani inadvertently served as a site for the emergence of the Odia political subject. Throughout its career as the premier Odia public association, the Sammillani was plagued by criticism of its apolitical loyalist stance. Barely five years after its establishment, it was publicly attacked by younger radical leaders for banning the use of *Vande Mataram* on its platform.¹⁸ These debates, in and around the organization, raised some crucial questions about the nature of political activity, Indian subjecthood, the role of the colonial state, that of the Indian National Congress, and the relationship between the region and the nation in Odisha. In its denial of politics, the Sammillani used terms that eventually escaped the narrow conservative definitions ascribed to them and came to be redeployed by opponents of the organization to signify citizenship and politics. In this section, I will explore the discussions about the nature of the political within the organization by tracking the use of two key terms in the Sammillani's rhetoric – rajaniti and praja. In doing so, I explore the roots of their elision of conservative meanings.

In 1903, at the first annual meeting of the association, the President of the session, Ramchandra Bhanja Deo, Raja of Mayurbhanj, justified the

¹⁸ Acharya, *National Movement*, pp. 33–4.

organization's decision to avoid politics by pointing out the particular politics or rajaniti that was being debarred from discussion in the Sammillani. He argued:

What is said to be *Rajaniti*? Why will we boycott discussions of *Rajaniti* in the Sammillani? [We reject it] by saying it is a science of governance: by saying it is any effort by human kind for the governance of the country or community or for the protection of its peace and prosperity or for the protection of the inhabitants from external attacks.¹⁹ (emphasis added)

Bhanja Deo proceeded to argue that, as rajaniti was about governance, it was the prerogative of the colonial state. By comparing colonial rule with what he claimed was misrule by earlier rulers such as the Maratha and the Muslim monarchs, he contended that the Utkal Sammillani need not engage with questions of governance as the new British rajas lived up to their responsibilities as rulers. In fact, he argued that the primary aim of the Utkal Sammillani should be to help the Odia community recuperate from the ill effects of centuries of Muslim and Maratha misrule through social, economic, and cultural reform. At stake in this formulation of colonial rule as good rule was Bhanja Deo's effort to ensure that the Utkal Sammillani did not participate in any opposition to the colonial state, even as it ventured to carve out for itself a public domain where it could represent the social, cultural, and economic interests of the Odia-speaking people. Ostensibly, by asking what is "*said* to be rajaniti", Bhanja Deo claimed to be invoking a commonsensical notion of politics. In such a commonsensical notion, the raja would be king and the praja would be subject. And yet, smuggled in here, perhaps entirely against his explicit desires and arguments, is also another notion of raja and praja.

This slippage was due to the fact that Bhanja Deo's "commonsensical" understanding of rajaniti was not the only understanding of politics and its constituent concepts, such as raja and praja in Odisha during the early twentieth century. Bhanja Deo's definition of rajaniti as the ethics of rule that precluded subject participation was an overly simplified rendering of deeply nuanced traditions of sovereignty and subjecthood. To begin with, praja was a rather slippery term.²⁰ With no etymological connection with

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 65.

²⁰ In colonial usage, the term praja has carried many different valences. Often used to mean subject, it was usually deployed to signify the peasant classes in the East Indian zamindari-aries. In Gandhi, praja is used to denote the nation or, sometimes, that the nation is the proper destination of the praja. In such a usage praja could be mean "public" and it does not always carry with it a suggestion of being ruled. See Ajay Skaria, "One Word Properly Altered: Gandhi and the Question of the Prostitute", *Postcolonial Studies* 10, no. 2 (2007), 219–37.

raja or ruler, praja literally means progeny.²¹ While commonly used to denote subject, in Odisha this subjecthood did not constitute a lack of agency in matters of state.²² Much of the scholarship on precolonial kingship in Odisha concurs that kingly sovereignty in early modern Odisha was shared.²³ By the time the Marathas gained control over Odisha from the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century, the area was ruled by a two-tier political system consisting of the ritually central Gajapati state of Khurda, which controlled the Jaganath Temple at Puri and the, feudatory hill states or Garjat kingdoms of the Eastern Ghats. With the Marathas gaining control, the political power of the Gajapati king waned and the Garjat kingdoms became increasingly independent. These precursors of the British princely states managed to maintain a fragile sovereignty over their fiefdoms through a complex ritual economy of rule that involved the Jaganath Temple through the Puri Gajapati rulers of Khurda, the princes and the local adivasi populations of the feudatory states.²⁴

Akio Tanabe has argued that the impact of growing market forces of the early modern period coupled with the rise of *vaishnava* Bhakti in Khurda produced a system of entitlements that resulted in the deepening of the state's reach into the local economy and society through a sharing of sovereignty between the king and the locality.²⁵ This deepening of state control was unlike that of the modern state as it did not involve the intervention of a centralized bureaucracy and military power in the locality. Rather, what made this balance of power possible was the popular commitment to elements of Vaishnav Bhakti, particularly *Karma Bhakti*, which linked day-to-day service in the locality with service to the king as

²¹ Arthur Anthony Macdonell, *A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary with Transliteration, Accentuation, and Etymological Analysis Throughout* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929). <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/romadict.pl?page=100&table=macdonell&display=simple>

²² The term praja is discussed by a colonial official, D. F. Carmichael, as he attempted to understand the roots of the name *paraja* (this is the name of a tribe in southern Odisha). Carmichael argued that *paraja* drew from the Sanskrit praja and denoted a “class of *ryots*” or “commoners.” Raphael Rousseleau has argued that the meaning is more specific —“subjects or clients” to the “patron king.” Furthermore, these subjects are peasant subjects as opposed to residents of the city. See Raphael Rousseleau, “The King’s Elder Brother: Forest King and the ‘Political Imagination’ in Southern Orissa”, *Rivista Di Studi Sudasiatici* 4 (2009), 39–62.

²³ See Georg Berkemer, and Margret Frenz, *Sharing Sovereignty: The Little Kingdom in South Asia* (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 2003).

²⁴ By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were twenty-six Odia-speaking princely states. See Chakrapani Pradhan and Niranjana Pattnaik, *The Odia Movement; Being a Demand for a United Orissa by Two Bachelors of Arts* (Aska: H. H. Panda, 1919), p. 75.

²⁵ Akio Tanabe, “Early Modernity and Colonial Transformation: Rethinking the Role of the King in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Odisha, India”, in Masaaki Kimura and Akio Tanabe (eds.), *The State In India: Past and Present* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 203–28.

service to the divine. The ritualization of kingship in early modern Odisha was essential to the day-to-day secular functioning of the state at the center as well as the periphery. This ritualization of kingship became even more complex in the feudatory states that have traditionally struggled to maintain control by balancing sovereignty between Puri, themselves, and the adivasi communities under their rule.²⁶ The feudatory princes maintained their control over adivasi communities either by claiming lineage from important tribal deities²⁷ or by appropriating the worship of tribal deities and situating such local worship in an economy of piety that involved Jaganath in Puri, other Hindu deities, and tribal deities.²⁸ At stake in this inclusion was a politics of conciliation that allowed Hindu rulers who were outsiders in the Gadajat areas to legitimize their rule. In some cases, adivasi legitimization had been incorporated into rituals of consecration. For instance, even in the mid-nineteenth century, royal succession in the princely state of Keonjhar had to be ratified, at least ritually, by leaders of the Bhuiyan community. The adivasi rebellion in 1868 in the Keonjhar princely state took place because a new successor had been announced without the approval of the Buiyan leaders. All this suggests that, in the day-to-day operation of state, sovereignty and the distinction between the religious and the political was often blurred. Sovereignty did not simply reside in the singular body of the king. Rather, the raja maintained his kingship through delicate networks of shared power and subjecthood.

However, Bhanja's oversimplification of systems of sovereignty was itself a product of colonial intervention into native kingship and religious structures. Bhanja's narrow notion of rajaniti as kingly ethics of rule was as much a product of Odia traditions of kingship as it was a consequence of the invention of Indian tradition due to the introduction of indirect rule by the postmutiny colonial state. As the policy of indirect rule of Indian princely states was introduced after the mutiny of 1857, the colonial state decided to minimize its intervention in to what it saw as "native political and social order."²⁹ The politics of indirect rule was based on a protectionist approach

²⁶ Traditionally, since the sixth century, the feudatory states were constituted by the establishment of foreign upper caste authority on the hinterlands. Often the origins of the ruling dynasty could be traced back to tribal origins but sovereignty was maintained through the establishment of Brahmanical authority on these areas. See Yaaminey Mubayi, *Altar of Power: The Temple and the State in the Land of Jaganath* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), pp. 35–77.

²⁷ Rousseleau, "The King's Elder Brother", pp. 39–62.

²⁸ Burkhard Schnepel, "Durga and the King: Ethnohistorical Aspects of Politico-Ritual Life in a South Odishan Jungle Kingdom", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 1, no. 1. (1995), pp. 145–66.

²⁹ For a discussion of the transition from the early liberalism of the East India Company to postmutiny traditionalism in the ideology of the colonial state, see Karuna Mantena,

to “traditional” Indian political systems where Indian custom and tradition determined colonial interaction with princely states and other native political structures. While this was accompanied by essentialized notions of Indian rural life, it also produced efforts to define Indian customs of rule.

In Odisha, this resulted in two crucial moves by the colonial state. First, the princely states were notionally turned into states of exception with partial sovereignty over their domain and little intervention from the administrators of British Odisha. Second, it also resulted in the separation of the Puri Temple as well as the Gajapati King of Khurda from political power.³⁰ Divine kingship became iconic rather than actual and was consigned to the private–religious experience of Odia Hindus while the political realm came to be inhabited exclusively by the British administrators and the native princes. No longer subjects of a religiopolitical hierarchy based on secular service to the divine, the Odia praja of the princely states as well as of British Odisha became private individuals with no access to the realm of the State.

Bhanja’s statement that rajaniti consisted of governmental maintenance of law and order drew on this invention of tradition and was a direct product of the colonial state’s policy towards the princely states of Odisha. In 1814, shortly after their conquest of Odisha, the colonial concerns about the administration of Princely states were guided by a liberal discomfort with princely misrule. To ensure the imperial mandate for good rule, a British official was appointed to each state who “unfettered by any precise rules might serve as a useful check on their conduct, and by obtaining a more accurate knowledge of the state of the country lay the foundations of an improved system of administration in the places in question.”³¹ This interventionist attitude was considerably qualified by the late nineteenth century, when the British government granted new *sanads* to the Princely states to clarify the relationship between them. In a 1875 memorandum laying out the relationship between the British government and the princely states, we see that the remit of the British official posted in a princely state remained fairly wide but the status of the prince as the ruler came to be more rigorously protected. For instance, on the question of whether subjects of the princely states could sue their rulers, the memorandum was explicit that this should not be allowed as it would put the princes and their subjects on equal footing legally. According to the memoranda such a move ran

Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

³⁰ See Mubayi, *Altar of Power*.

