3 Indigenous Views on Kingship

> We are the kings. (Samo Sisa, Gudapada)

> The Hill Bhuiya "boldly aver that the country belongs to them. They assert that the Raja is their creation, and that the prerogative of installing every new Raja on his accession is theirs, and theirs alone." (Dalton 1872, 142, quoted from McDougal 1963, 7)

> They [the Dongria Kond] are not to be ruled but they themselves are the rulers (. . .). (Nayak 1989, 184)

> It is maintained by our informants that the presence of Narangi Jani is essential on the occasion of the coronation of the Raja (of Jeypore), for he enjoys (what a Pengo asserted) the right of *Singhasan Mati* ["earth lion-seat"]. (Thusu 1977, 14)

When approaching tribal views on kingship one cannot rely on a huge corpus of written documents, which are largely non-existent, but must depend on ethnographic accounts, including oral history, rituals and stories. What they reveal is that tribal identity in the region is articulated relationally, just as much between different tribal groups, for instance with regard to the seniority of local communities, as in relation to the king, and thus, as "subject" or *porja*. Often this identity is formulated in relation to Dasara, the royal festival at which delegations of tribal communities paid homage to the king.

When ethnographer K. N. Thusu conducted research around 1970 among the Pengo – who live in the area around Nowrangpur, north of the royal capital of Jeypore – informants responded to his inquiries about their past with the following proverb (Thusu 1977, 12):

> Pengo Poraja,
> Andkuria Dombo,
> Kaunsalya Gaudo,
> Peeta Bhatra,
> Toibadi Baja,
> Taleboshe Raja

While some elements of the saying are obscure to me,[1] it is clear that – much like in the aphorism with which this book is concerned – a number of communities of this particular sub-region of the kingdom are related to the *raja*. This concerns tribal cultivators (Bhatra and Pengo) and service communities (Dombo, Goudo). Moreover, special reference seems to be made to Dasara. "Toibadi Baja" refers to

1 Especially the words Andkuria, Kaunsalya, Peeta are unclear. Neither the author nor his informants do provide much information on the meaning of the proverb.

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the music (*baja*) of particular drums (*toibadi*) that the Pengo played during the Dasara procession in Jeypore (Thusu 1977, 14). Like the Bhuiya of Keonjhar, the Pengo interlocutors of Thusu claimed that they helped the king establish his rule in the Nandapur/Jeypore kingdom long ago and would therefore have the particular and rightful role during the coronation of the king of sitting on a throne called *singhasan mati* (literally "lion-seat earth"). The last line of the saying might refer to this aspect, as *taleboshe* means to "sit down," which is a metaphor for settling down and establishing a place; here, establishing the kingdom.

About the same distance from Jeypore as the Pengo, only up on the plateau to the south of the town, similar ideas are found among the Gutob Gadaba. Memories about the former kings and relations with them were faint when I started my ethnographic fieldwork some 50 years after independence in the 1990s. Older Gadaba who I questioned on this topic vaguely recalled the *raja beti* in the month of *dosra*. At that time, a delegation from the village, led by the *naik* (headman), walked the 30 kilometers, as the crow flies, down the hills to attend the Dasara festivities. Because it was his duty to feed the delegation during this trip, the *naik* had been granted a special paddy field, the *naik bera*, which it is still called today. However, that was about as much as I could gather about those bygone days of the king.

The idea of kingship, however, seemed to be omnipresent. In 2010, I accompanied a group of young Gadaba women and some other men – villagers, musicians and local administrators – to the Adivasi Mela, the Tribal Fair in the state capital of Bhubaneswar, where the government annually invites the "62 tribal groups of Odisha" to perform dances on stage, present food and build "traditional" huts in the fairground (Berger 2014). When I later asked the young women what they thought about the whole event, they did not have much to say, being rather overwhelmed by their new experiences in the capital and the traumatic trip back to Koraput in extremely overcrowded trains (which I did not dare enter). However, one older woman, Suborna Sisa, aged perhaps 45 at the time, thought for a moment and then said it would be just like *raja beti*, only that in earlier times the king called them to Jeypore, while now the government (*sorkar*) called them to Bhubaneswar to dance. This perception of continuity seems to be well founded. Indeed, around 1940, Gadaba and members of other tribes danced in front of the king during the "gala show" at the Jeypore Dasara (Sahu 1942, 35). Even earlier, in the 1870s, the British official, W. W. Hunter, visiting the *raja* of Dhenkhanal, recalled that "around noon (. . .) arrived a band of jungle people, whose national dance the Maharaja wished to show me" (quoted in Elwin 1948, 12).

However, even in this case, the duty toward the king did not consist in merely paying a visit during Dasara and dancing and drumming in the procession. Kings in Jeypore, and perhaps earlier at Nandapur also, used the tribal

communities as a labor resource. In the 1960s, the Ollar Gadaba east of Nandapur still remembered well the forced labor they were required to do during the period before independence – sometimes with payment, sometimes without – such as carrying loads for the king and minor landlords (probably *mutadar*), or carrying those people themselves on palanquins (Thusu and Jha 1972, 74).

The Bondo, some 50 kilometers due south-west of Jeypore, also made their way down to the capital during Dasara. Based on his research in the 1940s, Verrier Elwin raised a number of significant points with regard to their relationship to the king of Jeypore. He writes that the "people are singularly loyal to their ruler, and the fulfilment of their duties to him and his officials is one of the virtues that is regularly impressed on young people" (Elwin 1950, 4f). As such, it may not be surprising that in the context of marriage – an ultimate question of *niam* or divine rule – reference is made to the king among the Bondo. Before leaving for the bride's village, a man of the delegation performs a short speech-cum-invocation that starts with the sentence: "Giving honour to the Maharaja we live in his kingdom" (Elwin 1950, 97).

Particularly noteworthy is the Bondo's partial replication of the centralized royal order, a feature that seems to be unique in the region. Whereas the Gadaba villages are not ranked (nor are those of the Pengo, Parenga, Didaye or Joria), the Bondo village of Mundlipada is the center of the "bara-jangar group," according to Elwin – that is, of twelve (*baro*) villages thought to be the original Bondo settlements. Not only do the Bondo bring gifts to the king of Jeypore during Dasara, but the village headman (*naik*) of Mundlipada, "subsidized and supported in his position by the Maharaja" (Elwin 1950, 6), also receives gifts ("tribute") three times a year from the headmen of the other villages.

Moreover, there is a ritual connection between the *bara-jangar* villages and the royal capital. While some other Bondo villages are not involved in this, the *bara-jangar* villages are ritually united in the worship of Pat Khanda Mahaprabhu, located in a shrine on a hillside above Mundlipada that includes a banyan tree in which a sacred sword (*kanda*) is hidden. With the headmen of the other *bara-jangar* villages attending, the sword is brought out and worshipped, and the blood of the sacrificed fowl is poured over it. Elwin (1950, 5) states that this sword is clearly connected to the royal court in Jeypore, as such swords would also be honored there; which is in fact the case. Also, the accompanying invocation leaves no doubt about the connection to kings. Notably, the invocation refers to Nandapur, the earlier seat of the king, which still has primacy of place in the regional imagination of kingship: "O Nandapur Mahaprabhu, O Pat Khanda Birkam, O Budha Bhairo of Nandapur (. . .). O Pat Khanda Mahaprabhu, let the kingdom, earth and country be well" (1950, 147). As Elwin rightly points out, Birkam (Vikrama) and Bhairo (Bhairava) were names of the kings in Nandapur and

Jeypore. However, it is not clear if the invocation actually refers to human kings at all. I would interpret "Nandapur Mahaprabhu" as the mythical King God (Raja Maphru), who is said to have been born in Nandapur (see M12), which is therefore referred to as "navel place" (*bumli jaga*) still today. "Pat Khanda Birkam" may refer to the sword that is worshipped in Nandapur during Dasara and "Budha Bhairo" certainly indicates a shrine (of which Elwin probably was unaware), where sacrifices also take place during the latter festival (see Chapter 5). This temple is located just outside Nandapur at the foot of the legendary Kotni Mala Hills that will figure repeatedly in the present chapter.

Especially significant is the combination, or almost fusion, of royal and divine significations, with Nandapur Mahaprabhu referring to a royal god and Pat Khanda Birkam to a divine king. What we have here is a congruence of local and global metapersons: royal gods in Bondo villages and the former royal capital. Perhaps it is no wonder, then, that among the Bondo, the *barajangar* group – ritually united by the Pat Khanda Mahaprabhu sacrifice – is also "the most devoted to the Maharaja," according to Elwin (1950, 6). Pat Kanda is also a major deity in the villages of other tribal groups of the region and is associated with the sun-moon deity (Sĩ Arke in Gutob and Remo) or Dorom, in contrast to the earth (Bosmoti). However, a sword is not worshipped, nor to be found, in any such places known to me. Nonetheless, the name might suggest an association of the deity with kingship or, in other words, another variant of the idea of royal divinity and divine rule or *niam*.

The connection between kingship, the tempers of deities and sacrifice was also crucial in statements by my Gadaba interlocutors. When discussing the performance of village sacrifices with Birsa Sisa,[2] a Gadaba of Gudapada, back in 2000, he became annoyed by the fact that some of the village sacrifices had been abandoned, and said:

> They have entirely stopped [performing some of the sacrifices] – stopped. On this account, the earth goddess (Dorti Mata) has become somewhat angry, has become angry, and for this reason, illnesses (*rogo*) are now breaking out all over the world (*dunia*), you know? For her, blood is not enough [. . .].

He then lowered his voice and continued:

> Listen, in Nandapur they've sacrificed a buffalo, sacrificed a sheep, sacrificed a human being (*loko*), in Nandapur, in the *dosra* month. In Jeypore they've sacrificed a sheep,

2 In my earlier monograph (where I also mentioned this statement and provided the Desia transcription as well), I used the pseudonym Buda Sisa for Birsa Sisa (Berger 2015, 113–14). I lived in his household during the first phase of my fieldwork in Gudapada. He died about ten years ago.

> sacrificed a buffalo, sacrificed a human being. But now they don't sacrifice any more human beings, don't sacrifice any buffaloes, and don't sacrifice any sheep: what are [they] doing? They do coconuts, this and that.

This statement raises a number of truly fundamental points, and I will return to it again repeatedly in the pages that follow. Birsa made it clear that he considered it the responsibility of the kings in Nandapur and Jeypore to sacrifice, even to provide human sacrifices for the earth goddess, who demands blood or becomes angry, producing "illnesses." Today, Birsa concluded, this is no longer done and coconuts would certainly not do the job.

Alongside such valuable comments from the oral history of the region, we should also devote our attention to those discursive and performative cultural forms that especially entail ideas about sovereignty, if we are to better understand the tribal view of kingship. In this chapter and in most of the others, the focus will therefore be on myth and ritual in particular.

3.1 Kings and Subjects in Tribal Myths

Verrier Elwin produced a great collection of Central Indian tribal myths filling two volumes (Elwin 1954, 1991a [1949]), but he apparently did not consider the topic of kingship to be of particular importance. In both volumes, neither the extensive index of "mythological motifs" nor the "general index" contain entries on kingship or kings. In the myths he collected (locally called "stories," *katani*), however, the motif of kingship is very prominent and also in those stories I recorded more than half a century later.[3]

Elwin makes the important observation that, except "in a few instances, the Gadaba stories might just as well be Parenga, or – with the change of a few names – the Koya stories might be Didayi" (1954, ix). Indeed, the same motifs are found in various transformations in diverse myths narrated by different tribal communities. Moreover, Joria tell stories about the origin of the Gadaba cloth, or the Gadaba about the origin of the Tiger clan among the Bondo (see Elwin 1954, xxxiv). Thus, the "stories come from the village rather than from the individual," as Elwin (1954, xi) rightly remarks (adding that excellent

3 Elwin recorded the myths between 1941 and 1951; I collected the stories between 1999 and 2016. Elwin recorded Koya, Didayi and Gadaba stories in the respective tribal languages, Bondo, Joria and Parenga in Oriya (that is, probably the highland dialect of that language, called Desia), "for the narrators were all bilingual" as he says (Elwin 1954, x). He also shared his method of translating the stories on the spot. In contrast, I have recorded the stories first (always in Desia) and translated them later, with the support of others (see appendix).

storytellers could not be found in the region), and, furthermore, they do not even originate from individual tribal communities. Rather, they "travel" in the region and, like the clan system (Pfeffer 1997), all communities share them. Hence, when I speak, for example, of a "Bondo myth" in the following, I merely want to indicate that the story was narrated to the ethnographer by members of this community.