³¹ Extract of Judicial Letter from Bengal, dated November 29, 1814, in India Office Records, Board’s Collections F/4/494/11899.

counter to “the theory on which the sanads were based, namely, that he is the ruler of the state.”³² As the “chief is (within his powers) supreme,” his authority “from the point of view of the subjects” should be “maintained intact.”³³ The only caveat to this authority was the maintenance of just rule. To this end, the memorandum noted: “In maintaining in this way the dignity of the chief the principle must be recognized that the chief’s dignity and privileges were dependent on this just, impartial and right administration of his state.”

The resonances between these colonial stipulations of the rights and duties of the king and Bhanja’s definition of rajaniti, the function of the raja and rights of the praja are clear. When Bhanja defined the limits of the Sammillani’s activities he was drawing from his own experience of kingship and its remit.³⁴ However, not only is his definition a very simplified version of Odia traditions of kingship, it did not account for contemporary discussions on sovereignty taking place outside colonial circles. For instance, we see that just a few years before Bhanja’s speech, in 1897–98, articles on the meaning of rajaniti appeared in the *Utkal Sahitya* journal. In an essay titled “Rajaniti,” Sadhucharan Rai unthreaded the relationship between raja and praja and, in this unthreading, endowed upon the praja a more modern characteristic of individual sovereignty.³⁵ Rai’s

³² A memorandum prepared in 1875, embodying a general sketch of the relations of the British government with the tributary mahals of Odisha, India Office Records R/2/286/8, p. 4.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁴ Bhanja Deo was the raja of the princely state of Mayurbhanj. The colonial career of this princely state as it transformed from a problem kingdom to a model one from the early to late nineteenth century illustrates the impact of colonialism on princely Odisha. Early nineteenth-century government reports commenting on mismanagement and exploitation of subjects illustrate that Mayurbhanj served as an important site for colonial intervention. However, by the late nineteenth century, we see that Mayurbhanj came to serve as important site for Odia literary and cultural activism, the state of Mayurbhanj was poised as a “model” kingdom complete with a monarchical constitutions, printing press, weekly newspapers, schools, and public works. See Ramaprasad Chanda, *Selections from Official Letters and Records Relating to the History of Mayurbhanj* (London: British Library, India Office Records, Board’s Collections, IOR/F/4/494/11900, 1942). (Selected by Mr. Chanda. Synopsis prepared by Dr. Achyuta Kumar Mitra.) State Council (MAYURBHANJ), 1896. Regulations of the Mourbhanj State Council. [Compiled by Mohinimohana Dhara.] (Calcutta: Caledonian Steam Printing Works). “Oppressive and Violent Conduct by Several of the Rulers of the Orissa Tributary Mahals – Allegations against the Rajas of Mayurbhanj and Dhenkanal, etc., Vol. 2” (London: British Library, India Office Records, Board’s Collections IOR/F/4/494/11900). Hence, when, at the turn of the twentieth century, the king of this kingdom describes rajaniti as ethics of rule and the praja as private individuals with access to the realm of the state, he was representing what was presented to him as the rites of good rule.

³⁵ Sadhucharan Rai, “Rajaniti”, *Utkal Sahitya* 1, no. 8 (1897): 193. Rai wrote regularly for the *Utkal Sahitya* in the early decades of the twentieth century. Not much is known about the particulars of his life because the journal did not introduce its contributors to its readers.

formulation oscillated between a monarchical model and a model of politics resting on the balance between the sovereignty of the raja and that of the praja.

Building upon the notion of praja as progeny rather than subject, he suggested that rajaniti was based on a homology between the sovereign/subject relationship and familial relationships.³⁶ This formulation of rajaniti as management of family fits well into the Sammillani's understanding of rajaniti as governance. Rai wrote: "Raja is father, raja is mother, raja is brother, raja is teacher, and he is your closest friend."³⁷ He postulated that while the raja, like a father, could exercise his powers to discipline the praja, he should never abuse his powers. Furthermore, just as the mother comforted the child when he was punished, the raja, too, should protect the praja from excessive punishment.³⁸ By enacting various familial and social relationships, the raja had to ensure that peace, brotherhood, and freedom among the praja was maintained. The raja here was more than just a figure of order, he was also a figure of conscience.

In this context, while the praja/subject depended on the raja for familial and social support, raja also required the support of the praja. In another essay entitled "Rajashakti O Prajashakti," Rai expanded on this interdependence between the raja and praja based on an economy of *rajashakti* (power of the raja) and *prajashakti* (power of the praja).³⁹ Prajashakti, according to Rai, was the sum of all power that resides in all human beings. Rajashakti was the amalgam of all prajashakti. In an ideal situation, rajashakti and prajashakti would balance one another. A decrease in rajashakti could result in a people's revolution. An increase in prajashakti could lead to the establishment of democracy or *prajatantra*.

It could be inferred from Rai's discussion that neither revolution nor democracy was the ideal condition. In the ideal condition, the praja would be content with the regime of the raja. However, Rai's formulation of an ideal situation did account for the individual agency of the praja. He held that "every praja was a miniature raja." Thus, Rai argued, as long as the raja recognized this individual sovereignty, his sovereignty would remain unmolested. Clearly, for Rai the raja/praja relationship was based on a balance between individual sovereignty and the sovereignty of the ruler.

Two things should be noted about the "praja" in Rai's discussion. First, the praja here was understood as a subject under the protection of the raja.

³⁶ By subject in this case, I mean subject to the sovereign, As such, this understanding of subject is not the same as the subject as a being with consciousness and the ability to act.

This is not to say that the subject-as-subject-to-sovereign is devoid of consciousness or action. Rather, that his/her very ability to act is limited by the terms of his/her subjection.

³⁷ Rai, "Rajaniti", 193. ³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Sadhucharan Rai, "Rajashakti O Prajashakti", *Utkal Sahitya* 1, no. 10 (1897).

By implicating the praja in a filial relationship with the raja, Rai invoked a traditional monarchical understanding of subjecthood where the praja's relationship with the state placed definite limits on his/her individual sovereignty; just as a child is free and self-determining only to the extent that the parent deems it fit. Paradoxically, and this is the second thing to be noted about Rai's praja: the praja also has individual sovereignty that is of fundamental importance to the stability of the raja/praja relationship and even rajaniti itself. When Rai argued that the each praja was a "small raja," the praja appeared in a completely different light. The argument that the raja/praja relationship depends on the balance between the sovereignty of the praja and that of the raja undermined the unquestionable control of the raja over the praja's destiny implied in the earlier idea of subjecthood. Even though this allusion to individual sovereignty does not invoke democracy, or at least the praja's participation in political activities, it opens the door to such possibilities. That is, the logic of individual sovereignty of the praja would ultimately lead to democracy or prajatantra. It is this ultimate possibility that Rai recoiled from when he wrote that in the ideal condition there should be neither rebellion nor democracy.

In both Bhanja's and Rai's framework, the praja's participation in governance remained suspect even as it repeatedly emerged as a possibility. It is in the limited case of their argument—the idea of rebellion—that this reluctance to envisage a politics of the praja emerges most clearly. Bhanja justifies the avoidance of politics within the Sammillani by arguing that good governance by the new English rajas makes the intervention of the praja into the affairs of state unnecessary. With this elaboration of the merits of the English raja, Bhanja Deo slips back into the language of the monarchical state in which the praja could only be a subject. For instance, he defined bad governance as rule where "the Rajas are selfish, and exploit their praja or are unable to protect their life and property."⁴⁰ Bhanja Deo used instances from the Odia past, such as the period of Muslim and Maratha rule, to illustrate bad governance. By juxtaposing the establishment of rule of law and social stability during the British rule of Odisha, against his view of the political, social, and economic chaos of the Muslim and Maratha rule over Odisha, Bhanja Deo situated colonial rule within the matrix of existing political networks.⁴¹ The British colonial government could be seen as just another player in an already existing hierarchical political field and not necessarily an alien or colonial force. As rajaniti was defined as the ethics of governance, the changing identity of the ruler did not affect the concept of the political. Thus, this ambivalence about the identity of the ruler in

⁴⁰ Ibid, 65. ⁴¹ Ibid, 66.

Bhanja Deo's definition of *rajaniti* allowed the leadership of the Utkal Sammillani to accommodate colonial rule in an existing political matrix.

Bhanja Deo's attempt to avoid politics by arguing that the British are good *rajas*, involves a double move that subverts the very purpose that it attempts to accomplish. On the one hand, there is an attempt to see the British as just another *raja*. On the other hand, in insisting that the *praja* stay out of politics, he uses a novel argument: that the *praja* can stay out of the political sphere because the government is being run properly. It is the converse of this statement that threatens to subvert his effort to foreclose on popular politics. The converse of his argument is that the *praja* need not stay out if the government is *not* running properly. By arguing that as long as the *raja* was fulfilling his responsibilities, the *praja* can abstain from politics, Bhanja Deo was providing for a possibility that a situation may arise when the *praja* could be a political actor. Thus, even as he asserted the older notion of *raja* and *rajaniti*, he smuggled in new notions of rule despite himself.

After establishing the efficacy of British rule over Odisha, Bhanja Deo argued that since peace and stability had been instituted by the British, it was time to "repair the losses suffered by the country due to many centuries of misrule." This was the function of an organization like the Utkal Sammillani. He proclaimed that the primary aims of the Utkal Sammillani would be to provide a common platform for the Odia-speaking people living in different British provinces, to increase national wealth through supporting industrial growth, to promote the spread of education among the people, to support development of Odia language and literature, and to bring about social reform. Thus, the Utkal Sammillani was imagined as a social, economic, and cultural organization that represented all the Odia-speaking people.

In Bhanja Deo's explicit formulations, the constituency of the Utkal Sammillani was the Odia *praja* of the English *rajas*. The creation of the category of the Odia-speaking people as a distinct community was a necessary precondition for the institution of the Utkal Sammillani. As the last two chapters have illustrated, such an Odia public had already been imagined in the emergent but limited urban Odia public sphere and this imagined category carried within it the rudiments of a political community. The Odia *praja* that the Sammillani represented was already marked by a shared culture and language. This community based on language and culture was very different from Bhanja's formulation of a *raja*–*praja* relationship where all that defined the *praja* was that it was the subject. Here, ironically, the *praja* was more than a subject. The *praja*, while being bound together as a community by its subjection to colonial rule, was also interconnected by a preexisting cultural movement.