The Creation of Kings and Subjects: The "Brotherhood" Stories

In the following, I will start by quoting one myth in full, which happens to be a Gadaba story from the region where I worked most. However, for reasons I have just outlined, this is not why I chose to start with this one as a sort of reference myth. Rather, this story introduces a number of themes relevant to my discussion in this chapter, such as the role of a horse, of carrying loads, of food and of marriage. In fact, these four themes are two sets of complementary codes selectively used in a large number of myths that deal with how social categories (in particular king and tribes) are created, related and transformed. Marriage and food constitute one complementary set. Both are closely associated with each other from the local point of view as highly generative and efficacious processes which lead to a change in status (Berger 2015, see M13[4]). The other set concerns the question of who carries and who is carried; it is about power. Humans either carry loads on their back (for themselves or for others) or are themselves carried by a horse.[5]

I will first outline the different themes and the dimensions of creation, relation and transformation with regard to the present myth. In a second step, I will deal with them comparatively, by referring to three other myths from the region. Mostly, I will refer to myths from the Jeypore/Nandapur region, sometimes referring to relevant aspects of myths from beyond this core area. For convenience sake, I have made a selection of especially relevant myths that are quoted in full in the appendix, for the other stories, the reader can consult the respective sources.

In the village of Guneipada, in the middle of the Gutob Gadaba region, Elwin recorded the following story (subsequently referred to as M1):

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4 The demoness in M13 only agrees to marry the elder brother if he too eats her food, raw meat.

5 Carrying is an expression of senior status in ritual contexts. For instance are the dignitaries of the "earth people," the dominant group in the village, carried on the shoulders of the "late comers" in the context of the sacrifice for Pat Kanda (see photograph in Berger 2015, 380).

> The twelve Gadaba brothers were born on the banks of the Godaveri River. One day they went to hunt in the forest, and as they went the eldest brother felt very thirsty. The youngest brother was carrying a gourd full of millet-gruel in a carrying-stick. The eldest brother sat down and began to drink some of the gruel. The other ten brothers went on, leaving these two behind. They presently came to a sago palm and drank the juice.
>
> Meanwhile a horse, sent by Mahaprabhu, came to where the eldest and youngest brothers were sitting. The eldest brother caught it but when he tried to mount it the horse attacked him. He said to the youngest boy, 'Put the gruel down for a moment and hold the horse for me. I will go and get a bamboo ladder and will mount with that.' The youngest boy held the horse and the other went to find a bamboo for a ladder.
>
> But while he was away the youngest boy got onto the horse and galloped away. When the eldest brother returned to the place there was no horse and no brother. So he picked up the carrying-stick with the gruel and followed the marks of the horse's feet. The other ten brothers joined him and they all went along after the horse's tracks to the Jeypore Hills. But the youngest boy got there first and became the Raja of the place.
>
> When the eldest brother arrived with his load and the people heard what had happened they called him Bhoi [carrier] Gadaba. The youngest brother married the daughter of the Raja of Jeypore. But they could not find a wife for the eldest brother. He sent his sepoys [soldiers] to find a wife and they went to the Godaveri River. There they found a girl called Tarki Asurin [demoness]. They tried to catch her hut she bit them. At last however they held her down and making holes in her ears, tied her with long strips of *siari* creeper [*Bauhinia vahlii*], and so took her to the Raja. The eldest brother married her, and gave her golden rings in place of the creeper with which they had tied her ears. After a time the girl longed for the jungle and ran away to the hills. The eldest brother followed for love of her. He was the first Asur [demon] Gadaba.
>
> Formerly the Gadabas used to carry loads of food for the Raja and so they were Bhoi Gadabas. In those days there were no Ronas, Malis, Gaurs, Brahmins. But in these days the Raja only takes food from the high castes; he will no more eat from the hands of Gadabas.
>
> Then ten other brothers were named Kond, Bondo, Didayi, Jhoria, Parenga, Konda Dora, Holar, Pengu, Chileri, and Maria. (Elwin 1954, 519f)

This story narrates a transformation of society. The tribal order of the twelve brothers changes into a royal polity. Significantly, the first transformation is divinely motivated. Mahaprabhu – or just Maphru, as he is commonly referred to – is generally seen as the creator god who installed the socio-cosmic order of *niam*. Here, he sends a horse[6] and thus triggers a new royal order. There is another social transformation mentioned at the end of the story in a kind of additional comment: the existence of a new layer of society, the "high-caste" late

6 See Lydia Icke-Schwalbe (1968) for a comparative investigation on the meaning of the horse in myths and cults among different tribal communities of Central India. She points out that, next to being a symbol of kingship and rule, the horse is also associated with fertility, at least among the Gond (1968, 16f); two elements that are also the core of the Vedic horse sacrifice (*ashvamedha*).

comers who take the middle position between the king and the tribes. We are not informed about how, from where or why they came. Moreover, this new change is not divinely motivated and it may be inferred that it is thus less radical and less relevant than the first.

The social transformation in time – twelve brothers > (tribal) subjects/(tribal) king (two layers) > (tribal) subjects/high castes/(tribal) king (three layers) – is related to a spatial contrast between three places. The twelve brothers are born at the Godaveri – the river that cuts through the southern extension of the Eastern Ghats creating a deep valley – and they migrate to the royal capital of Jeypore, a little less than 200 kilometers due north. The third location is not referred to explicitly, as it is the current settlement area of the Gadaba and as such self-evident to the speaker as the plateau between Jeypore and the Godaveri, although much closer to the former.

In a preliminary analysis of the myth and in approaching the tribal ideas of kingship, I want to look at the crucial codes mentioned above: food and marriage, the horse and the issue of mounting it. To begin with, I want to relate them to the tribal order of kinship. The feudal polity is obviously hierarchical, starting with the king, followed by Brahmans, other service castes such as gardeners (Mali) and herders (Goudo), then soldiers (*sepoys*) and another group serving the king as soldiers, the Rona. However, the original tribal order is also not "egalitarian." It is structured by seniority and the dominating kinship idiom is that of relative brotherhood. Even though power is not institutionally centralized among the tribal communities of the plateau, an elder brother has authority, certainly among the Gadaba, as I came to know during my fieldwork, and if told to do something the younger brother will usually obey (see M11, M13).[7]

In the story, this situation is clearly articulated in terms of the codes mentioned. It is the younger brother who carries the millet gruel and the elder who consumes it. The younger brother is told to hold the horse and he does. The tribal pattern of seniority is reversed when the younger brother manages to mount the horse and thus acquires the means of power, the horse representing royal supremacy and political leadership. With this, the elder brother finds himself in the role of carrier of food to be consumed by the "king," his younger brother, no longer the other way around. That the elder brother becomes *porja* (subject) is left implicit in this story.

Mounting the horse is only one of the means by which the younger brother became king, or perhaps rather was qualified to become king (because in this way, he "got there first"), the other is marriage. Obviously, a king was already

7 This does not preclude that on other occasions adult brothers fight physically.

ruling in Jeypore, whose daughter the younger brother marries. Subsequently, the new king uses his staff to find a bride for his own elder brother, which turns out to be a difficult task. He sends his soldiers to find and tame a demoness, a jungle creature coming from the Godaveri, like the twelve brothers themselves. The soldiers domesticate her and back in the capital she is somewhat civilized, as the *siardi* creepers (*Bauhinia vahlii*) are exchanged for golden earrings. However, this civilizing effort does not last long and she returns to the forest with the elder brother following, both of them being the ancestors of the "demon" Gadaba.

The myth thus constructs a sharp contrast between the wild and the civilized, including people, places and practices, marriage being only one way of expressing this opposition. The forest or jungle, forest people (the brothers), hunting, palm juice and millet gruel, *siardi* creeper and, in particular, the biting demoness are all representations of the wild, in contrast to the royal town of Jeypore, golden earrings, an army, a princess and a horse.

The other brothers are the ancestors of the other tribal groups, now subjects, which are then "named," and thus given an explicit identity after their younger brother has been established as the king. The list provided offers a quite accurate representation of the tribal composition of the area: Kond, Bondo, Didayi, Joria (Jhoria), Ollar (Holar), Parenga and Pengo (Pengu), which are all tribes of the region.[8] It is noteworthy that this story makes an explicit contrast between tribal cultivators and the "high caste" late comers: the gardeners, herders, priests and royal soldiers. In other stories (e.g. M12, M3) that narrate the origin of the different communities of the region they are often mixed. Regionally, however, there is in fact a clear distinction that is recognized between the tribal cultivators and the non-cultivating groups that have specific occupations (Berger 2002) which corresponds with the description in this myth. The difference between the tribal brothers and the late comers is articulated with regard to commensality. Earlier, the tribes could share food with the younger brother, even after he became king; thus, he was still considered one of them. With a tone of resentment, it is observed that this situation changed with the coming of the high castes, which alienated the king from his tribal brothers, from whom he no longer accepted food.[9]

This co-creation of king and subjects is discussed in a number of other myths, three of which I want to draw on here for comparison (M11, M13, M15). Each of them makes use of only a selection of the four codes mentioned and

8 The Maria are found somewhat further away in Bastar; what Chileri refers to is unclear.

9 What the story is not mentioning is that members of all four communities (Rona, Mali, Goudo, Brahman) also do not accept food from any of the tribal communities mentioned.

leaves one or more out: M11 leaves out marriage, M13 the horse, and M15 food and the issue of carrying loads. However, each myth introduces a new dimension as well.

M11, collected in a Didayi village, uses three codes to establish a threefold hierarchy, adding a new social category – that of the Dom or Dombo, who rank below the cultivating tribal communities in the local hierarchy (Berger 2002). The first man and woman – the ubiquitous incestuous sibling pair who are turned into spouses by divine intervention (see M12) – had three sons. In the course of the story, the younger son does not eat beef and manages to ride a horse. Status here seems to be directly linked to power. Immediately after the feast of beef, which the younger brother avoids, the mother asks her sons to mount a horse and only the non-beef-eater manages to accomplish the task. Having assumed the role of power, the younger son then introduces the next criterion of carrying loads. The middle son had consumed beef and could not mount the horse, but he does manage to carry the load as ordered by the younger brother. Failing in every task – having not only eaten beef but actually killed the cow – the eldest brother is scolded by the younger: "You don't know how to ride a horse (. . .) and you cannot even carry a load." Their parents then decide that their younger son will be king, their middle one Didayi Porja and their oldest Dom.

To explain the creation of subjects and king, M13 especially draws on the complementary alimentary and matrimonial codes. This story was recorded in the Joria village of (Lenji) Sukku, some 15 kilometers north of Nandapur, where I documented the Nandi and Ganga festivals (see Chapters 6 & 7) some 60 years later. A striking new feature of this myth is music. The two brothers know how to play instruments well, to such an extent that animals and humans start dancing when they hear them. Obviously, this "sweet music" is not merely entertainment but a means of attraction (people/animals are drawn in), enchantment (they forget their everyday affairs and dance) and control (even dangerous creatures can then be approached and dealt with). In my discussions of Dasara, the "gods market" in Bastar (Chapter 5) or the festivals of the Joria, I will return to the sound dimensions of the rituals, which are a sonic form of divine empowerment.

Here, the brothers make use of their music to approach two women in their search for brides. The younger one is pretty, the elder ugly, having long teeth, nose and hair, as well as huge ears. Enchanted by the music, the ugly woman is tamed in the manner we have already encountered in M1, her huge ears are pierced and she is tied with *siardi* creepers. In addition, a certain kind of wood is tied to her back, which is an indication of the way Gadaba used to wear their waist cloth (*kisalo'*), which distinguished the women from all others in the region (see photo 9.1). As soon as the brothers stop playing music the two women refuse to comply and resist them. Only by means of starvation are they made to

agree to marriage. The elder, ugly woman, in turn, forces the elder brother to eat her kind of food, namely raw meat. Quite clearly, she is a demoness as in M1 (without being named as such), she is aggressive, wild and ugly. This is made more than explicit by unmasking her as a cannibal. Through another, even more violent act (cutting off her ears and knocking out her teeth), the elder brother domesticates her and takes her to the Duduma Waterfall, where their descendants now live – the Gadaba and Parenga. Meanwhile, the younger brother and his wife commence the "race of kings," among them the "Maharaja of Jeypore."

The third story (M15) comes from a Koya village, further south. Like M11, the myth is concerned with the offspring of the original incestuous couple, here two sons and two daughters, and as in M1 a horse is made by Deur (another name for the sky god, Dorom or Mahaprabhu, etc.) to be mounted. However, the motive for this action is much more explicit in this story: there is no hierarchy among the communities, there is no leader, and general anarchy prevails ("everyone does according to his own mind"). The status of king and subject is not merely an effect of the action of mounting a horse or failing to do so, as the god clearly articulates what is at stake before the attempt is made: "Whichever of you two boys can mount and ride this horse will be Raja, the other will be Poroja." Two more features of M15 are noteworthy. First, the younger sister also mounts the horse and rides "round the world" with the younger brother looking for a place to settle, while the elder brother carries their loads for them. At the selected location ("Mahul-lakta Hill"[10]) they marry – thus repeating the original incest – and become "Raja-Rani."