By juxtaposing the Odia community and praja as subject, the Utkal Sammillani leadership redefined the “praja” as more than subject to a royal king. Praja now was marked by linguistic and cultural interests that were not within the governing responsibilities of the English raja. This community of interests bound the praja in connections that were not entirely mediated by the colonial state. Consequently, the very presence of Utkal Sammillani as a sociocultural organization outside the influence of the colonial state provided a possibility for the praja to explore his/her individual potential without limits posed by the colonial state. Furthermore, once the existence of such as praja was conceived, the possibility arose that this praja could practice a politics through a disagreement with the raja over questions of rule. This, in turn, could lead to a scenario where the praja could claim *as praja* some authority in the system of governance. It is this possibility that made Bhanja Deo anxious because by invoking the praja, the Sammillani was already laying claim to politics. Even though Bhanja Deo used the term praja to ensure that the constituency of the Utkal Sammillani remained apolitical and loyal to the colonial state, his very justification for the distancing of the praja from politics smuggled in the possibility of political activity by the praja.

A New Politics: Prajaniti for the Praja (1903–1918)

Even as the denial of politics in early Sammillani rhetoric raised the specter of a politics for the colonized in spite of its explicit efforts, the question of politics remained a highly contentious issue in the Odia public sphere. At every annual meeting of the organization, political activism was consistently disavowed.⁴² However, as the Swadeshi agitation against the partition of Bengal gained ground in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Sammillani’s apolitical stand became increasingly untenable. As the Swadeshi movement linked political opposition to colonial rule with economic self-sufficiency and boycott of British goods in the interest of fostering Indian industry, the Sammillani’s neat separation of the political and the socioeconomic threatened to break down. In this section, I will explore the public discussions surrounding the Sammillani’s disavowal of politics, the attempts by the leaders of the organization to resolve the ensuing crisis by proposing an alternative politics of the colonized called prajaniti and the eventual critique of the separation of the political and social that led to the fall of the organization.

In its initial years as a pan-Odia organization, the Sammillani’s decision to focus on the social and economic development of the community

⁴² Das, *Utkal Sammillani*, pp. 121, 135, 160.

without participating in political activity was celebrated by the Odia as well as Bengali press. In May 1904, an Odia newspaper carried an editorial in which the author congratulated the Odia leadership for pursuing “such a noble cause instead of clamouring in impotence for political privileges.”⁴³ This positive view of the Sammillani was strengthened by the efforts of the organization to deepen its reach into Odia-speaking areas in British Odisha as well as the princely states. By January 1905, little over a year after its establishment, the organization had 381 branches in Odia-speaking areas.⁴⁴ By the time the antipartition movement began in Bengal in 1905, the Sammillani was seen as the primary representative association of all Odia people. The 1908, the Swadeshi movement’s critique of colonial government threw the Sammillani’s apolitical stance into question. Newspaper reports reveal that, initially, Odia community organizations everywhere supported the Swadeshi movement. Even the Jaganath Temple chose to boycott foreign cloth and other goods in its ritual practices. The Puri branch of the Sammillani convinced the local marwari traders to carry locally produced goods.⁴⁵ However, in a few months, we see an increasing disaffection towards the antipartition movement in the Odia media. Loyalist newspapers, including the *Star of Utkal*, exhorted readers to distinguish between the antipartition movement and the Swadeshi movement. While the Swadeshi movement was “against the laws of political economy and would not survive for long,” the antipartition politics was a legitimate grievance of the “civilized Bengalis” who should be given the same consideration as the “kols,” the “Santhals” and the “negroes” by the British government.⁴⁶ In the more liberal newspapers, this attitude is reversed. For instance, the *Sambalpur Hiteisimi* argued that the Odias should support the Swadeshi movement but avoid the antipartition aspect of the movement because Odia activism “should be positive and not anti-British.”⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the Sammillani leadership supported the boycott of foreign goods and campaigned for it in various places. However, by 1908, we see a stark change in the

⁴³ *Udia O Navasambada*, May 4, 1904, in Bengal (India). “Report on Native Papers in Bengal for the Week Ending 8th May 1904” (Calcutta: Bengali Translator’s Office, 1904).

⁴⁴ *Udia O Navasambada*, January 25, 1904, in Bengal (India). “Report on Native Papers in Bengal for the Week Ending 30th January 1905” (Calcutta: Bengali Translator’s Office, 1905).

⁴⁵ *Utkal Dipika*, October 8, 1904, in Bengal (India). “Report on Native Papers in Bengal for the Week Ending 2nd November 1904” (Calcutta: Bengali Translator’s Office, 1904).

⁴⁶ September 9, 1905, in Bengal (India), “Report on Native Papers in Bengal for the Week Ending 5th October 1905” (Calcutta: Bengali Translator’s Office, 1905).

⁴⁷ *Sambalpur Hiteisimi*, February 10, 1906, in Bengal (India), “Report on Native Papers in Bengal for the Week Ending 27th February 1906” (Calcutta: Bengali Translator’s Office, 1905).

organization's attitude towards the movement. As mentioned earlier, the most ubiquitous feature of the movement, the nationalist song – *Vande Mataram* – was banned from the Sammillani platform. This move opened the leadership of the organization to criticism as they were called a “handful of sycophants” who had shown no solidarity with the Indian National Congress.⁴⁸ The liberal leadership of the organization, headed by Madhusudan Das, responded by arguing that political reform should be gained by “moral not physical force.”⁴⁹

While the banning of *Vande Mataram* caused controversy, the Odisha famine of 1908 coupled with the government's plans to conduct survey exercises for revenue settlement at a time of scarcity forced the organization into an untenable position. Newspapers of both loyalist and liberal bend such as *Nilachal Samachar*, *Sambada Vahika*, *Gadajat Basini*, and *Utkal Dipika* exhorted the Sammillani to “show their practical usefulness as a representative organization by doing something substantial to relieve the distress in Odisha.”⁵⁰ These arguments were often linked with an economic critique of colonial rule.⁵¹ Within the context of the antipartition Swadeshi movement that conflated economic concerns with radical anticolonial politics, it became impossible for the Sammillani to pose demands for economic support while still sustaining its apolitical stance.

This conundrum led the founding member of the Sammillani, Madhusudan Das, to propose an alternative politics that would enable the Odia people to ask for economic rights without demanding political rights. Madhusudan Das (1848–1934) was one of the most influential figures in the Odia public sphere of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Educated as a lawyer in Calcutta, he served as the Odia translator to the government of India, a member of the legislative council, as member of the Odisha Association (established 1882) and a founding member of the Utkal Sammillani. Das rose to fame early in his career when he successfully represented the Queen of Puri in her lawsuit

⁴⁸ Acharya, *National Movement*, pp. 33–4.

⁴⁹ *Utkal Dipika*, January 18, 1908, in Bengal (India), “Report on Native Papers in Bengal for the Week Ending 22nd February 1908” (Calcutta: Bengali Translator's Office, 1908).

⁵⁰ *Gadajat Basini*, February 8, 1908, in Bengal (India), “Report on Native Papers in Bengal for the Week Ending 21st March 1908” (Calcutta: Bengali Translator's Office, 1908).

⁵¹ For instance, *Sambad Vahika* noted that “notwithstanding the many blessings which the British rule in India have conferred on the Indians, they are growing poorer day by day, their resources are being more and more exhausted and they are falling victims to malaria, cholera, famine and plague, which are decimating people by the thousands. The Indian has to pay a heavy tax which leaves nothing for him to eat. Indigenous industries have been destroyed by foreign competition while famine has become chronic.” *Sambad Vahika*, February 20, 1908, in Bengal (India), “Report on Native Papers in Bengal for the Week Ending 21st March 1908” (Calcutta: Bengali Translator's Office, 1908).

opposing the implementation of the Puri Temple Act of 1880. He dominated the Utkal Sammillani platform for most of the organization's active life.

In his essay, "Utkal Sammillani", published in the *Utkal Sahitya* journal in 1908, Das argued that politics was not necessary for the development of the community because:

What would a conquered *jati* achieve by discussing rajaniti? ... Why will the conquerors listen to us if, as has been noticed elsewhere, we go around critiquing them?⁵²

Implicit here is an echo of Bhanja Deo's argument that the praja have no say in the realm of governance. However, while Bhanja Deo had suggested that the British were just another ruler in a long list of rulers, Das' use of the term "conquered" gestures at a departure from the Sammillani's notion of rajaniti as an economy of rule between the raja and the praja. This recognition that British rule was not simply any rule but a colonial rule also changed the nature of praja – not simply praja but a colonized praja. However, despite this nod to contemporary critiques of colonial rule in Odisha and elsewhere, Das' subsequent discussion shies away from any radical anticolonial propositions.

He conceded to the critics of the Sammillani that the exclusion of politics limited the organization's effectiveness. By breaking down the community's development or *unnati* into the *unnati* of *dharma* (ethical goodness), *moksha* (spiritual transcendence), *kama* (pleasure) and *artha* (wealth and power), Das argued that the exclusion of religious and political discussion resulted in an inability to develop fully on any of these registers. This reference to the four *purushrathas* is revealing. In classical Indian political tradition, the objective of the science of politics or *Danda niti* was to "create the cultural conditions necessary for the pursuit of the four great ends of life: the *purushrathas*."⁵³ By invoking this, Das effectively marked the parameters of his intervention as squarely within the science of politics. This again is a departure from the early Sammillani discussion. While Bhanja Deo's definition of rajaniti as ethics of rule effectively precluded any discussion of politics, thinking about the science of politics and the attainment of *purushrathas* opened the door to alternative definitions of rajaniti. In his pursuit of the four *purusharthas*, Das suggested that the Sammillani should allow for a partial inclusion of politics. He defined this partial politics as follows:

⁵² M. S. Das, "Utkal Sammillani", *Utkal Sahitya* 11, no. 3 (1908): 63.

⁵³ Anthony J. Parel, "Gandhi and the Emergence of the Modern Indian Political Canon", *Review of Politics* 70 (2008): 41.

Praising and pointing out our problems rather than critiquing is our need of the hour . . . Such praxis is part of Rajaniti and it would be more appropriate to call it Prajaniti. The Sammillani often neglects this prajaniti because it confuses prajaniti with rajaniti.⁵⁴

This prajaniti belonged to an entirely different sphere of activity than that of rajaniti. Das argued that it was crucial for the interest of the raja as well as the praja to make this distinction clear and avoid any encroachment of one on the other. Not simply limited to praising the government, the rest of Das' essay laid out a manifesto for a praxis of prajaniti. This praxis was centered on community education. According to Das, the Sammillani had to identify and educate the Odia people about:

What self-interest is not at odds with the community's interest and that, whatever is against the interests of the community is not in the interest of the individual. *We should identify the tasks that are in the interest of this province of India, but not against the interests of India and how are they to be achieved. In the present condition which of these tasks can be counted among our commonly held desires and which of these is it within our powers to achieve. Basically, what is the identity and responsibility of every individual, every family, every village and the whole Odia province?*⁵⁵ (emphasis added)

Thus the function of the Sammillani, according to Das, was to educate the Odia people in the ethics of communal life. The Sammillani had to identify and balance the interests of the individual, Odia community, and the Indian nation. In balancing these interests, Das posed a *regional* politics that was informed by both local and national concerns.

In this economy of interests, Das ascribed to the Sammillani a conceptual task. The actual task of development of the Odia condition, such as the establishment of schools, local hospitals, or cooperative banks was to be carried out by the rural organizations or *Gramya Samitis* set up by the Utkal Sammillani. The Sammillani itself was to clarify conceptual issues about community building and ensure that the Gramya Samitis acted in accordance with the interests of the Odia region and the Indian nation. Since Das argued that the activity of the Utkal Sammillani as well as that of the Gramya Samitis was prajaniti, two types of praja emerge here. The Utkal Sammillani as praja ascribed to itself the position of the vanguard while the Gramya Samitis as praja were to be instructed by this vanguard in the rites of citizenship.

In Das' rejection and refiguration of Rajaniti, the stakes of rajaniti emerged clearly. In accommodating critiques of the Utkal Sammillani's political standing while maintaining the Sammillani's distance from politics, Das' formulation of a politics of the colonized praja proposed

⁵⁴ Das, p. 63. ⁵⁵ Das, *Utkal Sammillani*, p. 65.

a number of radical shifts in the understanding of subjecthood. While arguing the separation of the *praja* from *rajaniti* be maintained, his invocation of *purusharthas* as development towards the four crucial ends of life and insistence on education as the centre of community activism suggests a fundamentally liberal understanding of subjecthood – liberal but Indian. This avowal of partial citizenship and politics despite profound discomfort with the idea of popular politics was due to Das' realization that acting in the interests of a community essentially involved political activity. What Das failed to address is how the Odia community could be emancipated without opposition to the colonial state whose interests did not coincide with that of the Odia community.

This question of the opposition between the interests of the colonial state and that of the colonized animated the activism of younger members of the *Sammillani*. For instance, in an essay entitled “*Samaja Sanskara o Rajaniti*”, an anonymous author argued that “a community's politics influences and constitutes its social life in as much as it is influenced and constituted by the community's social life.”⁵⁶ From 1908 onwards, the primary critics of the *Sammillani* were members of student organizations like *Bharati Mandir* and the younger members of the *Sammillani* itself. Young students and lawyers such as *Gopabandhu Das*, *Harekrushna Mahtab*, *Nabakrushna Chaoudhury*, *Nilakantha Das*, *Godavarish Mishra*, *Lakshminarayan Sahu*, and *Jagabandhu Singh* disagreed with the *Sammillani*'s positive attitude towards the colonial state. Over the next two decades, many of these men came to play a significant role in anticolonial politics in Odisha. Prominent among the opponents of the *Utkal Sammillani* were *Gopabandhu Das*, *Nilakantha Das*, *Godavarish Mishra*, *Krupasindhu Mishra*, and *Harihara Mishra*. Together they came to be called the *Satyabadi* group named after the *Satyabadi School* set up by *Gopabandhu Das* in 1909. This school came to symbolize anticolonial nationalism in Odisha. Through their educational activities, the *Satyabadi* group was engaged in social reform projects that exposed them to the day-to-day realities of the common Odia people. The politics of the *Satyabadi* group emerged from an understanding of the people as oppressed and disenfranchised under colonial rule. The *Utkal Sammillani*'s formulation of “*praja*” as passive receptors of good governance did not speak to the ground realities as witnessed by the *Satyabadi* group.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Anonymous, “*Samaja Sanskara O Rajaniti*”, *Utkal Sahitya* 11, no. 4 (1908), 14.

⁵⁷ For more details, see *Nivedita Mohanty, Odia Nationalism: Quest for a United Odisha, 1866–1936*, pp. 85–93.

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, two perspectives on political participation by the colonized circulated in Odisha. In arguments for the Sammillani's apolitical stance we see that any participation in politics is seen as "impotent" and sometimes as a self-indulgent, elite pastime.⁵⁸ In arguments against the Sammillani's stance, politics is seen as essential to the amelioration of economic problems that plagued common Odias. As such antipolitical arguments saw the practice of politics as a betrayal of popular interests that could only be served by an elite alliance with the colonial state. In contrast, propolitical arguments during the Swadeshi movement held that without political rights for the colonized, popular economic interests could never be met.⁵⁹ Despite this opposition, both sides shared a common understanding that proper politics was possible only if the colonized shared equal political rights as the colonizers. Therefore, political agitation was impotent because the Odias were not on a par with the British. And yet, it was necessary precisely because equal political rights had to be gained by the colonized. In this framework, the leaders of the Sammillani as well as the emerging radical leadership had to engage with the conflict between regional and national interests. Much like other minority politics, regional agendas worked on a principle of colonial appeasement and a need to seek state protection against more dominant national interests. Both these concerns, about the lack of political sovereignty and the anxiety about balancing the interests of the region and the nation, became much more significant with the introduction of a wider franchise in 1918 through the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms.

A Magna Carta for India: Constitutional Reforms of 1918–19 and the Emergence of Liberal Citizenship in India

The introduction of a wider franchise in 1918 precipitated a rethinking of the relationship between the ruler and ruled in India. It also resulted in what I would call the "regionalization" of Indian national politics. The system of diarchy instituted by the Government of India Act of 1919 involved the introduction of wider elections, which established a system

⁵⁸ For instance, in a 1914 article published in the weekly *Asha*, the editor noted: "But if educated men sit down and simply make a spectral analysis of politics then they will be possessed by the devilish politics ever more." In Unknown, "Politics and the Uriyas", *Asha*, March 13, 1914.

⁵⁹ See for instance, Anonymous, "Bharatare Rajanitik Andolana", *Utkal Sahitya* 9, no. 3 (1905). Invoking the examples of Britain, Germany, and Japan, the author argued that these nations are advanced because: "Rajashakti was allied with the prajashakti." In India, on the contrary, the British raja's interests were diametrically opposed to those of the praja.

of dual governmental responsibility between a popularly elected provincial government and the central government under the Governor General of India. The need to demarcate constituencies and assign representation to various elements of Indian society required the colonial government to take regional public opinion into account. Consequently, the reforms involved a systematic accounting of linguistic communities in India and language became one of the most important factors in determining representation in future elections. As regional identity movements had come to be based on language by the early twentieth century, the idea of Indian franchise and representation came to be informed by a system of classification that was based on linguistic regions.

With the emergence of a more popular franchise and increased awareness of the need for a broader popular base in both regional and national organizations, the colonial government, Indian National Congress, and the Utkal Sammillani had to conceptualize subaltern political participation. The argument here is about neither elite politics nor subaltern politics. Rather, it is an attempt to elaborate on the way in which the elite thought about the absorption of the non-elite into the realm of the political. Appealing to regional linguistic interests and using regional languages in all-India nationalist political praxis was the most effective means of enabling a broader base for both the regional and national political organizations. Hence, I argue that this need to create a political community that would reach beyond the elite produced the paradoxical concept of the Indian citizen who was marked by particular regional linguistic identities.

The emergence of colonial citizenship required a reformulation of the notion of *rule* or *rajya* in colonial India, which would make way for the participation of Indian subjects in British reign in matters of government. Thus, this section traces changes in the understanding of “rule” or *rajya* through a reading of political discussions both within and outside Odisha that argued for a broadening of politics and the inclusion of the “masses” in political agitation in India. It is in this shift in the meaning of rule in 1918–1919 that the roots of the change in the attitude of the Utkal Sammillani’s politics lay.

In the years preceding the 1918 reforms, Indian leadership as well as the colonial government in India became increasingly entangled in the ongoing global move towards self-determination. The growing emphasis on the “consent of the governed” in the Wilsonian moment in world politics coupled with the commitments made by the colonial government to the Indian leadership in return for native support in the Great War compelled the British government to “endow India . . . with the largest measure of self-government compatible with the maintenance of the

supremacy of British rule.”⁶⁰ In their response to Wilson’s arguments for self-determination of races, the Indian political leadership came to deploy Wilson and his speeches as a propaganda tool against the colonial government. For instance, shortly before her arrest for sedition in 1917, Annie Besant distributed copies of Wilson’s war message in aid of the Indian Home Rule movement.⁶¹ The impact of World War I on Indian politics also produced profound changes in the attitude of the Indian leadership. Their excitement about Indian participation in the war effort as a means to achieve parity of citizenship with European British subjects as well as the rapid growth of Indian manufacturing to make up for British goods that had disappeared from local markets encouraged a reappraisal of the relationship between the British and their Indian subjects. In 1916, the Indian Home Rule league led by Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak elaborated a detailed argument for self-governance that fell just shy of a demand for complete independence.

Tilak’s home rule speeches from 1916 to 1918 reveal how the demand for home rule was founded on a careful reinterpretation of *rajya* or rule as it shifted away from the domain of the *raja* and was transformed into a category tenuously linked to popular will. By translating home rule as *swarajya*, Tilak argued that, rather than demanding the removal of British sovereignty, the demand for *swaraj* was seeking to achieve the right of Indians to govern their *home*.⁶² Taking care not to argue against the continuance of colonial rule, Tilak suggested that *swarajya* entailed a qualified idea of self-rule. Hence, even though the utterance of *swarajya* invokes the existence of “some kind of rule opposed to *swa*, i.e. our,” this opposition is not necessarily about the alienness of the ruler’s race.⁶³ That is, he argued elsewhere, the contemporary government of India was not alien because it was British but because the British colonial government did not do its duty as King:

The King’s duty is to do all things whereby the nation may become eminent, be benefited, rise and become the equal of other nations. That King who does this duty is not alien. He is to be considered alien, who does not do this duty, but looks

⁶⁰ This language was included in a proposal introduced in the Executive Council of the Colonial government in 1916. Richard Danzing, “The Announcement of August 20th, 1917”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 28, no. 1 (1968), 20.

⁶¹ Erez Manela, *Wilsonian Moment: Self Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 78.