The second new feature is a comment on the royal administration, a somewhat bleak note at the end of the story. In M1, we encountered the king's soldiers (*sepoys*), who searched, found and overwhelmed the demoness. M15 distinguishes more roles and is much more negative about their effect on the people: "Bhima [the younger brother, now king] made Amins [revenue officials] and guards and police. Very soon the police and Amins began to trouble the people and everyone was afraid of them." In contrast to the soldiers in M1, these troublesome representatives of the state have no function in the generation of the category of subject but are rather described as some sort of unintended negative consequence, a pestilence on the people that was created by the younger brother once he became king. From the perspective of the subjects, it seems it was not a good idea of their younger brother to bring them into

10 I am not aware that this name refers to a actual geographical location. *Mahul* is the name of the flower from which the popular liquor is distilled. *Lakta* refers to "matted" hair and thus indicates asceticism. Both may signify a forested place.

existence. This aspect foreshadows the topic of the wicked king, the Dom King, to which I will turn shortly.

The three myths also provide more spatial coordinates, by elaborating the geographical code. While M1 introduced the forested banks of the Godavari, the capital of Jeypore, and a further unspecified area where the Gadaba then lived (and still do today), M11 introduced the Machkund River – also a "jungle" area – at whose banks the Didayi settle, and north/east (and upstream) of which the Gutob Gadaba and Parenga villages are also to be found (i.e. the area left unspecified in M1).

The narrative of M13 unfolds between two famous waterfalls in the area, though only one of them is mentioned explicitly. It starts with the Kotni Mala Hill, where two brothers live. This hill, where marks can be seen in a rock that resemble those of a mortar (*kutni*), lies just south-east of Nandapur, with the Rani Duduma (Queens Fall, also "Queen-Gorge-Mother," *rani-jol-ma*, see M3) adjacent to it. Both hill and waterfall implicate each other and figure prominently in many myths, often being jointly referred to as Kotni Mala, Bet Jola[11] ("Mortar Creepers, Hunting Gorge," see M3, M4; thus the name combines the two main modes of subsistence called *beto-taso*, hunting [*bet*] and cultivation [*tas*]). The story ends about 30 kilometers to the west at an impressive waterfall,[12] simply called Duduma ("Waterfall"), where the Machkund River drops more than 160 meters (Senapati and Sahu 1966, 13) and continues its course at the bottom of a steep valley toward the Didayi and Bondo area.

On the basis of the four myths discussed thus far we can say that, from the local perspective, the institution of the king – and hence the *raja/porja* relationship – is established by divine intervention and with the aim of creating order. While the subjects are granted senior status in local terms, it is the younger brother who accomplishes the task that qualifies him to become king. What further distinguishes the *porja* from the *raja* is their connection to the wild, which is

11 *Jola* means ravine, gorge; but also spring, moat or bog (see Gustafsson 1989, 208; Mahapatra 1985, 221). Rousseleau translates "*mal*" with mountain, not with creeper (and Kotni Mal hence as "Mont du mortier," 2008, 192). *Mal* also means (flower) "garland" and may be understood as a reference to rice (see Chapter 8); which obviously also would make sense in connection with the mortar.

12 Not only Adivasis consider this to be a divine place. Also members of the Breklum mission, visiting the waterfall in 1882, were obviously overwhelmed by it, writing: "Anbetend stehen wir vor der Erhabenheit dieser Natur, der Schöpfung des Allmächtigen, stille" (quoted in Waak et al. 1994, 2–3; approximately in English: "In adoration we stand before the majesty of nature, the creation of the Almighty, silent"). Already 20 years ago it had become a popular picnic spot for middle class Hindus on holiday trips.

articulated in culinary and matrimonial terms especially, but also in spatial terms, contrasting forest and royal capital.

The creation of a royal polity constituted by tribal brotherhood, with the subjects sharing their food with their fraternal king, turns out not to be enduring or, in other words, turns out to have certain undesirable side effects. The polity does not remain a dyadic *raja/porja* order. Instead, other people come in, the "high castes" that rob the tribes of their commensal relationship with the king, and, perhaps worse, policemen, guards and tax collectors also arrive, implying control, exploitation and servitude, as well as causing trouble and fear. Other myths also point to this dimension; for example, a story collected among the Bondo (M17) describes how the king of Jeypore dreamt of the birth of the most important Bondo deity, the above-mentioned Pat Kanda Mahaprabhu. Sending his men to Bondo territory to worship the god had the effect of all Bondo taking flight, as they were afraid that they would not cope with the demands of their visitors. However, the king's men "chased" them and brought them back, and a number of administrative-cum-service duties that catered to the needs of the officials were then established, alongside sacrificer and headmen, such as carrying baggage, fetching water and taking reports to the police. M17 presents this administrative intervention in a matter-of-fact, less agitated way than M15.

Also, another story (M19) starts out by saying that Mahaprabhu sent the *raja*, the government and the sahibs "to rule over mankind" and because people were afraid, they lived peacefully, which probably means to say, they obeyed. The story then takes an ironic twist, as the god decides to create order among animals as well, creating two kinds of monkeys and a dog, and assigning them the positions of Sahib-Raja, Police and Reserve Police, respectively. The chatter of the monkeys, according to the story's ending, would be equivalent to making a report to the police. In any case, whether in a fearful or humorous way, the stories clearly articulate the downsides of being a subject.

With regard to the rationale of becoming a subject, two things are particularly noteworthy in the myths discussed thus far. One is the issue of beef-eating. When I started my fieldwork in the mid-1990s, many of the Gadaba men and women ate beef, and cattle sacrifices were a regular feature in life-cycle and annual rituals. However, there was certainly a discourse that indicated that beef-eating and cattle sacrifices were potentially problematic. Some people did not eat beef and others – Birsa, for instance – only cooked beef outside but not inside the house. State institutions had a clear stance on it. When I was married (the passive form is quite suitable here) in the Gadaba village in 2000 (Berger 2015, 531f), the police warned me not to sacrifice cattle, as would traditionally have been the case (they tolerated cattle sacrifices by the locals which they knew took place). Some children also told me that they had received a beating

at school, as a classmate had leaked to the Hindu teacher that beef had been consumed at home (Berger 2014). A footnote from Elwin (with reference to a Bondo myth) indicates that this was not a recent situation.

> All the tribesmen used to keep cattle for agriculture, sacrifice and food. Under Hindu influence many of them have ceased to kill cows openly even for sacrifice, though the practice continues secretly and most tribesmen do not hesitate to eat the flesh of a cow which has been killed accidentally or by a wild animal. The custom is so firmly established in the mythology that it is hard for the people to believe that beef-eating is wicked as their Hindu neighbours say it is. (Elwin 1954, 358, fn.1)

At the time of my research, cattle were not sacrificed secretly but in public ceremonies. Also, I do not think that in the 1990s, or at the time of Elwin's research, locals regarded their beef consumption as wicked or that eating beef (or not) would be "one of their major ethical preoccupations," as Elwin (1954, L) claims. Rather, beef-eating has been, probably for a long time, a distinctive status criterion in the region. All those "high castes" mentioned in M1 (Rona, Mali, Goudo, Brahmins; the latter not found in villages, but only in towns such as Nandapur) abstain from eating beef, and some from pork as well (Berger 2002, 69), and they wear the Hindu sacred thread as a sign of their regional higher status. The myths thus recognize beef-eating as a status indicator, as part of the alimentary code, although among the Adivasis, I doubt it was a matter of ethics. At the same time, the myths do contain a moral dimension, even though their narrators would not subscribe to it. M11 significantly makes a distinction between those who do not eat beef (the future king), those who do (the future tribal subjects) and those who are the lowest because they actually killed the cow.[13] It thus seems that the tribal myths have incorporated external elements of a Hindu discourse and valuations that mark beef-eaters as lowly; hence, their status as subjects.[14]

The other noteworthy issue, related to the previous one, is the role of demons, who are usually female. In M1 and M13 (see also M2), the tribal subjects – in particular, the Gadaba and Parenga – are said to be the descendants of the union of a demoness and an elder brother. This immediately triggers the association with the Vena story discussed in the previous chapter, where the first

13 Unlike in the plains, Gadaba do not leave the business of killing a cow to the Dombo, but do it themselves (speaking of the situation twenty years ago).

14 This motif is also to be found among the Kuttia Kond. Niggemeyer (1964a, 222f) recorded a myth in which the younger brother, after having consumed goat, chicken and dove meat is able to ride the horse and subsequently becomes king, while the elder brother had eaten meat of the pig, buffalo and cow, failed to climb the horse and becomes Kond.

creature resulting from the sacrifice of the wicked king is an ugly being "from whom were descended various foreign tribes" (Doniger 1980, 327) – an ugly creature, subject to his "younger brother," the king. It seems that the tribal myths are an indigenized version of the pan-Indian Vena story (see Rousseleau 2010b). As in the case of beef-eating and cattle sacrifice, they seem to have accepted and appropriated external criteria for the explanation of their own status as subjects. However, in contrast to beef, the tribes of the region do have a moral stance on "demons," perhaps the most vicious of whom are Soni and, particularly, Rau (Rahu). At least as far as the Gadaba are concerned, these creatures stand outside the moral order of *niam*, which is based on relationships of reciprocity. Like the police – as has been pointed out to me repeatedly, echoing the attitude of fear articulated in M15 and M17 discussed above – demons always take by force and never give; they practice what Sahlins (1965, 147f) called "negative reciprocity."

In his analysis of elite and subaltern versions of the myths about Rahu – the demon of eclipse – and their relation to the Dom community, Ranajit Guha (1985) deals with exactly this problem. Why do subaltern communities rationalize their own low status using external Brahmanical norms such as beef-eating (riding a horse being another instance)? For Guha, relationships of dominance and oppression are encoded in myths – or religion more generally – and subaltern mythology deals with this situation in ambivalent ways. On the one hand, they internalize their debasement, for example by accepting Brahmanical status-criteria of beef-eating or elite representations of tribal communities as descendants of demons. On the other hand, subaltern myths also document defiance and subversion. This would also, Guha argues, entail an "alternative morality" (1985, 12) that endorses banditry or the wicked king Vena as forms of resistance. Without discussing his arguments further here, it can be said that the myths of the Koraput region that I deal with in this chapter, may also be seen to show such ambivalence. In the creation of kingship, the low, wild, demon-like status of the subjects is accepted as vital, as we have seen, quite similar to the Vena story. However, there are other tribal myths that elaborate the indigenous view on what constitutes a bad king, a Dom King, a king from the lowest level of Desia society. These myths provide another model of the creation of kingship, one in which sovereignty is framed differently, not in relation to beef-eating or horse-riding, but in terms of wilderness and rebellion. In order to define the tribal view of a bad king, however, it is also necessary to summarize what the myths say about the normal behavior of good kings. What makes a proper king? What are his qualities?

Good and Bad Kings: The Dom Raja Stories

Proper kings do two things, they host sacrifices and create order. Mahaprabhu is himself the creator of divine order, of *niam*. He created affinity out of consanguinity – spouses out of siblings – and from the primordial union sprang the tribes of the region. However, he wants more order among humans and thus initiates kingship. Like the divine order of *niam*, which finds articulation and application especially in the domain of ritual conduct (Gadaba also speak of *niti niam*), the royal order is foremost a ritual order. That is to say, sacrifice and order are two sides of the same coin. This is a very common experience for all Desia during festivals, as the social composition of a village and the seniority of its segments become manifest in sacrificial performances, when body parts of the animal victim, as well as the spatial and temporal set-up, are related to the status of the participants, in contrast to those who may not participate in the performance at all.

A festival often referred to in the myths, which is similarly about order and sacrifice, is the royal Dasara. One dimension of Dasara is the payment of tribute (*beti*), which is given by delegations of tribal communities to the king in Jeypore. A Bondo myth (M20) describes how a boy who brought a goat, rice and two rupees to the king as a tribute was called "Mandhara – giver of *man*, honor." Yet clearly, hosting Dasara is not merely the king's right and a means to receive tribute, but his duty as well, which is linked to the performance of sacrifices, especially human sacrifices. Thus, reminiscent of the Gadaba Birsa Sisa, quoted earlier, who stressed the role of (human) sacrifices in Nandapur and Jeypore, a story from the Ollar Gadaba (M2) states that after the younger brother became king, he started performing Dasara and sacrificing humans. Another myth I recorded (M7), narrates that, at the time of Dasara, a hill deity regularly caught young girls who were dancing and consumed them. The deity was overpowered and brought to the king of Jeypore – to Purnagarh (the "Old Fort") – and handed over to him. The people then started sacrificing buffaloes – surrogate victims for humans – at the time of Dasara.[15] Here, the king prevents irregular, random killing of humans and through his power is able to tame the deity and transform the relation of predation into one of regular worship.