⁶² By invoking “home” as self (the *swa* of *swarajya*), Tilak also invoked the “world.” As Partha Chatterjee has established, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’ Indian political and social rhetoric made use of the tropes of home and the world to establish boundaries between the domain of activity of the Indian people and that of the British government.

⁶³ B. G. Tilak, *Lok Tilak’s Speeches on Home Rule* (Banares: Yoda Press, 1917), p. 3.

only to his own benefit, to the benefit of his own race and to the benefit of his own country.⁶⁴

By avoiding the question of the alienness of British rule, Tilak posed an idea of self-rule that was divorced from any implication of nativist Indian sovereignty. To underline this separation, he punctuated the rest of his speech with the refrain “the question of swarajya is not about the emperor.” Swarajya was not about the emperor because the emperor represented an “invisible sentiment” that was different from the “visible administrative arm of the state.”⁶⁵ As such, demanding swarajya by questioning the right of the visible administration to “manage” India was not sedition or *rajyadroha*. In the era of swarajya, he argued:

The Emperor still remains. The difference would be that the white servant who was with him would be replaced by a black servant. [Cheers] From whom then does this opposition come from? This opposition comes from those people who are in power. It does not come from the Emperor. From the Emperor’s point of view there is neither anarchy nor want of loyalty, no sedition in this. *What does Rajadropa (sedition) mean? Hatred of the King. Does the King mean a police sepoy? . . . you will see that the demand made by us is right, proper, just and comfortable to human nature.*⁶⁶

While it can be argued that Tilak’s care to illustrate that the demand for swarajya was not sedition was a strategic move to avoid prosecution by the colonial government and to assure his listeners that their support of the movement could not be seditious. By arguing that the demand for swarajya was proper to human nature, Tilak envisioned an Indian subject who was not only entitled to express dissent but this expression was essential to proper rule. This was clearly a radical departure from existing loyalist perspectives on popular dissent like those prevailing in elite organizations in Odisha where any opposition to the colonial state was seen as an illicit encroachment into the realm of the political.

This changing relationship between the subject and the sovereign in British India was also a major concern for the planners of the constitutional reforms of 1918–1919. The Montague Declaration of August 1917 proclaimed the intention of the government to work towards “the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British empire.”⁶⁷ The reforms of 1919 were the enactment of

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 6. ⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 4. ⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 21.

⁶⁷ Great Britain India Office and India Governor-General (1916–1921: Chelmsford), *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* (Calcutta: Superintendent’s Government Printing, 1918).

this governmental policy to institute responsible government based on popular elections. In keeping with the spirit of the declaration, the reforms introduced two major changes to the existing form of government in India. First, the reforms introduced the idea of direct election that was based on limited popular franchise. Hitherto, a system of indirect elections was used to enable Indian representatives to be members of the Indian Legislative Council and the Provincial Legislative councils based on a very narrow franchise.⁶⁸ Second, a system of diarchy where the responsibility for the governance of British India was shared between a partially elected central government and the provincial government was introduced. The Southborough committee set up to investigate the eligibility criteria for franchise and categorization of the Indian electorate into constituencies suggested that franchise be based on territorial constituencies within each province. This provincial and territorial classification of the new Indian electorate created a new citizen who was not simply a potential voter but who was also a subject marked by regional or provincial identity.

The report on the Indian constitutional reforms suggests that the drafters of the reforms were chiefly concerned with the need to educate the rural Indian masses in a “sense of citizenship” as the proposed changes threatened to cause “the most radical revolution in the people’s traditional ideas in India.”⁶⁹ The report noted that unlike in the past, when the Indian peasant placed his “faith” in the government official to represent his interests, he now had to be much more actively involved in governance as he had the “power to compel” the attention of the person *he chose* as his representative.⁷⁰ Coupled with this language of radical

⁶⁸ The preexisting system of indirect elections is explained in the Report on Constitutional Reforms in a discussion about the limitations of the existing system. The report notes: “The chief of these are the very restricted nature of the present franchise, and except in the constituencies composed on the member of some special class or community, the lack of any real connection between the primary voter and the member who sits in the councils. In the Indian Legislative Council there are eighteen members who are elected to speak for sectional interests, and nine who may be said to represent, however remotely, the views of the people as a whole. So far as can be stated the largest constituency which returns a member directly to the Indian Legislative Council does not exceed 650 persons; and most of the constituencies are decidedly smaller. The constituencies which return the nine representatives of the people at large are composed of the nonofficial members of the various provincial legislative councils, and the average number of voters in these electoral bodies is only twenty two, while in one case the actual number is nine. In the case of the provincial councils themselves there is the same division of members between those who are directly elected to represent special interests and those who are elected indirectly as the representatives of the general population. For the latter the members of the municipal and local boards either acted as electors or chose electoral delegates to make the election; but in neither cases do the constituencies exceed a few hundred persons”, in *ibid.*, p. 53.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87. ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

change was a language of protection in relation to the Indian rural population. As the report discussed the political preparedness of the Indian population, concerns about the possible exploitation of the “Indian ryots” by “people who are stronger and cleverer than he is” served as ground for the colonial state to “retain power to protect him.”⁷¹ While these concerns about political unfitness and its associated dangers can rightly be read as a means to halt Indian progression towards complete self-governance, the report reveals (along with Tilak’s notion of *swarajya*) a moment of profound rupture in the way both the colonial officials and the Indian political elite read the relationship between the sovereign British government and its colonized Indian subjects.

This moment of rupture is particularly important because it was the beginning of one of the most enduring preoccupations of Indian nationalist as well as postcolonial politics – the politicization of the Indian masses. It is in this context that the use of the vernacular also became important in politics for both the colonial government that was trying to introduce representative government and the Indian political elite of the Indian National Congress that was trying to rouse the masses to join the struggle for self-determination. Later in the chapter, I will be illustrating how there was an increasing realization within the ranks of the Indian National Congress that a common national political agenda could not be propagated throughout India without recourse to vernacular languages. While English served as a *lingua franca* for the urban English educated elite of the Indian provinces, the majority of the Indian population used the local vernacular for public communication. As was illustrated in Chapter 2, the vernacular public sphere was fairly well developed by the 1920s and could effectively serve the interests of pan-Indian nationalism.

In Odisha, these shifts occasioned a break from the earlier avoidance of political discussion within the Utkal Sammillani. A special session of the Sammillani met in August 1918 with the express objective of critiquing the proposed constitutional reforms. As president of the session, Madhusudan Das made a speech on Odia objections to the proposed reforms. Even as he set out to critique the government, Das placed his discussion squarely within the earlier economy of rule between the British *raja* and the Odia *praja*, by posing the August 1917 Montagu declaration as an Indian *Magna Carta*. What distinguished the 1917 declaration from its medieval English predecessor was that while the latter was introduced by a king “who had no sympathy with the aspirations of the people,” the former was the “free gift of a constitutional monarch” to protect the “just

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

and legitimate rights of the people.”⁷² By framing the reforms as an Indian Magna Carta, Das was able to sustain an idea of sovereignty rooted in the British emperor and account for the emergence of a new kind of politics in India where the Indian people were laying stake on governance.

Das’ speech also reveals the impact of the reforms on the manner in which the political geography of India came to be envisioned in the subsequent years. Much of his speech was devoted to the implications of the suggestions for the reorganization of the provinces on linguistic grounds in the report on the constitutional reforms.⁷³ In discussing these suggestions, M. S. Das addressed the report’s concerns about the need to gradually politicize the rural Indian population by underlining the importance of linguistically homogenous provinces for the effective politicization of the people. He explicitly linked the question of redistribution of British Indian territories on linguistic lines with the reform objectives by connecting language with access to citizenship. While Das applauded the report’s allusion to the need for reorganization of provincial boundaries, he took issue with the implicit deferral of any actual state action to that end. In the rest of his speech he made a forceful argument for the reorganization of Indian provinces on linguistic lines based on the claim that the government’s efforts to institute political reforms would come to naught if provinces were not linguistically homogenous.

By introducing the idea of “intermediary ruling classes,” Das attempted to prove that in linguistically heterogeneous provinces such as Bihar and Odisha and the Bengal Presidency, the speakers of minority language were at a great disadvantage in the new atmosphere of representative government. Instead of introducing limited self-governance through the institution of provincial autonomy, the reforms would put in place an intermediary ruling class of Biharis and Bengali who were in a majority in the aforementioned provinces. As Odias were a minority in both provinces, they would be assigned a fewer number of representatives to both the Bihar and Odisha and Bengal provincial legislatures. This, in turn, would mean that the Odia would not have an equal say in matters of government and hence would not enjoy a true measure of self-rule. Das emphasized that this lack of self-rule for the Odias and the institution of “intermediary ruling classes” would both mar the “sisterhood of Indian states in the future” and jeopardize Odia loyalty to the British Empire.

National consciousness and self-esteem ought to develop into national pride and sustain the spirit of sacrifice. Realization of the responsibilities, which the new

⁷² Reprinted in Debendra Kumar Das, *Utkal Sammillani (1903–1936)*, p. 423.

⁷³ *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms*, pp. 148–9, 158–9.

atmosphere has given birth to, is an impossibility without the growth of the national consciousness. Allow a group of people to occupy the position of an intermediary ruling race and you store up trouble for the future from the dominant race and deprive the empire of loyal support from another race. Allow one race to exercise a dominant influence over another and you mar the glorious picture of a sister-hood of states in India of the future.⁷⁴

By entangling national consciousness, responsibility and the notion of intermediary ruling races, Das made a case for the recognition of Odias as a separate political constituency that could only have representation through the formation of a linguistically organized Odia province. This recognition, Das argued was crucial for the life of the Empire as well as that of the emerging Indian nation as a sisterhood of states. By stressing the link between language and access to self-rule, Das was arguing for the recognition of the regional nature of the emergent citizen in India. Hence, for both the framers of the constitutional reforms of 1918 and the Utkal Sammillani, the reforms were about the introduction of a new kind of relationship between the colonial state and the Indian people. Furthermore, this relationship was marked by an idea of a regional citizen based on a regional electoral constituency. This is particularly reflected in M. S. Das' formulation of "intermediary ruling races," which emphasized self-rule through a demarcation of distinct "racially" differentiated regions.

Speaking to the Heart of the People: Indian National Congress Policy on Regional Languages and Linguistic Politics

The introduction of constitutional reforms coincided with a shift in the policy of the Indian National Congress towards linguistic politics in India. At the national level, this acknowledgement of regional linguistic politics occasioned a reimagining of the Indian nation as a conglomeration of linguistically diverse regions. It was in this period (1918–1920) that the metonymic relationship between linguistically diverse regions and the unified Indian nation was established. This section will trace the prehistory of this moment and also illustrate how this new idea of the Indian nation enabled an elision of other more pressing registers of difference – particularly the Hindu/Muslim question. Two important themes will be dealt with in this section – the curious relationship between the Congress attitude towards language and the organization's engagement with the problem of Hindu/Muslim communalism and the realization within

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 433.

Congress that its objective of the politicization of the Indian masses was impossible without the use of vernacular languages.

Language became an important issue on the Congress platform in 1903 when the British government published plans to partition the massive Bengal Presidency into two halves. Bengali Muslims were a majority in the proposed East Bengal province and Bengali Hindus were a majority in the new western half. The proposals for the partition of Bengal led to the first mass-based public demonstrations against the policies of the colonial government – the Swadeshi movement of 1908. While the Swadeshi movement figures as a major landmark in the history of anticolonial nationalism in India, the partition of Bengal played a pivotal role in two other histories in early Indian nationalism – in the history of communalism in India and that of the Congress attitude towards language in national politics. In 1903, after the plans for the partition of Bengal were made public, the Congress met for its major annual meeting in Madras and severely criticized what its leaders saw as the government's efforts to create dissension among the "Bengali speaking brethren" on religious grounds.⁷⁵ Here, the linguistic community of the Bengali-speaking people was privileged over the actual religious communities that the Bengali-speaking people belonged to. Paradoxically, this acknowledgement of the linguistic identity of the Bengali people involved an argument for the retention of existing political boundaries of British Indian provinces in general. This argument entailed an opposition to other plans for rearranging regional boundaries that would *unite* other linguistic communities in India. In particular, the Congress resolutions in Madras criticized not only the partition of Bengal but also the proposals of the Risley circular, which called for the amalgamation of the Odia-speaking tracts including the Ganjam district of the Madras Presidency under a single administration.⁷⁶ Criticizing all government efforts to rearrange provincial boundaries the Congress in Madras stated:

Resolved that the Congress views with deep concern the present policy of the Government of India in breaking up territorial divisions which have been of long standing and are closely united by ethnological, legislative, social and administrative regulations and deprecates the separation from Bengal of Dacca, Mymensingh, Chittagong Divisions and portions of Chotanagpur Division, and

⁷⁵ This language of "Bengali speaking brethren" recurs in the Congress discourse about the partition of Bengal. See A. M. Zaidi and S. G. Zaidi, "On the Road to Self-Government", in *Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress, Vol. 4: 1901–1905* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd, 1978).

⁷⁶ For an account of the Risley circular see Pradhan and Pattnaik, *The Odia Movement*.

also the separation of the district of Ganjam and the agency tracts of the Ganjam and Vizagapatnam Districts from the Madras Presidency.⁷⁷

This contradictory resolution that questioned both the government's efforts to divide the Bengali linguistic community and unite the Odia linguistic community alienated the Odia political elite. It appeared that the Congress would not support Odia efforts for the amalgamation of all Odia-speaking areas under a single administration.

The 1903 Congress recourse to claims about the interests of regional linguistic community in its opposition to the partition of Bengal compounded a curious conflation of the question of religious difference and the idea of a linguistic community. The argument that linguistic community produced a shared everyday life that trumped the demands of religious separatism recurred in the early twentieth-century Congress rhetoric about the Hindu–Muslim relationships. For instance, the 1906 annual presidential address by Dadabhai Naoroji spoke about the need to inculcate a “thorough political union among the Indian people of all creeds and classes” by emphasizing the linguistic commonality between people of various religious groups:

In this appeal for a thorough union for political purposes among all the people, I make a particular one to my friends, the Mohammadens . . . All the people in their political position are in one boat. They must sink or swim together. Without this union all efforts will be in vain. There is the common saying – but also the best commonsense – “United we stand – divided we fall.” There is one another circumstance, I may mention here, If I am right, I am under the impression that the bulk of the Bengalee Mohammadens were Hindus by race and blood only a few generations ago. They have the tie of blood and kingship. Even now a great mass of the Bengalee Mohammadens are not to be easily distinguished from their Hindu Brothers. In many places they join together in their social joys and sorrows. They cannot divest themselves from the natural affinity of common blood. On the Bombay side, the Hindus and Mohammadens of Gujarat all speak the same language, Gujarati, and are of the same stock, and all the Hindus and Mohammadens of Maharastric Annan – all speak the same language, Marathi and are of the same stock – and so I think it is all over India, excepting in North India where there are the descendants of the original Mohammaden invaders, but they are now also the people of India.⁷⁸

While this passage raises many interesting questions about race, religion, and historical memory, let us focus on how language is used to trump

⁷⁷ A. M. Zaidi (ed.), *In the Glorious Tradition -Vol. 1: 1885–1920* (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Applied Political Research, 1987), p. 238.

⁷⁸ A. M. Zaidi and S. G. Zaidi, “The Surat Embroglio”, in *Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress, Vol. 5 (1906–1911)* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd, 1978), pp. 136–7.

religious difference in Naoroji's call for the thorough unification of all classes and creeds in India. In his formulation, the difference between Hindus and Muslims is an artificial and historically contingent difference. Religious identity by definition is also a historically contingent form of identification that cannot enable Hindus and Muslims of various regions of India to "divest themselves from the natural affinity of common blood." By moving immediately to the assertion that the Hindus and Muslims of Maharashtra and Gujarat share a common language and racial origin, Naoroji afforded linguistic community a primordial status in the organization of the people of India. It was a marker of difference far older and influential than religious difference that was threatening to disrupt his dream of a united India.

It is evident from the language of first Indian constitution to be prepared by Indians in 1928 that this use of linguistic affinity to trump religious difference had come to dominate the way in which constituents of the Indian nation were being categorized and enumerated. The Nehru Report written under the presidentship of Motilal Nehru was published as the first native constitution for India. After expending a lot of ink on the question of communalism and communal representation in the future Indian electorate, the Report turned to the question of linguistic reorganization of states. The Nehru Report deemed the question of linguistic reorganization of the states as an issue that was "more germane to the Constitution of India."⁷⁹ Focused mainly on the question of the creation of a new Sindh province, the Report's discussion of the details of the proposed reforms in the boundaries of the Indian provinces called for a deliberation on the issue which considered "the general question on the merits apart from its communal bearings." Implicit in the Nehru Report's efforts to set aside the question of religious difference and focus on the question of linguistic regions was the imagining of the Indian nation on linguistic terms. It is evident that, by 1928, the dominant way of thinking about difference in India was through language rather than through religion. Congress rhetoric often presented political debates based on religious issue as illegitimate and harmful to the interests of the Indian nation. However, by 1928, the idea of a differentiated India seemed to be acceptable to the Congress leadership. This was because in place of religion *language* had become the dominant and most acceptable register of difference for the Congress platform.

⁷⁹ Conference All Parties and Motilal Nehru, *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Conference to Determine the Principles of the Constitution for India: Together with a Summary of the Proceedings of the Conference Held at Lucknow*, 3rd ed. (Allahabad: General Secretary, All India Congress Committee, 1928), p. 44.

How did this come about? The roots of this resolution of difference lie in the late 1910s when the Congress leadership attempted to broaden its popular base through local propaganda. In conjunction with the increased governmental attention to the politicization of the Indian masses as the result of the constitutional reforms of 1918–19, the new impetus within the Indian National Congress to “broaden its base” made the question of *language* of popular political discussion very important. In 1920, Annie Besant, the President of the Indian National Congress Session at Lahore noted:

In many parts of the country, where Conference are carried in the vernacular, the raiyat attend in large numbers, and often take part in the practical discussions on local affairs. They have begun to hope and to feel that they are a part of the great National Movement, and that for them also a better day is dawning.⁸⁰

Besant saw the use of the vernacular languages as a way to include in the “great National Movement,” the hitherto excluded sections of the Indian population – the raiyat or peasants. In Congress, the raiyat had frequently come to stand in for the lower classes of rural India. Hence, like the framers of the report on the constitutional reforms of 1918, Besant and her colleagues at the Congress had come to realize that popular participation in “practical discussions on local affairs” was impossible without the use of the vernacular languages in political and public forums. What should be noted here is the emergence of more general concern with the *local* and the implications of greater attention to “local affairs” on the growing constituency of the “National Movement.” The realization that the awareness of a membership in the Congress-led “National Movement” had to come via a greater involvement in discussions about local affairs points to the ways in which the emergence of the need to increase popular participation in political affairs led to the rethinking of the relationship between the national and the local. Hence, apart from the efficacy of using the vernacular in public political discussions, the Congress leadership at the center was also coming to realize that the incorporation of local affairs within the concerns of the day-to-day activities of the Congress was essential to broadening the reach of its politics.

Of course, local issues had been espoused by the Congress leadership in the past. For instance, Gandhi’s support of the peasants in Champaran in 1916 was definitely based on an attempt to draw on local politics to make the case for a wider political demand for reforms in colonial governance. However, these early efforts at involvement in local affairs were meant to

⁸⁰ A. M. Zaidi and S. G. Zaidi, “Emergence of Gandhi”, in *Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress, Vol. 7 (1916–1920)* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd, 1978), p. 202.

serve as exemplars. They were meant to be spectacles that would reveal the problems with colonial governance. Besant's invocation of local affairs was motivated by an entirely different need – to involve a greater number of people in Congress practices through a greater attention to particularities of their daily lives: to bring the nation home to the local. Hence, the local came to be constitutive of the national in this period.

This concern with language and the local was echoed in Gandhi's discussions about language in the early 1920s when he centered language as matter of great importance to the fight for Swaraj. It is through his rhetorical intervention that the question of language became of the most prominent issue with the ranks of the Congress in the 1920s. By the time both Annie Besant and Gandhi were talking about the question of language, Congress had called for the establishment of new provincial branches called the Provincial Congress Committees (PCCs). The constituency of these PCCs was based on linguistic lines rather than the existing provincial boundaries. Once Congress had recognized linguistic politics through the establishment of PCCs along these linguistic lines, it adopted the demand for the redistribution of British Indian territories on linguistic lines as one of its foremost demands in the early 1920s. Even though the politics of Congress and its attitude towards the constitutional reforms of this period underwent significant changes in this period, its attitude towards vernacular languages and linguistic politics remained constant.

In his advocacy of vernacular languages in the 1920s, Gandhi made the use of Indian languages central to anticolonial praxis. He did this in two ways: first, his critique of the use of English as the lingua franca of India was based on the need to use the language of the people in popular propaganda and, second, he made the demand for linguistic reorganization of Indian provinces central to demand for self-rule in the Congress politics of the 1920s.