15 The narrators of the story did not mention a name of a deity, just used the generic term *maphru* (god). However, the place on top of the hill pertaining to the village of Ponosput-Bagra (where the Joria are considered as "earth people" and are the sacrificers), where they sacrifice the buffaloes, is (at least nowadays) a Durga shrine. In Purnagad, south-east of Jeypore, about 6 km away from the hill-shrine, the Kalika temple is supposedly the place (both on account of the Joria and the Brahman temple priest) where the dangerous deity had been installed.

Several myths refer to human sacrifice without mentioning Dasara. A Parenga story (Elwin 1954, 269f) narrates how Bhima Raja (Bhima being associated with rain in the region; I will discuss this figure in more detail in relation to the Bali Jatra in Chapter 8) attempted to build a tank[16] but the water always drained away. Ultimately, the youngest daughter of Megh ("cloud") Raja, called Jalkamni, is sacrificed: "Bhima Raja (. . .) made a pit into the tank and cut the girl's throat above it" (Elwin 1954, 270) and her blood turned into water. "Since then Jalkamni has lived in the world and rain has fallen," the story closes.[17] During the most important village festival of the region (Chait Porbo), a Joria story (M16) recounts how a shaman is searching for plantain leaves to sacrifice to Pat Deota, who is equipped with the royal symbols of horse and sword.[18] The earth goddess (here, Thakurani) is willing to provide them if the shaman sacrifices his daughter, adding that should it be done his daughter "will live in the houses of Government and great Rajas." In the end, the shaman sacrifices his daughter and from "her blood sprang up plantain trees." Somewhat further away from the region of my immediate concern, in the Kalahandi district of Odisha, a Kond story also deals with Bhima Raja and his Rani. After constructing fields, he had no seed and so sacrificed his middle son "and sprinkled his blood all over the soil. From the boy's blood every kind of grain sprang up" (Elwin 1954, 164f).

Some of these above-mentioned stories refer to human kings, the others to royal deities. M7 and M20 mention earlier human kings in their specific locations, or capitals: Nandapur, Jeypore and Purnagarh (in Jeypore). The Parenga, Joria (M16) and Kond myths deal with royal gods. In either case, however, whether human king or divine god, the connection to (human) sacrifice is explicit. In two of the stories, the kings/gods actually perform it, while in the other story, the sacrificial victim is said to henceforth live in the houses of kings and rulers. Significantly, it seems to be the earth, in particular, that receives human sacrifices – either the earth goddess demands it directly and the human is sacrificed at her shrine, or the victim's blood is poured into a pit or sprinkled over the earth. Also noteworthy is the generative power of blood, its potential to give new life. Blood

16 There are no tanks in the tribal villages of the region. However, kings are known for building tanks (e.g. Conzelmann 2010).

17 Jalkamni (Kamni) is the water deity among the Gadaba and Bondo, especially associated with the rivers in which the paddy fields are constructed.

18 In a Parenga story Pat Deota – equivalent to Pat Khanda Mahaprabhu – is also referred to as "raja of the gods" (Elwin 1954, 590) and the Bondo myth (M17) quoted above establishes a very close relationship between this deity and the king in Jeypore who dreams of the god's birth and sends his men to worship him.

turns into water that will then make the plants grow, it transforms into trees or into seeds, a theme we will revisit when discussing the Go'ter ritual of the Gadaba (Chapter 9). A good king, in summary, constitutes order by sacrificing, especially at Dasara. If he does not perform sacrifices, as Birsa Sisa described, the earth goddess becomes angry, and that means the opposite of fecundity and well-being, illness. Through the offering of blood to the earth – of human blood in particular – the king generates fertility in the form of water, trees and seeds.

A king must care for the land with respect to its fertility, but also in terms of its availability for the subjects. This point is brought home by a myth (M3) I was told by a Dombo in the Gadaba village of Onmail, close to a settlement and site of a hydro-electric project that makes use of water from the Machkund River. The project was planned before Independence (see Stanley 1996; Strümpell 2008) but only completed afterwards. Even though Elwin claims that there are no remarkable storytellers in Koraput, in this notable narration, the storyteller starts off in a completely conventional way, combining various traditional motifs (the primordial incest from which the tribes sprang; the hunting sequence at the Queens Fall; the birth of the king in Navel Pit Nandapur), but ends with a surprising critique: the king allowed the modern Indian State to take the land away from the tribal inhabitants, who lost all rights to what was turned into government land. Thus the story ends:

> Now, what did the king do? "Give us one foot of land" they came to ask from the king. One foot [of land] they said but turned the whole place into a government settlement. Made the settlement, one piece of land of the waterfall, they build the Power House, cut the [Duduma] waterfall. (. . .) [King] gave one piece [of land], [but] the government (*sorkar*) took everything now. [It] fell into the hand of the government. Alas (*are!*), the king has no land, the Porja have no peace (*santi*). The government keeps all the fields. Like that, all over the place the king lost [all things], the children of that womb [presumably the offspring of the incestuous sibling pair, the 12 tribes] were true and the senior people too, old king lost the country, the era of the king is gone. (M3)

What this story thus laments is the failure of the king to maintain order, in the sense of watching over his land on which his subjects depend. This was not only the end of peace for the tribal cultivators, but the end of kingship as well. Let me now turn from this negligent king to the bad king, the Dom Raja.

The myths I collected, as well as those recorded by Elwin, all assume the existence of a Dom King but do not explain how he came to power. However, in the Koraput District Gazetteer from 1945, R.C.S. Bell (1945, 80; see Rousseleau and Behera 2002/3, 58f) mentions a "tradition in the Agency" that does provide a story of Dom usurpation.

> A tradition in the Agency, current among others besides the Dombs, has it that the Panos of Ghumsur in Ganjam district proved themselves so obnoxious to the people by their criminal habits that the Raja issued an order that any Pano should be killed wherever he should be found. In fear of this edict the men of the tribe scattered and some of them sought refuge in the hills of Jeypore. Soon after their arrival one of their number succeeded by a trick in inducing the Kondhs of the locality to accept him as their king. Observing that the Kondhs were in the habit of worshipping a certain *bija* tree [*Pterocarpus marsupium*] this man concealed himself in the tree and suddenly leapt from it when the Kondhs were performing their devotions, announcing that he had been sent to them to be their king. Simultaneously he summoned some of his fellow-refugees who had concealed themselves nearby and declared that they were his retinue. The Kondhs believed that a king had been given to them by the tree as a reward for their devotions and accepted the ruler thus sent to them. They built forts for him at a number of places, of which the remains of one near Sembliguda are still clearly visible and are known locally as the 'Domb fort'. A period of terror and anarchy followed during which the Raja and his followers came to be called 'Dumbas' or 'devils', which name was later changed to 'Domb'. (M23)

I will not discuss this story here, which probably was not recorded in a tribal village but in Jeypore; rather, I will focus on the Dom Raja stories, as they are common in the region, dealing with the downfall of this king. The figure of the Dom King is mentioned in a number of myths, two of which I collected – one among the Gutob Gadaba in Gudapada, one among the Bening Porja of the village of Sarbati.[19] I will follow the same procedure as above, first quoting this latter story as a reference myth (M5) in full, then complementing it in my analysis with relevant dimensions of its variants. The Bening Porja are a particularly small community, living beside the Queens Fall mentioned above, only a few kilometers from Nandapur. They are said to have had a particular kind of relationship to the king, as will be further discussed in the next chapter.[20]

> Well, there is a village named Sapuram. Gorua Dokra and Moti Dokri of the Bening community, two people, lived in this Sapuram village. These people lived by collecting roots and fruits. Well, Dom King lived then, named Nono Muni, one Dom lived, Moon Sage (Chandra Muni) Dom, in this interior. By doing the work of a messenger/ambassador (*rajdut*) he became king. When he lived, our Bening people took no lease of land, we did not

19 Raphaël Rousseleau (2008, 2010b; Rousseleau and Behera 2002/3) also discusses the topic of the Dom Raja. He is mainly interested in the relationship between this myth and the actual history of the Jeypore Kingdom and argues that the myth mirrors the history of the Silavamshi and Suryavamshi dynasties and the shift from the former to the latter. I am more concerned with the Dom Raja stories in relation to other tribal myths and ritual performances as described and analyzed in Chapter 6. But I will deal with some aspects of the history of the king/tribes relationships in the next chapter.

20 Rousseleau and Behera (2002/3, 61) refer to them as Benek Porja and argue: "we can maintain that the actual Benek Paraja are directly related to the more ancient royal dynasty historically documented in Nandapur."

do any agriculture then. Not doing agriculture they did collect roots (*pit* tubers, *Dioscorea bulbifera*) and honey and gave them as tax. Later, a jug (*mota*) with stone rice (*gora chaul*) they give as tax. At the time Gorua Dokra [and] Moti Dokri, these people lived and went digging for roots. That way, the Lizard Stone Maggot Spring way (Tendka Pakane Khira Jhola) they went. Carrying a net they went to Kitlum Mali near Pool Crab Mountain (Kundi Kakda Parbat). There Raja was born, Bening Raja, Stone Place (Silputi) Raja. The tiger (*bag*) watched and the deer (*kutra*) fed it with milk (*dud*) during the day. ([the narrator explaining] We are Desia people, we don't know milk (*kir*), we say *dud* ["mother's milk"]). These people [Gorua Dokra and Moti Dokri] they went for searching for food. They heard the child cry and as they approached the tiger and deer withdrew. They took the child, carrying it while digging for roots. Then they went to Earth Deity Spring (Jakor[21] Jola), from there to King Spring (Raja Jola) and it became evening. They stayed there and in the morning went back to Sapuram. There they lived, taking care of the boy, feeding him with tubers and fruits; the boy grew up.

At the time to pay tax, the old man thought: "the Dom [king] does not know I have a son, I am childless, I hide him from the king." The youth saw that he was preparing a stalk of bananas, *pit* tubers, honey and other things and asked, "Where are you going, father?" – "I will bring this as tax to the king's house," the old man said. – "I will also come along," the boy said. But the old man answered, "No, my child, if you come, there will be destruction (*nosto*). I have told that I have no child, I am sterile from beginning. If you will go there, the king will kill us." The boy remained silent. But he followed his father secretly through the bushes. When he arrived he explained, "Hiding, hiding I arrived, father." – "Well then," the old man said, "salute the king." And after he said that Bening Dokra [the old man] saluted the king. Then the royal boy (*raja pila*, i.e. son of the old couple) greeted with his feet. "You are greeting with your feet?" the Dom said, and took his weapon (*nalibeti*) to kill him. The Bening boy fled into the forest, came to Hunting Spring (Bet Jola) and told a bamboo bush, "Make me a shield (*chitki pairi*) and a bamboo sword (*komtri kanda*)." The wheel (*chakra*) was created and the *komtri* sword was made, the bamboo sword. With it he went to war and killed the Dom king. After he killed the king all works were finished and he kept the sword. This sword became Potangi Pat Kanda. The sheath still is in Nandapur. That is the story. [The narrator then immediately added] Well, these people when they bring Nandi sing this song, I sing you a piece: "Don't go here, don't go there, the black sword is there (*enke no ja tenke no ja kanda kalu oche*), don't go there, don't go there face/honey [?] is there (*tenke no ja tenke no ja mu bilu oche*).

This myth discusses three actors and their relationship: the old Bening couple, the Dom King and the boy, who also turns out to be a king. Many stories of the region begin with an old childless couple who live by gathering and fishing, thus at a time before agriculture. Obviously, these are forest people and, accordingly, they give forest products as tax to the Dom King. Later, after having begun agricultural practices, they provide him with bad quality rice, full of

21 Jakor is the name of a deity associated with the earth in Gadaba (and other Desia) villages (Berger 2015, 120, 404–09). This deity is possibly related to the local representation of the earth goddess called *jakeri* among the Dongria Kond (Hardenberg 2018a, 47, 625; see below).

stones, which may be interpreted as a tentative sign of resistance against the Dom King. The narrative only reveals a few details about the latter, namely that he was an envoy, perhaps of some other king from a different place, before becoming king himself. Moreover, he is twice referred to as a sage. Taken together this might indicate that he was originally an outsider.

The other king of the story, the boy, is clearly a forest creature, as can be seen from his place of birth, his name and his upbringing. The place, Kitnum Mali, probably refers to Kotni Mala, the rocks near Queens Fall, which show signs of being a huge mortar, mentioned in M13. The designation Pool Crab Mountain might also relate to this spot, with its combination of waterfall and hill. In any case, Hunting Spring (Bet Jola) does refer to this place – Kotni Mala, Bet Jola being the standard expression for this particular combination of rocks and waterfall – to which the young man goes (returns) to receive the weapons. While the name Bening Raja refers to his later forest parents and the community of the same name, Silputi Raja translates as "Stone Place King" and might signify his mountainous place of birth (in addition to a possible reference to the Stone Dynasty (Silavamshi) of Nandapur from the thirteenth century, as Rousseleau (2008, 2010b) would argue). Especially evident is the forest nature of the king as he is also nursed by a deer and protected by a tiger before he is adopted by gathering and fishing forest people – the Bening couple.

After the sequence dealing with the king's birth and adoption, the second part is about Dasara and the fight with the Dom King. Because the boy (Bening Raja) has been kept secret, he is told to stay home while the old man goes to pay his dues to the Dom Raja. Perhaps the old couple had recognized in their foster child a rival king from the start and feared bloodshed. However, the boy does not obey and follows the old man. Whether intentionally or out of ignorance, it is not clear, but when facing the Dom Raja he does not properly acknowledge the status of the king. An illegitimate king – a Dom King – is greeted in an inverse manner, with the feet: a low status king being saluted with a low status body part. The reaction of the thus insulted Dom King is violent and the response of the Bening King again testifies to his forest nature: he escapes into the forest and is supported once more by forest creatures, not animals this time, but a bamboo tree at the Queens Fall, which provides the Bening Raja with forest weapons. By no means inferior tools, the Bening King slays the Dom King with these weapons, and so becomes the new king, while his sword receives a new name[22] that is reminiscent of the name for a major celestial deity (Pat Kanda). It thus becomes an object of worship, part of which is still said to be in

22 Potangi is a town 25 kilometers east of Nandapur, the area of the Ollar Gadaba.

Nandapur.[23] The narrator of the story directly links the sword of this myth to the Nandi festival of the Joria, to which I will return in Chapter 7.

In several important ways, this myth contrasts with the brotherhood stories I discussed above. The first aspect to mention is the autochthonous creation of the Bening Raja, autochthonous in the strict sense, as he is born from the earth (at Kitlum Mali, "Pool Crab Mountain") on his own, without intervention. Other myths also mention that the king or King God was born from the earth. M3 narrates the birth of the king at Kotni Mala, after the queen had left (jumping into the waterfall): "Then the king was born there. Navel Pit King's house is in Nandapur. There you find *nal bumli* (navel pit), Kotni Mala, Bet Jola." M12 starts with the birth: "At Nandapur, King God (Raja Maphru) was born on a hillock, in the forest. He came out there, was born there." Thus he "came out" of the earth, notably in the forest, near hills and water. This autochthonous origin of the king contrasts with the creation of kingship as the result of a divine quest for order and as a consequence of the accomplishment of some divinely inspired task, such as riding a horse. The Bening Raja is simply born a king.

However, although born a king, and this is the second aspect, the Bening Raja does not automatically assume office but has to overthrow and kill the Dom Raja. In contrast to M1, where the younger brother marries the king's daughter to become the new king of Jeypore, Bening Raja has to rebel against and fight the Dom Raja. The third aspect is that this story of the Dom Raja establishes kingship without hierarchy. The codes that distinguish status in the brotherhood myths – of carrying loads, eating beef, riding a horse or marriage – are absent and, accordingly, we find no seniority between brothers or communities, nor do we encounter the topics of debasement, of incompetent carriers, wicked beefeaters or ugly demon brides. The rule of the Bening Raja does not involve inferior, humiliated subjects, at least not in this story. While the brotherhood stories assert a tribal king by denigrating the tribal subjects, the Dom Raja myth is truly subaltern and neither relies on elite status codes nor on hierarchy. Quite the contrary, the motif of humiliation is inverted in the Dom Raja stories, as it is the Dom King who is debased by being greeted with the feet by the jungle boy. Finally, what should be stressed is the positive valuation of the forest and all forest creatures. Whereas in M1 and M13, the forest is connoted with demonesses that are wild, aggressive and ugly, the Dom Raja story depicts the forest as providing, protective and powerful.

23 The story does not make it explicit where the capital of the Dom King lies, but it seems to have been Nandapur, as the sheath of the sword is still there.

Five other myths deal with or mention the Dom Raja. Four were collected in tribal villages (M6, M9, M14, M18; two Gadaba and two Parenga), the fifth (M23) comes from Bell (1945), the first part of which I have already mentioned in explaining how the Dom King came to power. However, this myth, albeit only briefly, also mentions the downfall of the Dom King. Four of these myths confirm the basic message of M5, and they also add more details and actually provide some clues about what makes the Dom Raja a bad king. One of them (M14) holds some surprises.

M6 has the same structure as M5 discussed above, the birth of the boy king and his adoption by the old couple in the first part, then the fight and victory over the Dom King in the second. In this version, however, both the Dom King and the boy are verbally more explicit. The Dom Raja actually demands tax from the couple ("Will you bring it or not?"), perhaps indicating a threat; while the boy not only greets the Dom Raja with his feet but challenges him verbally, saying: "Which *raja*? Tell! I bid salute with my feet, quickly I will [sit] where you are sitting now. (. . .) How big are you, how big am I?" Not only is the oral threat more explicit in M6, the destruction due to the war is also more disastrous, as the earth is "spun around" (*buligala pruthi*); the "earth is finished" (*pruthi sarigala*); and the "country is finished" (*des sarigala*). In particular, the royal capital seems to have been destroyed ("Earth destroyed, where many [*lake*, 100,000] kings reigned") and the number of subjects decreased ("here at Nandapur the *porja* decreased, but there you have a lot of place") and the palace is shifted from Nandapur to Jeypore. The myth may thus actually provide a rationale for the historical shift of the royal capital, stressing at the end the pivotal and unique role of the new *raja* in hosting Dasara in Jeypore.

In two stories, we are given some hints about the bad behavior of the Dom King and how it contrasts with the proper conduct of a good king as outlined above. Instead of providing grain, especially through the performance of human sacrifice, the Dom Raja steals or withholds it. At a divine feast, as a Parenga story narrates (M9), the earth goddess ate so much that she vomited and seven girls and five boys were born from her vomit: seven kinds of grain (among them rice and finger millet) and five different pulses (e.g. black gram), respectively. After the gods sent the grain and pulses to the Middle World to feed humans, the Dom Raja wanted to take the seven sisters as his wives, so caught and kept them in a "pit" and imprisoned their brothers. Two gods (the by now well-known Dharmo Mahaprabhu and Pat Deota, alias Pat Kanda, actually all variants of the sky god) then conquer the Dom fort as kings, as they "got onto a horse" first, beheading the Dom Raja and freeing the sisters and brothers, thus providing humanity with grain and pulses again. The king gods thus actually sacrificed the Dom King,

while the people – so the story ends – still sacrifice to the stone head of the Dom Raja to procure rainfall.

Given the above identification of the grains as daughters of the earth goddess, it is quite clear that this is what another Gadaba story (M18) indicates when speaking of the "young and beautiful daughter" of Mother Earth, without explicitly mentioning that this refers to cereals. Also in this story, the Dom Raja wants to marry her and tries to take her by force. This time it is not deities but other kinds of seeds that rescue her. The young woman throws castor seeds at the king, which turn into bees and drive the Dom Raja and his army away.

The Dom Raja story provided by Bell (M23) also repeats the general narrative of the boy found in the forest, who is nursed by an animal (although it is not a wild animal, but a goat) and raised by foster parents. However, details of how the boy overthrows the Dom Raja are not provided, and the story jumps directly to the moment when the boy establishes a new kingdom in Narayanapatnam, which was later moved to Nandapur. What is special in this version is that it is the only one that mentions the later succession of kings. It recounts how a descendant of the boy had no sons and due to divine intervention decided to give his daughter to "a certain youth who had come to his kingdom," also through divine initiative. The current royal family of Jeypore would be their descendants. This may thus refer to the dynastic change from the Stone to the Sun Dynasty, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

As I argued above, the Dom Raja story (M5) can be contrasted with the various versions of the brotherhood narratives, with the former involving the autochthonous creation of kingship, the acquisition of rule via rebellion, and the absence of hierarchy and the use of elite codes for making status distinctions, as well as a positive valuation of the forest, which is unconnected to debased demon qualities. However, a fourth Dom Raja story (M14) recorded in a Parenga village actually presents a combination of the two types of myths, plus a shot of Ramayana. The first half of the story is about the birth of the future rebel king and how he overthrows the Dom Raja. In the second half, the seniority of brotherhood is, as we know already, turned into the distinction between the king (younger brother) and his subjects, Gadaba and Parenga being the descendants of the elder brother. While this myth thus maintains the topos of rebellion as a means to assume the throne, two aspects stand in contrast to the reference Dom Raja story (M5) discussed above (hierarchy and the origin of kingship), and another is ambivalent (the valuation of the forest).

The rebel king is not earth-born in this myth (M14) but is the offspring of a noteworthy union between a merchant's "lovely daughter" and two deities, Rama and Lakshman, well know from the Ramayana epic. While in some stories the king seemed to be human and in others divine, this myth presents a

hybrid king, half human, half divine. After the seduction by the two gods, the daughter (while she is not called Sita in the myth, she also disappears into the earth like the Ramayana heroine[24]) first gives birth to twins, two boys who become separated, and later a girl. The younger son is found and raised by an old foraging childless couple in the forest – here called Beng Raja and Rani – and later becomes the slayer of the Dom Raja and the new king. While the general outline of the Dom Raja story is thus the same, the rebel king clearly is not autochthonous but an outsider (as both his merchant grandfather and his divine fathers come from elsewhere).

The hierarchy established in M14 between the younger and elder brothers is very similar to the other myths around this theme (M1, M11, M13, M15). After the younger brother kills the Dom Raja and becomes king, he finds his elder brother again and makes him his carrier. As in M1, the younger brother then tries to find a bride for the elder and finds their sister, the female child of the merchant's daughter and Rama and Lakshman. She displays many of the attributes of a demoness (aggressive, cannibalistic) and had previously already been tamed by her father gods in the usual manner (*siardi* ropes through the ears and a "stone" around the waist, referring to the *kisalo'* cloth). The elder brother and his new wife – a variant of the original incest – soon return to the forest and become the ancestors of the Gadaba (elder brother) and Parenga (younger brother).

The valuation of the forest is ambivalent in the myth, as it is both protective, as in M5, perhaps even nurturing, but also associated with a demon-like creature, as in M1. The twin brothers are taken into the "jungle" after their birth and the younger one is left under a sacred fig tree (*pipal*, *Ficus religiosa*), the elder under a sago tree (*Caryota urens*). Here, the aspect of feeding is not made explicit, but obviously, the trees protect (and perhaps feed[25]) the infants in a similar way to the deer and tiger in M5. At the same time, however, in M14, the forest is associated with the demon sister of the twins, who persuades her elder brother and new husband to return to the jungle.

M14 thus represents an intermediate type, between the Dom Raja stories of M5 and M6 and the various brotherhood myths. The throne is assumed by rebellion, but the *raja*/*porja* distinction is the consequence of establishing a new royal order, including the debasement of the tribal subject, although in an

24 After disappearing in the earth she re-surfaces at Kappor Chua, a place that has been mentioned in several myths before. Elwin (1954, 386) explains that this is a "sacred grove and spring" near Mundlipada, the main Bondo village, where Sita is supposed to have bathed. In the myth (M14) she is bathed there by Lakshman.

25 In another Bondo story (Elwin 1954, 185f) deserted twins are nurtured and raised by a sago palm under which they lie ("drinking, drinking they grew up," 1954, 185).

attenuated form: the demoness is not called as such and even though she is dangerous and a cannibal, she is at least not said to be ugly. The valuation of the forest and the origin of the king might be related. Perhaps there is some consistency in the boy king not being presented as autochthonous but as an outsider, and the forest having an ambivalent value. The contrasting features of the brotherhood myths, the Dom Raja stories and the intermediate form are summarized in the table below.

Table 1: Comparison of "Brotherhood" and Dom Raja Stories

	Brotherhood Stories (M 11, 12, 13, 15)	**Intermediate Form** (M 14)	**Dom Raja Stories** (M 5, 6)
Origin of king	Divine intervention	From outside	Earth-born
Acquisition of rule	Solve task	Rebellion	Rebellion
Hierarchy (elite codes)	+	+	-
Debasement of tribes	+	+	-
Debasement of king	-	+	+
Valuation of forest	-	- +	+

What the various Dom Raja myths do not explain is why the Dom King is a Dom. Dombo, as they are called in the region (also Harijan, Goren by the Gutob Gadaba), were weavers[26] and they are still petty traders and musicians today among the Desia, but no trace of these activities can be found in the stories. As the position of village herald is always assumed by a Dombo, the description of the Dom Raja as a former envoy might be regarded as an indication of local practice. It is more likely, however, that the Dom Raja stories are part of a discourse that regards Dombo as disreputable. Such representations are to be found locally, as well as in the literature. Due to their role in trade and as intermediaries in market transactions (e.g., the purchase of cattle), Dombo have the local reputation of being rascals, likely to cheat you if you do not watch out. Moreover, they have a low regional status and the tribal cultivators do not, as a rule, dine or intermarry with them.