In his 1920 article entitled "An Appeal to Madras," Gandhi argued that the use of English in popular propaganda undermined the ability of political speakers to reach their audience. He noted that in all the years since the establishment of the Congress party, English had been useful only as a "spectacle but never for its real educative value."⁸¹ That is, political speeches in English may have drawn the crowds to experience Congress politics only as passive spectators. Such a popular experience of Congress where the common people did not participate as thinking citizens, rather as devotees following the example of the spectacular

⁸¹ Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 19 (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1958), p. 332.

English-speaking political leader was no longer desirable by 1920. Given the increasing attention to the political education of the common people due to the constitutional reforms, Congress was beginning to adopt a policy of increasing popular awareness of the people's role in a democratic political set up. Gandhi's discussion of popular politics and the relationship between the leaders and the people is symptomatic of this shift. In an article titled "About leaders and Public," he noted:

There is a new awakening in the country. The common people now want to play their part, are ready for self-sacrifice, but do not know the way. And so long as we do not speak to the people in their own language, what can they understand? How can they understand?⁸²

Regional vernaculars became central to the project of building a new mass-based political movement where every individual understood his role in the movement and "was ready for self-sacrifice."

As the Congress leadership came to realize the importance of vernacular languages to their political project, they espoused the demand for the linguistic reorganization of the Indian provinces as a central political aim. In 1920, immediately after the declaration of the constitutional reforms while the Congress was still prepared to participate in the provincial elections, Gandhi wrote an article titled "What Should the Voter Do?"⁸³ He suggested the voters ask their prospective representative the following questions:

2. Do you hold that all the affairs of a province should be conducted in its own vernacular and that the affairs of the nation should be conducted in Hindustani – a combination of Hindu and Urdu? If you do will you endeavor incessantly to introduce the use of vernaculars in the administration of the respective provinces, and the national language in imperial administration?

3. Do you hold that the present division of the provinces of India was made for administration and political purposes and that no regard was paid to the wishes of the people? And do you hold that this division had done much harm to the national growth?⁸⁴

These questions reveal the growing importance given to linguistic reorganization of the provinces during this period. By posing the lack of linguistically organized provinces as an impediment to national growth, Gandhi shifted the emphasis of regional linguistic movements from regional interests to Indian national interests. That is, the demand for linguistically organized states was no longer required merely to safeguard

⁸² Ibid, pp. 179–80.

⁸³ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 20 (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1958), p. 319.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

the interests of particular linguistic groups. Rather, linguistic reorganization of Indian provinces was central to the interests of the Indian nation as such reorganization would lead to national growth. Hence, Gandhi made regional linguistic politics cosmopolitan and nationally relevant.

Thinking the Region Within the Nation: Changing Attitude of the Utkal Sammillani Towards Anticolonial Politics

[T]hose who say that a colonized community has no politics, do not see human life in its entirety. Whether free or subjugated a community which lives within a kingdom and accepts the reign of a well structured State governed by the rule of law, has a politics in some form or other. The politics of a self-governing people will be different from that of a colonized people. However, it cannot be said the colonized have no politics.⁸⁵

Gopabandhu Das, Presidential Speech at the Utkal Sammillani, December 1919

This speech by Gopabandhu Das, who later served as the president of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee, marks the final radical change in the praxis of the Utkal Sammillani. In its annual session in January 1920, the Sammillani decided to espouse Congress politics and participate in the emerging Non-Cooperation Movement. As the prevailing understanding of rule based on the relationship between the British sovereign and the Indian colonized subject was changing due to the introduction of electoral franchise in 1919–20 and the Indian nation came to be understood as a conglomeration of linguistically distinct regions, Odia attitudes towards anticolonial, nationalist political agitation also radically changed. This nationalization of regional politics could not have been brought about without the intervention of a younger generation of Odia political activists led by Gopabandhu Das. These activists attempted to rethink crucial relationships that were the basis of the Sammillani's attitude towards political activism – the relationship between the British raja and the Odia praja, the relationship between the interests of the region Odisha and the Indian nation and, finally, the relationship between the elite of public organizations and the people they seek to represent. It is this rethinking that produced a new notion of citizenship in Odisha articulated through terms such as *praja-sadharana* (ordinary-subject) often used by Gopabandhu Das in his writing. Central to this rethinking was the privileging of those who constituted the “silent masses of India” in definitions

⁸⁵ Gopabandhu Das, *Desa Misrana Andolana*, Vol. 3, Gopabandhu Rachanabali (Collected Works of Gopabandhu Das) (Cuttack: Gopabandhu Janma Satabarshika Samiti, 1976), p. 14.

of community and politics. This section treats Gopabandhu's speech and traces his ideas about politics, citizenship, region, and nation to illustrate how the emerging ideas of representative government, on the one hand, and a nation constituted of linguistic difference, on the other, enabled a regional understanding of citizenship and the region's role in the future of the Indian nation.

Gopabandhu's speech was not only the harbinger of the changes in Odisha politics but also the most sustained and representative statement of the changing attitude towards political activism, the colonial government, and the Indian National Congress in Odisha. In his speeches and writings, Gopabandhu, like Gandhi, called for mass participation in political activism and made the individual Odia central to both regional and national politics. His definition of the relationship between the region and the nation was founded on the primacy of the needs, interests, and potential of every Odia individual.

In order to make his point, Das used both rhetorical strategies and conceptual intervention into the way community was thought about in Odisha. Through rhetorical strategies such as discursive structures of past presidential speeches to introduce new concerns into the Sammillani platform, Das attempted to reformulate the very meaning and symbolism of the Sammillani as a community organization. While he called for a reformulation of the prevailing understanding of the Utkal Sammillani to include more populist ideas and imperatives, Das also introduced a new way of thinking about community itself by arguing that the ultimate objective of the Utkal Sammillani should be the establishment of *udaar manabikata* or "expansive humanism." This informed the way he reconceptualized the constituents of the Odia community and located the Odia region within the Indian nation. More significantly, the notion of expansive humanism informed his eventual construction of the identity of the Odia/Indian citizen.

Mimicking presidential speeches of earlier years, which began with obituaries to notable members of the Odia community, Gopabandhu commenced his speech with a reference to the dead of Odisha. However, he departed from this earlier rhetoric by also calling attention to even greater losses to Odia population due to the ongoing famine and floods in Odisha. The significance of this departure was not simply because of the mention of the Odia masses in the same register as the members of the Odia elite but also due to the tone of this invocation of the Odia people:

If they had lived a long life with healthy and strong bodies they could have added great strength to this country. Who knows what talents lay hidden in them? Who can say what they could have contributed to society if these talents were given time

to develop? . . . It is superfluous to say that their deaths have weakened Odisha. Each one of them, either in a big way or a small way, were the strength of this community union of ours.⁸⁶

This mention of the dying millions of Odisha was doing something more than bringing public attention to their plight. Das was attempting to engage with the earlier tendency of the Utkal Sammillani to see itself as a vanguard class that spoke for the interests of the “silent long suffering Odia people.” While refraining from demonizing something that was essentially a product of the movement’s early efforts to build a public notion of a political community that did not preexist the organization, Das was arguing that it was time to see both the organization and the Odia people differently.

Signaled here is the emerging notion of the Odia praja as something more than subjects of the colonial state. By thinking of them as potential contributors to the Odia community rather than the consumers of the boons begotten by the Utkal Sammillani from the colonial state (as the earlier use of the term praja seemed to suggest), Das centered the role and interests of the Odia people in the development of a community project like Utkal Sammillani. This shift reveals the earliest move within the Utkal Sammillani from the elitist civic activities based on the management of the Odia people to a more populist political agenda wherein the people themselves had a direct stake.

Apart from this radical reconfiguration of the organization, Das proceeded to argue for a more expansive understanding of both the Sammillani and the Odia community. Calling for a more inclusive association that would make it more than a “mere *Conference* . . . a meeting of knowledgeable Odia people aimed at discussing the interests of Odisha or that of Odia people.”⁸⁷

This speech featured an entirely new construction of the Odia community, which was no longer founded merely on the Odia language. Rather, Das’ new Odia community was based on the *place* known as Odisha.

Who is Odia community? It is seen around the world that communities are named after places. A feeling of affinity develops naturally among those who inhabit the same place. Their hope, purpose, fate and future is confined to a singular interest for welfare. Their land of action is the same and undifferentiated. For them that very land is a pure and lovable space. It is their birth place. In their view it is equal to heaven. Therefore, those who live in such a defined tract of land – they are one community and they are named according to the name of that land. According to this natural law those who have been born and have died with the same hopes and

⁸⁶ Das, *Desa Misrana Andolana*, p. 10. ⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 10.

desires, and have been imbued with the same interests – they are all Odia community.⁸⁸

This definition of the Odia community signaled a significant shift in the understanding of community in Odisha as the fundamental basis of the Odia community shifted from language to place. Definitions of community in Odisha, both before and after the formation of the Utkal Sammillani had always been based on language. As Chapter 1 illustrates, the efforts by the colonial state to replace Odia with Bengali first occasioned public articulations of the interests of the “Odia community.” Since then community came to be defined as a group of people speaking the same language. Occasional efforts to broaden this understanding to include non-Odia-speaking communities who resided in the Odisha division were made by the domiciled Bengalis of Odisha division. The domiciled Bengalis were an influential group within the Odia literati of Cuttack and played an important role in the Odia language movement of the nineteenth century. In 1905, the *Star of Utkal*, an English-language paper published by a member of the domiciled Bengali community, featured an article that introduced the term *utkaliya* to denote members of the Odia community. *Utkaliyas* were people who lived in the Odia-speaking area but did not use Odia in their day-to-day lives.⁸⁹ However, it was with Gopabandhu’s speech that the dominant understanding of the Odia community went through its first divorce from language.

By founding his understanding of community on spatial categories like *stana* (place), *sketra* (area), and *bhumi* (land), Gopabandhu called for a shift in focus from a linguistically based community to one that was geographically organized. In his speech, Das managed this shift by calling into question the distinction between Utkal and Odia. The common understanding of Utkal – due to its links with the term *utkaliya* – invoked the idea of the inhabitants of Odisha. The appellation Odia denoted the speakers of the Odia language. Das posed the question: Is there a distinction between those who inhabit Odisha and those who speak Odia?

Some people even see a difference between Utkal and Oriya. In fact there is no difference between these two and there *should not* be any. Whether they are from Bengal or Punjab, from Marwar or Madras, Hindu or Muslim, Aryan or Aboriginal, those who have assimilated their selfhood and interest with Orissa – Orissa is theirs and they are of Orissa. These days it is impossible for a place to be inhabited by the same kind of people. There is almost no place on earth where different communities or societies are not living together. Only, the focus of their interests is one. It is natural and acceptable that over time they become united as

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 12. ⁸⁹ Anonymous, “Utkaliya”, *Star of Utkal*, 1905.

a community. The United States of America is an exemplar of such a formation of community affiliation.⁹⁰ (emphasis added)

This move proposed to shift the locus of Odia regional politics from an exclusive community based on linguistic identity to a more inclusive constituency based on a shared everyday life in a common *place*. However, the argument for a community based on adjacency and commonality of interests did not necessarily involve a disavowal of the Odia community as a linguistic unit. Rather the very invocation of other such linguistic identities such as Bengali, Punjabi, Marwari etc. reveals Gopabandhu's investment in the distinctiveness of these identities. In fact, he was calling for a cosmopolitan idea of community where shared interests, common historical experience and future aspirations transcended rather than effaced particular linguistic identities. Furthermore, by calling for transcendence of linguistic identities, he did not forsake the idea of a distinct region of Odisha. In fact, for Das, the transcendence of particular linguistic, religious, or caste identity was possible precisely because the geographical category Odisha was assumed as an irrevocable reality. Hence, his call for the inclusion of other linguistic groups in the Odia community did not threaten to demolish the long-cherished vision of a separate region of Odisha.

The geography of the proposed province of Odisha became central to the objectives of the Sammillani as a consequence of Das' privileging of a spatial definition of the Odia community. Hence, in this session a new constitution of the Utkal Sammillani was drafted where the concept of "natural Odisha" as a geographical category was defined.⁹¹ In the new constitution, natural Odisha was opposed to the existing "artificial" or political Odisha that did not include all Odia-speaking areas.

As the definition of regional community came to be founded on a commonality of interests and shared everyday life rather than exclusively on language, Gopabandhu was able to argue for a new set of objectives for the Utkal Sammillani that were aimed at fostering an inclusive politics based on expansive humanism. He listed three main objectives of the Utkal Sammillani: fostering kinship among the various communities within Odisha their home, participation in politics because as a well-rounded community organization all interests and concerns of the community fall within the purview of the Sammillani, and the establishment of liberal humanism.

⁹⁰ Utkal is a term used both to denote the Odia language and the place Odisha as a geographical category. In this particular instance, Gopabandhu is using Utkal to denote both and here Odia denotes simply the language. Das, *Desa Misrana Andolana*, p. 12.

⁹¹ Ibid, *Utkal Sammillani (1903–1936), Part 1*.

At the root of his revisioning of community was his use of expansive humanism that enabled him to forge an intrinsic connection between the interests of the Odia community and that of the Indian nation. Approaching the question of the relationship between the region and the nation from the perspective of the interests of the Odia community, Das argued that expansive humanism could be possible only through espousing broader Indian objectives:

Indian feeling will definitely help us in our journey towards gaining expansive humanism. We have to remember that we are part of the Indian community. India is a mega-nation, hence over time many small communities marked by provincial differences have emerged in India; only all their fates are encompassed in the fate of India. Whether we are connected with Indian institutions or not, we have to more or less participate in the trials and tribulations of India. . . . *We have to remember that we are human first, then Indian and finally Oriya.* If we do not keep this thought in mind then the development of our community is impossible. Every individual has freedom, only without social foundation this freedom cannot emerge. Just like that, the freedom of Orissa will blossom on the firm ground of strong Indian nationalism and all-inclusive expansive humanism.⁹²

Unlike Madhusudan Das' sisterhood of provinces organized by a common allegiance to the British Empire, Gopabandhu Das' India remains unmarked by Indian subjecthood to the British. While M. S. Das' organizing principle for the making of the Indian nation was a shared bond with the British Empire, for Gopabandhu Das, it was a social kinship of common interests. The Indian nation in Gopabandhu Das' formulation was a society of linguistic provinces in which the freedom of each province was ensured by the establishment of the strong national civil society. Hence, Das posed Odisha as something akin to a citizen in the Indian social world populated by other such communities. Also the emphasis on India as a liberal civil society allowed him to reimagine the relationship between other communities residing in Odisha – Biharis and Bengalis.

The earlier Utkal Sammillani attitude towards these groups is best exemplified by Madhusudan Das' description of the Bengalis and Biharis as "intermediary ruling races." M. S. Das argued that being majority linguistic groups in their respective provinces, these groups of people occupied a more dominant position in the colonial hierarchy of influence. They acted as intermediaries between the colonial rulers and the Odia people. Such a reading of the relationship between these communities and the Odia community implied unequal and oppressive transactions between Bengalis and Biharis and the Odia community. Through his

⁹² Ibid, *Desa Misrana Andolana*, p.15.

discussion of liberal humanism and a national civil society, Gopabandhu Das attempted to reimagine this relationship as equal.

Having established Odisha's place within the Indian nation, Gopabandhu Das moved to establish the particular characteristic of the Odia community that made it most adept at imagining a liberal and inclusive community. Das argued that historically only the Odias have been able to recognize the importance of expansive humanism and lead an inclusive social and spiritual life. He based his argument on the Odia community's allegiance to the Cult of Jaganath. He notes:

The history of the Oriya community clearly reveals that the Oriyas have forever been proficient at this expansive Humanist ethic and have experienced an everyday connection with India . . . Even though Orissa is bounded by rivers and mountains, they (the Oriya community) have transcended these boundaries and moved towards greatness. At the focus of nationalism is liberal humanism, in all of India it was the Oriya people who understood this. . . . Among the Oriya this nationalism and love for the country could never be rigid, lifeless, barren and selfish. It was never founded on the desire to gain ruling power or violence. It was based on profound religiosity and firm faith. Peace, friendship and freedom are its symptoms. In Orissa this thought is materialized in Nilachal Dham [Puri- the seat of the Jaganath cult]; hence Jaganath is the national deity of Orissa. . . . In the ethic of Nilachal there is no distinction between big and small, raja and praja, Brahmin and Chandal, friend and foe or even Hindu and Buddhist. In the later Chaitanya age even the distinction between Muslim and Hindu was obscured. Because this seed of expansive humanism and pan Indian nationalism lies in Nilachal, over the ages devotees and great men have been attracted to Nilachal.⁹³

Through this discussion of the Jaganath cult, Das is able to both establish the exceptional and exemplary nature of Odia community and make an argument for equality within the Odia community by drawing on the notion of equality before God. Making such a case for expansive humanism allowed Das to describe an Odia community that transcended race, religion, and caste. As more and more concrete decisions about the new province were made in the next two decades, this description of Odia community that transcended difference and was held together by allegiance to common land and religion would be put in service of the movement for the formation of the new province.

Conclusion

Gopabandhu's humanist definition of the Utkal Sammillani, the Odia community, and the relationship between the region Odisha and the Indian nation established the basic structures and ideas that were

⁹³ Ibid, p. 15.

fundamental to the foundation of liberal democracy in India. His redefinition of both the Utkal Sammillani and the Odia community enabled him to posit a new idea of liberal community that was not based on any exclusive marker of identity. Rather, it was based on a shared everyday life that, in turn, enabled him to see members of both the Odia and the Indian community as mutually interchangeable and fundamentally equal.

This was clearly a departure from Madhusudan Das' understanding of the non-Odia-speaking people such as Bengalis and Biharis as "intermediary ruling races" whose control over the fortunes of the Odia-speaking people, in the Bengal Presidency and the province of Bihar and Odisha, threatened to negate the colonial government's efforts to introduce representative government based on franchise. Gopabandhu Das's concern about the creation of a community based on the homogenizing potential of expansive humanism was informed by his desire to think the relationship between the Odias, Bengalis, and Biharis differently.

A stake in this rethinking was an argument for a national community that allowed for both Indian nationalism and Odia regional affiliation. The shift in the understanding of community represented by the difference between Madhusudan Das and Gopabandhu Das' approach to Bengalis and Biharis illustrates the gradual expansion of the limits of regional and national allegiances. That is, the move from an idea of regional community based on exclusive interests to an idea of regional community predicated on expansive humanism enabled the imagination of an Indian citizen who could be simultaneously loyal to *both* India *and* Odisha.

At the root of this shift and the creation of this doubly marked Indian citizen is Gopandhu's astute sublimation of language as the basis of regional community. Gopabandhu effected the resolution of the contradiction between an exclusively language-based regional identity and the increasingly urgent need to imagine an inclusive Indian national identity by founding his definition of Odia identity on the notion of the shared space of Odisha. As the rhetoric within the Indian National Congress illustrates, language as the basis of regional community sat uncomfortably within the Congress's political agenda of unification. Even when it was acknowledged, linguistic identity of the Indian peoples was seen as an irrevocable fact of Indian life that needed to be harnessed to further the project of Indian nationalism. Within this context, the Odia *drive* to define regional community on exclusively linguistic lines could possibly disrupt the nationalist agenda. Therefore, the *linguistic identity drive* had to be sublimated into something a bit more acceptable within the nationalist framework. However, as I have illustrated in the discussion of my use of the term sublimation in the introduction, this sublimation of regional

exclusivity is always inherently reversible. It is wrought by the pressure to fit into a broader Indian federation of linguistic communities and to account for uncomfortable minorities like Muslims, domiciled Bengalis, and, most importantly, adivasis within the territory being claimed as Odisha.

In his 1920 speech, Gopabandhu was able to achieve this by shifting the basis of Odia regional community from language to shared space. This space, "Natural Orissa" was already a discrete space in the Odia imagination but not yet an officially defined territory. As Gopabandhu's speech suggests, this imagined shared space of natural Odisha was also marked by specific qualities of sacredness and religious inclusivity. With the Indian National Congress' establishment of Provincial Congress Committees on linguistic lines, the demand for a separate territory contiguous with natural Odisha could be made in earnest. From this moment on, Odisha as a spatial and territorial category came to be central to Odia politics of the 1920s and 1930s. In the next half of the book, we will see how this spatial and territorial idea of Odisha is elaborated through the use of the discourse of inclusive humanism that was at the root of the sublimation of exclusive language politics in Odia regional politics and eventually in debates about regional territory at the national level. We will see how this sublimation of language and its attendant discourse of shared everyday life was employed to claim areas inhabited by adivasi communities as part of Odisha in Chapter 5. But in the next chapter, I will illustrate how the foundations of this discourse of shared everyday life were established in spatial imaginaries of Odisha that were elaborated as part of colonial, regional, and national descriptions of Odisha. This spatial imaginary of Odisha as a sacred, inclusive land is what legitimized Odia claims to adivasi areas during the formation of the new province in 1936.