However, this is only one side of the story, and in my experience many Desia have very close and amicable relationships with Dombo, even ritually being their *tsoru* brothers (Berger 2015). Despite some exceptions (Berger 2015; Hardenberg 2017, 2018a; Pfeffer 1994b, 1997), the colonial and academic literature

26 Dombo were still weaving in the village of Gudapada during my initial fieldwork beginning 1999, already then a rarity. But they discontinued the practice soon afterwards.

echoes the pejorative side of the Dombo representations. As such, they are described as deceiving "Domb tricksters," with a "hereditary aptitude for theft" (Bell 1945, 62, 79), infiltrators into the hills (Fürer-Haimendorf 1943, 151, fn. 1), "degraded missionaries of a lofty faith" (Elwin 1950, 21), as the "criminal population of the district" (Somasundaram 1949, 38), or as having a "rogue" or "devilish" character (Sahu 1942, 95). Vitebsky (2017a) also has few positive things to say about this group – called Pano in the Sora area, as among the Kond – and much like Niggemeyer (1964b), he stresses their corrupt and exploitative activities as disadvantageous to the tribal population. Rather than mirroring the actual role of Dombo in Desia society, I would argue, the Dom Raja myths return to these motives of greed, fraud and corruption that abound locally as well as in the literature. M23 is a case in point as a Dom succeeded in becoming the king of Jeypore because of treachery and the "criminal habits" associated with this community.

I now turn to the Dongria Kond, an indigenous community that will be discussed repeatedly in this book. Their case is especially discussed here as excellent ethnographic descriptions are available and ideas of kingship figure very prominently in their cosmology, myths and rituals.

3.2 Kingship in Dongria Kond Myth and Ritual

The Dongria Kond or "Hill" Kond live in a clearly circumscribed area called the Niamgiri Hills. These steep hills, which rise up to 1500 meters from the surrounding plains of about 400 meters, lie at the margin of the core region with which this book is mainly concerned. Today, they belong to the Rayagada District but they pertain to the greater Koraput area and were previously part of that district (until 1992). At the foot of the hills lies the town of Bissamcuttack, where earlier the Thatraja resided, a vassal king who owed allegiance to the Maharaja of Jeypore about 120 kilometers away across the Koraput Plateau. Such a vassal king had certain responsibilities:

> On behalf of the Jeypore maharaja, the *thatraja*[27] of Bissamcuttack ruled over the Dongria Kondh, the highlanders, as well as the plainsmen of three taluks. Besides the collection of land revenue from the tenants, the special duty of *thatraja* was to secure 500 soldiers, *paikas*, for the protection of the great zamindary in time of war or rebellion. (Nayak 1989, 180)

Thus, the Dongria had their "own king" close at hand. Ethnographically they are well documented. Prasanna Kumar Nayak's work, from which I quoted

27 *That* refers to a battalion of 5000 soldiers, as Nayak explains (1989, 180).

above, especially focuses on Dongria feuding (1989, see also 2021). With regard to the Dongria myths, I rely on the work of Jena et al. (2002). My most important source is the comprehensive ethnography of Roland Hardenberg (2018a), who examined and analyzed their buffalo sacrifice in great detail. As Hardenberg points out, kingship is an idiom of superiority, both socially and cosmologically, and his ethnography shows that it is also a relational idiom.[28] The Dongria proudly refer to themselves – perhaps reminiscent of the Bondo attitude toward the king of Jeypore – as "children of the king" (*raja mila*, 2018a, 74) and, in turn, regard themselves as kings vis-à-vis their Dombo clients, their "subjects" (*praja*), the only other community living in the hills alongside the Dongria. In this context, a Dom Raja as encountered in the Desia myths above would be a clear inversion of the situation as seen by the Dongria.

The notion of superiority or, more specifically, sovereignty is also cosmologically embedded. The superior male "deity" (*penu*) is called Dharmuraja, the sun god and father of the Dongria, who is also (at least sometimes) considered to be the husband of the earth goddess (Dharni). Dharmuraja chose Niamraja – the "king of moral rules" (*niam*) – to rule over the Dongria. Niamraja is the supreme mountain deity of the Dongria and resides in the highest peak of the area, the "mountain of rules"[29] (*niamgiri*), which also designates the entire area inhabited by the Dongria. According to Hardenberg, it is the male deities in particular who bring knowledge and rules to humans, the Dongria, and who are therefore considered kings.

The creation of both the sun god and Niamraja is narrated in origin myths collected by Jena et al. (2002) that I summarize here.[30] As has become apparent in the various myths I have discussed above, many different names and versions of deities' names circulate, in addition to the different ways ethnographers choose to write those names. Thus, Dharmuraja (as spelled by Hardenberg) is equivalent to Dharmaraja, Dharam Devata or Mahapuru (Jena et al. 2002, 136) and to Mahaprabhu, Dorom, Pat Deota, Pat Kanda (among others) mentioned above, all related to the sky god (sun or sun/moon), in contrast to the earth goddess (variously called Bosmati, Thakurani, etc., here Dharni).

28 Also Hardenberg (2018a, 74, fn. 8) observed what has been repeatedly noted in the discussion of tribal myth: "When talking about the raja Dongria are never quite specific about whether they mean the gods who are represented as kings or the kings living in the palaces in the plains."

29 The word *giri* is translated as "path" (e.g. Hardenberg 2018a, 326) as well as "hill" (Jena et al. 2002, 12).

30 The narratives collected by Jena et al. are of amazing detail, compared to those collected by Elwin or myself on the Koraput plateau.

The creation of the sun god king: Dharamraja (Jena et al. 2002, 136–43) (M21)

The first creature Jamarani, the "ancestral mother of the Dongria" (133), together with Sita Penu, goddess of wealth, created *raitos* or cultivators inside the earth, in complete darkness; thereafter animals and plants. But the *raitos* demanded more human beings to be created. "She [Jamarani] explained that such a large number of human beings would require a king who would be responsible for the people's welfare and could act as a mediator between the people and *jamarani*, the supreme creator." (136) But finally Jamarani agreed, called all the gods in order to create a king together. A figure was made from clay in the shape of a human body but it was not completed, the limbs were lacking. Jamarani gave life to the figure and put it in a bamboo cradle. A fly pointed out to Jamarani that putting the figure into a cradle would not be sufficient, the fly said to Jamarani: "You have formed a figure and kept it in the open: how do you expect it to become active or later to produce offspring of its own? It would be better to protect the figure by keeping it in an earthen pot. Only by doing so will it become active after some time and can procreate" (137). Jamarani did as suggested and after some days different types of deities emerged from the pot. Jamarani also gave birth to different kinds of people, "scheduled castes" such as Hadi or Ghasi and "pure castes" such as Paika and Brahmans. But as a king had still not being created the people urged Jamarani again: "if you do not give us a king we will not be able to live in this darkness for long, and peace and harmony will not last. Since it was you who created us, it is you who are obliged to save our lives. We cannot move in this darkness, and we need a king who will bring us light" (138).

Jamarani then sought the help of her assistants (Alleni and Jateni) who went to the river deity Gangi Penu for help. Gangi Penu instructed the assistants how to sacrifice for her (the proper sacrificial offering being a pig) and to take sand from the bottom of the river and grind it. When the assistants showed the grinded sand to Gangi Penu it was found to be still too coarse and they threw it away. The sand was swallowed by a swan who laid an egg on the bank of a river. Jamarani asked her assistants to search for the swan that was finally found. The egg was placed in an earthen pot made by potters, three more pots being placed on each side of the pot containing the egg. Jamarani proclaimed that the king who would bring light would emerge from the pot.

Then sun god (Dharam Devata, Dharamraja) was born from the egg. However, no one – neither gods nor humans – had witnessed the event as all were asleep. With one exception. As it turned out, only a Harijan boy had witnessed the sun god's birth. The other deities became angry that is was a Harijan boy who was the only witness and "slashed his body to pieces" (141). Dharmaraja was shocked by this cruel action and granted the Harijan boy a privilege, saying to him: "You will be the one who can watch me performing my ablutions, or bathing, who will be able to see me picking up my sword, raising my umbrella over my head and placing myself on the throne, with my crown on, to rule over the people" (141). After some hesitation, because she first considered the sun god to be still too young to rule, "jamarani put royal robes on the sun god, and gave him a sword, hat and shoes to wear. When he walked out of the darkness, light filled every place he crossed and the people were overjoyed for having been redeemed from the darkness by their king, Dharmaraja" (142).

Then the people emerged from the belly of the earth through a crack, the Adivasi [Dongria] being the first to emerge from it. They divided themselves into clans (*kuda*) established a shrine for the earth deity (*dharani vali*) and each one selected a certain territory for settlement.

In contrast to the stories discussed above, this myth (M21) has a cosmogonic character. Moreover, the king that this myth deals with is clearly a divine, not a human, king. While this story discusses other significant aspects, I want to focus here on the process of the creation of king and subjects and on the relationship between the two.

Two female deities are crucial for the creation of the god king and humans – with the help of other gods (and "assistants"). Jamarani (also called Jaura Penu, Hardenberg 2018a, 613) is the female version of Jomraja, the god of life and death of the Gadaba and other Desia. However, there is another goddess involved, Sita Penu or Sita Penu Lahi Penu as she is also called. She is the goddess of "wealth" and "rice" (both called *lahi*), rice being the highest form of "life" (*jiu*, *jela*) and, consistent with similar ideas I have described above, this rice-wealth goddess is also considered the daughter of the earth deity (Dharni) (Hardenberg 2018a, 87f, 611f). The existence of the earth is already taken for granted and she is not herself created; rather, crops, animals and cultivators are generated by this divine pair. The need for a king is articulated by Jamarani as well as by humans. The former stresses that the king's role is to be the provider of human welfare and a mediator between humans and gods (hence his role in sacrifices), while the latter focus on the royal function of maintaining peace and harmony and leading the people out of the earth, where they are still contained.

The creation process described proceeds in two steps and entails what might be called multiple interiority. Creation is achieved through a redundancy of containments, many of which have an earthly aspect. Significant too are the materials of creation. In the first step, an incomplete clay figure is put into an earthen pot as a procreative and activating device, generating different kinds of people, not tribal cultivators (*raitos*) such as the Dongria, who were created earlier, but low (Hadi, probably Dombo, and Ghasi) and high castes (Brahmans and Paik). In the second step of creation, the sun god Dharmaraja is not made from clay but from coarse sand, contained successively by a swan, an egg and an earthen pot. While high and low castes are the result of a failed attempt to create a king with an incomplete effigy (reminiscent of the Vena story), a king finally emerges from a perfectly complete form, an egg. All creatures, it is clear, humans and king gods, are of earthly matter and generated through repeated chthonic containment.

After Dharmaraja has been born from the egg, he still needs to become king, which means he has to be recognized as the king by his subjects and has not yet been instated. However, after his birth there is a complete lack of acknowledgement as all humans are asleep; everyone, except a Harijan boy (thus a Dombo), who was the only witness. He is then killed in a way that resembles the Meria sacrifice or the buffalo sacrifices, which the Dongria still practice

today, by hacking the victim to pieces. The Dombo earlier provided, and still provide, the sacrificial victims; here, the boy himself becomes the victim of divine violence. Dharmaraja intervenes, resurrects the boy and turns him into a proper subject, as he is allowed to "watch" the royal performance, handling his various royal insignia. Thus, he makes himself king by creating a subject who acknowledges (watches) his role as king. This is then confirmed by Jamarani, who consecrates him as king, providing Dharmaraja with royal objects.

In the final sequence, Dharmaraja assumes his role as sun king and leads the people out of the darkness of the earth's womb into the sunlight. It is not the high or low castes, but the Adivasi cultivators, the first to be created by the two goddesses, who confirm their precedence by emerging from the earth first. They immediately establish the core elements of their existence, the trio consisting of clanship, territory and sacrifices to the earth goddess. While the unspecified gods had sacrificed the Harijan boy, Dharmuraja made him his subject. As soon as the Adivasi emerge from the earth, they start sacrificing. Subjects are thus distinguished from sacrificial victims, the former sacrificing surrogate victims to the earth, from which they originate.

This myth is different from both types discussed above. Neither a task (such as carrying loads or riding a horse) nor a lowly practice (such as eating beef or marrying a demoness) create the division between king and subject, as in the brotherhood stories. While a hierarchy is created, it is based on a different criterion – precedence (cultivators are created first, emerge first). There is, interestingly, also an element of external moral standards with regard to violence. That Dharmuraja is shocked by the way the Harijan boy is killed hardly mirrors the Dongria point of view, as this is the way they kill sacrificial victims during the buffalo sacrifice. It may thus represent a lowland or colonial perspective. However, while this external sentiment results in the creation of subjects, the moral transgression is not performed by the low status categories (e.g., the Harijan boy) but by the gods.

Similar to the brotherhood stories, three levels of subjects are distinguished: Adivasi cultivators, "high castes" and "low castes," and as is common from the village perspective, in contrast to the regional perspective, it is the Adivasi cultivators who have – as earth people and sacrificers – the highest local status (Berger 2002). The Dongria myth (M21) only has one aspect in common with the Dom Raja stories (there is no rebellion and no mention of a forest), namely, the autochthonous creation of the god-king. Like all other creatures, Dharmaraja is earth-born. However, unlike M5 and M6, the creation is not unmotivated, it does not happen for no reason, but is the result of both divine and human requests. In contrast to the brotherhood stories and similar to the Dom Raja myths (M5, M6),

this Dongria story does not employ elite status criteria that lead to the selection of the king or to his legitimation.

While the cosmogonic Jamarani-Dharmaraja story (M21) thus lacks most of the themes and codes of the brotherhood and Dom Raja stories, these are employed in a sequel myth (M22) that narrates how Dharmaraja installs another king, who is closer to the people than the sun. Again, I present a summary of Jena et al. (2002, 159–61).

> Dharam Devata [Dharmaraja] wanted a king to rule the people on earth and called all gods and also humans for a meeting. It was planned to test the powers of the future king. The task for the candidate would be to exactly determine the number of seeds contained in a cucumber and pumpkin.
>
> At the time the wicked king Biribija ruled over another country. Of his seven sons he loved the first six but he and his elder sons despised the youngest. The latter, in turn was critical of his father's unrighteous rule and the wicked actions of his elder brothers. The king prohibited the youngest son to go to the meeting called for by Dharam Devata, while his elder sons went there to meet the test. Being sons of a king they were honorably received in Dharam Devata's court. But while they failed the test the youngest – who had secretly followed and mixed with the common people – new the answer and was made king of the earth by Dharam Devata. "The people were satisfied that they had been given a wise king and dharam devata named him Niyam; with his title (raja) added to this name, he was known among his people as Niyamaraja" (160).
>
> Frustrated by their defeat, the six brothers tried to trick their younger brother into eating beef but Niamraja read their intentions and refused to accept the meat that was offered to him. Dharam Devata acknowledged his faultlessness and instructed him how to rule and to take care of the welfare of his people. Moreover, he should also regularly inform him about the events in his kingdom. Provided will all sorts of seeds – and taking Sita Penu with him – the new king reached his kingdom: "When Niyamraja reached the earth, it was devoid of hills, but a mere wish on his part caused hills and mountains of various shapes and sizes to emerge. He manifested himself in the form of a great hill and his people had already begun to regard him as king of the hills. Thus he became the king of the hill gods and chose the highest peak as his abode, the Niyamgiri or Niyam Hill, from where he could observe his people. Today, an entire range of hills bears his name" (161).

Like the Parenga story about Rama, Lakshman and the merchant's daughter (M14), this second Dongria myth (M22) is a combination and variant of the brotherhood and Dom Raja stories and also adds new dimensions.

A wicked king also figures prominently in this myth, although he is not called Dom King but "Black Gram Seed" (Biribija), the color obviously representing his evilness. He is not a local but comes from "another country." One element the story shares with the Dom Raja myths (M5 and M6) is that the would-be king goes to the "meeting" secretly and that he rebels against the wicked king. Admittedly, "criticizing" a bad king is not the same as killing him, but both are forms of opposition, even if on a different scale, and they demonstrate the righteousness of the

new king. The positive valuation of the hill-cum-forest is evident in the fact that this is the very form of the new king, Niamraja, the forested mountain called Niamgiri, "path/mountain of moral rules," towering over the area at 1500 meters. The feature of the autochthonous origin of the new king is ambiguous. While he is clearly a prince of a foreign country, when he "reached the earth" he manifests himself as the highest peak. Thus, while he is not from the place, he becomes the very environment the Dongria inhabit.

Equivalent to the brotherhood stories, a task needs to be performed, but this task is not related to performances of sovereignty and servitude (horse riding/carrying loads) but to cultivator's knowledge (the number of seeds). However, this second Dongria myth (M22) also employs elite status codes (beef-eating) to underline the immorality of the elder brothers and the virtuousness and cleverness of the younger.

A new feature of the second Dongria myth (M22) is the relevance of knowledge linked to *niam* (the wise king named Niam), a feature that is particularly related to male gods, as I mentioned above; this knowledge, moreover, is directly linked to Dongria livelihood. Also, the gift that Niamraja brings from Dharmaraja is related to cultivation, as he provides the Dongria with seeds and wealth in the form of the goddess Sita Penu Lahi Penu. Dharmaraja and Niamraja are thus related in a way that is reminiscent of the relationship between the Jeypore Maharaja and his vassal king in Bissamcuttack. The superior sun god is far away, while Niamraja is very close to the Dongria and is asked to provide "information" to Dharmaraja about what is going on in his domain.

I will now turn to the material and performative representations of this cosmology in the village lay-out and the rituals of the buffalo sacrifice. In this context, the two male deities, the sun god and the god of the mountain, often merge.

Kingship, Village Space and the Buffalo Sacrifice

Implicit reference to the Meria sacrifice is made twice in the Dongria myth (M21) concerned with the creation of the first king, Dharmaraja – the killing of the Harijan/Dombo boy and the establishment of a shrine for Dharni –, while it is not mentioned at all in the story of the selection of Niamraja (M22). In the creation myth, it was Dharmaraja who made possible the populating of the land, the foundation of clan territories and the worship of the earth deity, such that the connections between sacrifices to the earth goddess, the rule of the sun god (and his vassal king Niamraja) and clan territory are quite explicit. The sacrifices of today, generally called "buffalo sacrifice" (Kodru Parbu) – and perhaps previous human sacrifices as well – make the connections between land,

clan, sacrifice (stressed at the end of M21) and kingship even more explicit. Accordingly, one of Hardenberg's chapters dealing with certain aspects of the buffalo sacrifice is called "Clan land and rulership: The umbrella (*satara bonda*) of the king" (2018a, 510–16). Most conspicuous in this context are sacred objects – ritual knife and umbrella – that circulate through the region of a clan in the rhythm of buffalo sacrifices held in one or another of its villages, thus constituting an agnatic ritual unit and territory called *muta*. "The connection," Hardenberg (2018a, 513) writes, "between these two ritual objects and the clan is so strong that people define a *muta* by saying that it consists of those villages sharing the same 'knife and umbrella' (*suri bonda*)."

When a village decides to perform the buffalo sacrifice, the sacred objects – many of them made from iron and some associated with former human sacrifices – are brought to the hosting village. Among these objects is the knife (*suri*) with which a ritual specialist later pierces the victim – tethered to a pole in front of a hut representing the earth goddess – through a hole from within this hut in a crucial symbolic act of ritual killing (2018a, 517). The other object, on which I want to focus here, is the *satara bonda*, the object with the highest status in the whole ritual associated with the sun god (2018a, 602). It is a small round metal object made from iron or brass that is fixed as the pinnacle of a long bamboo pole. It is an "umbrella" (*satara*) and is also referred to as the umbrella deity (Satara Penu). Other objects considered by the Dongria to relate to kings are attached to this pole, such as iron arrows and peacock feathers. During a buffalo sacrifice, there are two such umbrella poles, a junior one representing the village territory, which accordingly never leaves the locality, and a senior one representing the clan territory (*muta*), which circulates with the knife (together *suri bonda*) in the rhythm of the buffalo sacrifice. This senior one is identified with Niamraja, who is said to reside in the object during the ritual. Dongria hold that these *bonda* were given to them by the kings. Hardenberg stresses, however, that it is not clear whether they refer to human or divine kings, as any great (mountain) god is also considered a king and addressed accordingly as *raja* (2018a, 515, 596).

The core events of the buffalo sacrifice extend over three days, from Friday to Sunday. Friday is considered the day "the umbrella will stand" (2018a, 542f), and the erection of the pole is the main event of that day, during which reference to the king is most explicit. As the place where the *bonda* is erected is of crucial significance, I will briefly point out the main features of the sacred geography of a Dongria village as described by Hardenberg (see 2018a, 32, 427f). As in all Kond settlements, Dongria houses are arranged in two, more or less curved rows creating an oval open space in between which opens toward the east (including south) and west (including north). In the center of a Dongria

village, only a few meters away from each other, are two complementary stone constructions, *jakeri* and *koteiwali*. *Jakeri* are the stones locally representing the earth goddess (Dharni) that are, although in the center of the village, relatively oriented toward the west. *Koteiwali*, represented by a menhir and oriented toward the east, is her husband, and the father of the Dongria (2018a, 432). He signifies the male principle and the sun in relation to the earth (2018a, 48, 476), is considered the male founding deity of the village (2018a, 337), represents the mountain gods and Niamraja in particular (2018a, 125, 382) and he is associated with rule but also with war (2018a, 559). We can thus clearly recognize the cosmology of the myths described above – in particular, the opposition of earth and sun god – in this spatial layout, noting that Dharmaraja and Niamraja merge as male gods embodied in the *koteiwali*.

These opposing structures of the earth goddess and her husband are further elaborated during the buffalo sacrifice (2018a, 478). A hut (*dharni kudi*) is constructed, either around or near the *jakeri* stones, and a sacrificial post (*bisimunda*) is erected in front of it (2018a, 468f). Symmetrically, for her husband, a wall (*palawara*) is built behind the menhir representing *koteiwali*, and a sacrificial post (*panikimunda*) is erected in front of the stones (2018a, 455). Moving from west to east, one thus finds the hut of the earth goddess with the *jakeri* stones, the sacrificial post of Dharni, the sacrificial post of *koteiwali*, his menhir and the wall. The two sacrificial posts of these two ensembles hence face each other (2018a, 425).

The ritual actions that focus on the *bonda* as representations of kingship and Niamraja occur on the first of the three main days of the festival and involve trance, procession and sacrifice (2018a, 542f). In one buffalo sacrifice described by Hardenberg, shamans (*bejuni*) surrounded by the other villagers danced in front of the bamboo poles in the fashion of divine kings (*rajanga*) and of Niamraja, the "king of gods" (2018a, 548), in particular. Raising their right fists rhythmically, the shamans moved a few steps in one direction and then turned back again, these actions signifying war and victory (Hardenberg personal communication). Cloths were then tied around the shamans' heads in the form of turbans, a common sign across the region that the ritual medium is ready to receive gods inside his or her body, in this case Niamraja. The youngest of the shamans jumped onto the sacrificial bamboo pole next to the *bonda* and climbed halfway up, about two to three meters. After shaking wildly, she climbed down again, fell unconscious and was taken care of by villagers. After her, the two other shamans climbed the pole in a similar fashion. According to Hardenberg, the shamans bring Niamraja down into the village in this way.

The bamboo pole with the *bonda* was later untied from the wall of *koteiwali* and carried through the village. Being received like a guest in every house,

white cloths were tied to the pole and sacrificial offerings were made, with blood smeared onto the pole. After this tour around the village, the *bonda* was returned to the *koteiwali*, attached to the wall again and the main sacrifice of that day took place. A white ram was sacrificed in the Dongria way, that is, hacked to pieces amidst the shouts and whistles of the men, and its head then tied to the *bonda*. The divine king of the Dongria was worshipped in this manner on the first main day of the Kodru Parbu. The main buffalo sacrifice that gives the festival its name takes place on the final day, and is dedicated to his wife, the earth goddess. On the evening of this first day, the attention already shifts from the male god to the goddess and the iron tools associated with her, especially the ceremonial axe (*tangi*) (2018a, 551f). As these subsequent rituals do not have explicit links to kings and kingship, I will not discuss them further here.

Society is thus constituted in the context of sacrifice. To be more precise, the "unity of the clan is (. . .) defined in relation to the sacrifice of the earth goddess" (Hardenberg 2018a, 583). Yet, the purpose of the sacrifice is not only to reassert collective identity but to regenerate well-being in an encompassing sense, which the Dongria formulate in the words *nehi ane*, "it will be good" or "it will be right" (2018a, 606). Hardenberg quotes a striking passage from Macpherson that illustrates this notion. Here, the earth goddess herself gives clear instructions on how to perform the sacrifice and what the benefits of the action will be: "let each man place a shred of the flesh [of the human victim] in his fields, in his grain store, and in his yard (. . .).[31] Then see how many children will be born to you, how much game will be yours, what crops, how few will die. All things will become right" (Hardenberg 2018a, 606; Macpherson 1865, 122f).

In this exchange of life for life, kingship plays an important role in the form of ritual objects that are crucial for the sacrificial performance and which link territory, gods and clanship. The objects are either closely associated with deities or directly represent them at certain moments in the festival: especially the ceremonial axe (*tangi*), on the one hand, and the ritual knife and the brass pinnacle or umbrella, together referred to as *suri bonda*, on the other. The axe is associated with the earth goddess and the locality of the village, which it does not leave, while the *suri bonda* represent the sun god and Niamraja in particular, defining the clan (2018a, 224, 513) and circulating within its territory, the *muta*. Said to have been formerly given to them by the king, these objects are

31 The Dongria no longer bury the meat, but place it near the *dharni kudi*, though other Kond groups have been reported to still bury the flesh. Also with regard to the Go'ter of the Gadaba (Chapter 9) other ethnographers have stated that the flesh of a particular buffalo (representing a revived deceased human person) is buried, while I could not confirm this practice during my fieldwork.

woven into the socio-ritual fabric of Dongria society, from the clan as a whole to the individual villages, to the local lineages and individual houses that are the keepers of these valued objects.

There can therefore be no doubt about the crucial significance of royal symbols in the most important festival of the Dongria. The question of whether the *muta*, in the sacrificial sense, corresponds to the unit of the same name in the former royal administration, or whether the organization of Dongria villages into *muta*, perhaps even the associated buffalo (former human) sacrifices themselves, had at some point been established by kings, is very difficult to answer. On the basis of his ethnography, Hardenberg (2018a, 584, 596f) argues that the *muta* of the Dongria is first of all a ritual unit of agnates sacrificing to the earth goddess and is not defined by "any central agency from outside" (2018a, 584). In this sense, the *muta* would clearly be different from the administrative unit and might have preceded the latter. Hardenberg concludes that the two systems – administrative and sacrificial – overlapped but "one was not derived from the other" (2018a, 599).

It is indeed difficult to imagine that the sacrificial system of the Dongria was at some point established by some human king. These practices are most likely not the result of acts of royal will, and the sacrifice functions – and probably did so in the past – perfectly without any royal ingredients. While the rituals thus work well without human kings, it is evident that Dongria cosmology imagines humans to be ruled by king-gods. The buffalo sacrifice clearly is a local practice, but one which human kings of the past possibly found suitable to adapt to and to link up with (a possibility I will again consider in Chapter 9). As paradigmatic sacrificers themselves, kings were conversant with the language of sacrifice and could thus legitimate their claims to supremacy by involving themselves in local rituals. Conversely, the Dongria practice in this way was able to include and refer to a powerful outsider. The buffalo sacrifice and the royal Dasara can hence be understood as complementary sacrificial systems operating on different levels. Whereas the buffalo sacrifice constitutes Dongria society and the different segmentary levels from *muta* down to the individual house, the royal Dasara adds the global framework, integrating the Dongria into the sacrificial polity. These speculations of a historical nature, however, will not concern me here further, but will be the topic of the next chapter, after which I will take a closer look at the Dasara festival. Nevertheless, the Dongria case, which demonstrates a particular pervasion of ideas of kingship with regard to cosmology, myth and ritual, strongly suggests such correspondences.

3.3 Tribal and Pan-Indian Ideas of Kingship: Summary and Comparison

Local ideas of kingship are deeply embedded in indigenous worldviews. Accordingly, these ideas about kingship speak to and are informed by the key values that govern such worldviews, values such as kinship and seniority; the former especially in the form of brotherhood, the default mode of human existence from the highland perspective (Berger 2018), the latter as the indigenous articulation of hierarchy as value (Pfeffer 1997).

The tribal ontology of kings is closely related to the indigenous notion of sovereignty. In general, gods and humans are seen as distinct but not altogether different forms of being. In the Dongria creation myth (M21), for instance, the sun god and humans both emerge from the earth. Gods are obviously more powerful than humans and, consequently, as recipients and performers respectively both are differentially related to sacrifice. Especially in the ritual context of trance and possession – moments of ritual aggregation – divine powers and human bodies merge (see Otten & Skoda 2014; or with regard to the dead, Vitebsky 1993). In the case of the king, the human/divine distinction is also not always so clear, and the idea of kingship relates to human, divine or hybrid beings. The brotherhood stories seem to identify the king as a human ruler, but the earth-born creature of the Dom Raja stories that overthrows the wicked king rather seems to be divine, like the King God (Raja Maphru) that emerges from the "navel place" Nandapur or at Kotni Mala in other myths (M3, M12). The Dongria creation myth (M21) – and many other references to metapersons as kings (e.g., among the Desia, Jomraja, giving and taking the bodies of humans at birth/death) – understands the god to be a king. In the subsequent Dongria myth (M22), the situation is ambiguous. The wicked king Black Gram Seed rules over "another country" and it is not clear if he is human or divine. After his youngest son successfully accomplishes the task set out for him, however, he "reached the earth" as Niamraja – obviously a king-god – and manifests himself as the mountain. The buffalo sacrifice of the Dongria corresponds to these narratives. Niamraja is the divine mountain, but he also takes the shape of knives or metal "umbrellas" (reminiscent, perhaps, of the Pat Kanda (sword) of the Bondo) or the stones of *koteiwali*. We are thus speaking of an animist view of kingship, where select aspects of nature or material objects are regarded as non-human royal metapersons. This leads us to the question concerning what sovereignty means from the indigenous point of view.

Sovereignty, from this perspective, clearly is not about ruling people, conquering or demarcating a territory. It concerns the ability to regulate and govern the flow of life and, hence, to ensure well-being in an encompassing sense, including progeny, fertility and the health of humans, plants and animals.

This, of course, closely aligns with A.M. Hocart, who argued that the germ of sovereignty lies in the control of the flow of life, guaranteeing the good life in an all-inclusive sense (e.g., Hocart 1970, 30–40). The Dongria articulate this idea in their concept of *nehi ane*, "it will be good," "it will be right" (Hardenberg 2018a, 606); the Gadaba in the notion of *bol soman*. *Bol* means "good" and "well." *Soman* has a variety of meanings that capture the encompassing nature of the "goodness" that is at stake: it means equal, balanced, even, alike, but also exact and complete (Gustafsson 1989, 525; Mahapatra 1985, 278). Thus *soman korbar*, "to make even," means to rectify something, to make something good, or complete that which was wrong or broken. Both concepts also entail a normative and moral dimension: "rightness" or the proper way things should be done in order to be "good." Consequently, they also refer to *niam*, the sociocosmic order or "moral law" (Hardenberg 2018a, 352) that is particularly manifest in ritual. Well-being and order (*niam*) go together.

For the Dongria, *lahi* is a notion that is closely related to well-being and means both "wealth" and "rice" (including little millet), the latter being the daughter (Lahi Penu) of the earth goddess and the highest form of "life" (*jiu*, *jela*; *jibon* in Desia). The connection to sacrifice as the regulation of the flow of life is obvious. Kings are sovereigns, as they guarantee well-being through the circulation of life in sacrifices. When the Dongria perform the buffalo sacrifice or the Gadaba the Go'ter, they, like kings, also navigate the flow of life, but on another level, not of the "country" (*des*) or "kingdom" (*raj rasi*) but on the level of clan territory (*muta*) or village (*ga, nayu, ungom*). It is a form of subaltern sovereignty. The flow of life that guarantees well-being is a shared responsibility of both the elder and the younger brother.[32] Accordingly, M2 ends after the younger brother becomes king: "The king started with the Dasara festival, the Gadaba Porja started the Go'ter. The king sacrifices humans during Dasara, Gadaba sacrifice the buffaloes. The Joria do the Nandi."

Analyzing the myths, I have focused in particular on the way social categories are created, related and transformed, especially the categories of king and subject. Subjects, moreover, have turned out not to be reducible to a homogenous category: the myths outline three layers of society – low castes, tribal cultivators, high castes – that correspond to the empirical reality I documented among the Desia (Berger 2002). Significantly, while the tribal cultivators acknowledge the senior status of communities such as the Mali, Rona or Paik at a

32 Because sovereignty is about well-being through sacrifice, the keepers of the most important royal objects among the Dongria are the priests (*jani*) not the headmen (*naika*) and their function is ritual, not political.

regional level, locally – that is, in their villages – they claim and are acknowledged to be superior because of their status as "earth people" (*matia*), due to their sacrificial sovereignty. Unlike a dominant caste in the plains, replicating the domain of Kshatriya power on the village level, the tribal cultivators are senior only in terms of sacrifice and their vital relationship to the earth that guarantees the well-being of all village inhabitants, whether tribal cultivators or not. It is for this reason that, in Gadaba villages, the non-cultivators who receive a share of the harvest show "respect" (*manti*) to the earth people in the context of the sacrifice to the local earth goddess (*hundi*) (Berger 2002; 2015, 164f), in the same way as the Bondo boy in M20 was a giver of "honor" (*mandhara*) when he brought the gifts to the king during Dasara. It is not political power but sacrificial sovereignty that is honored here.

It is perhaps this aspect that one of my Gadaba friends, Samo Sisa, of the village of Gudapada, referred to when he stated "we are the kings." The context of this remark was the constant conflicts he had with his father, which occasionally erupted into physical violence. We, the younger generation, are the kings now, and the older generation, now grandfathers, are subject to our rule. At the time, I thought he was referring to the physical strength, virility and dominance of the younger men. However, most likely, Samo was referring to the autonomy of his generation, which pivots around the complex of land and sacrifice. It is the young married men who cultivate the land and are thus responsible for the necessary sacrifices.

On the level of ritual, which often closely corresponds to the myths, one pattern is clearly discernable. It is the sun – or both the sun and moon in the case of the Gadaba and Bondo – that is conceptualized as celestial king-god and locally represented in shrines that make a reference to kingship. While the shrine of the Sun Moon deity (Sĩ Arke) has various names among the Gadaba, the one most commonly used is Pat Kanda, thus referring to the "main sword." However, in none of the Pat Kanda shrines that I saw was an actual sword to be found. Nor did people state that there used to be one. While explicit reference to kingship is here only made with regard to the name, Elwin (1950, 145f) states in relation to the Bondo that the main Pat Kanda shrine in Mundlipada actually contained a sword that was worshipped (see Nayak 2013). Also, among the Dongria, the *koteiwali* is explicitly linked both to kingship (also with regard to sacred metal objects) and the sun god. In all cases, the shrines referring to the celestial king-gods are contrasted with and linked to the shrine of the earth deity, generally considered to be the wife of the celestial king-god, hence also a queen, although this is mostly not stressed (the names Jamarani, "queen of life

and death,"[33] and Takurani, "ruling queen," being an exception). The reference to kingship is most explicit with regard to the male sun-moon deities, who have numerous names (Sĩ Arke, Pat Kanda, Mahaprabhu, Pat Deota, Dharmuraja, etc.), but all share one feature: they are considered to have constituted the divine socio-cosmic order, referred to as *niam*.

Among the myths that deal with kingship, I have identified two types, the "brotherhood" myths and the Dom Raja stories, as well as intermediate forms combining elements of both. In the brotherhood myths, kingship is established out of the tribal agnatic unit by divine intervention motivated by a quest for order. Status and the aptitude to rule are tested, with the result that the younger brother becomes king and the elder brother subject. On the one hand, this may be perceived as a reversal, as now the younger brother commands the elder, the opposite of everyday experience. However, it can also be understood, on the other hand, as an articulation of the local seniority of tribes as earth people and sacrificers, as outlined above, complementing the global sovereignty of the king.

Noteworthy in this process of the creation of a royal polity in the brotherhood stories (and also in the intermediate forms) is the prominence of external criteria of assessment with regard to status and eligibility for sovereignty, as well as the debasement of the elder brother, the subject. Underlying both, I would argue, is the opposition of wild versus civilized, which finds expression in alimentary (beef-eating, eating of raw meat, cannibalism vs. refraining from those practices), matrimonial (marrying an ugly, fierce demoness vs. marrying a princess), political (carrying loads vs. riding a horse) and geographical (forest vs. royal capital) codes that devalue the wild in contrast to the civilized. The wild turns out to be of lower status and powerless, with the tribal subjects (explicitly Gadaba and Parenga) conceived as the descendants of the elder brother and a non-human demoness. This powerlessness is also in evidence with regard to some unintended consequences of the creation of the royal polity and the emergence of certain functionaries of the royal organization. Being alienated through high-caste intervention from their king, who no longer shares their food, or troubled and exploited by tax officials and the police, the tribal subjects cannot do anything about it, with the best option being to flee.

The Dom Raja stories invert the valuation of the wild, of the forest and its creatures, depicting it as protective, providing and powerful. Given this view of the wild, the king is no longer the result of actions defined by the external status criteria of the royal organization – hierarchy or seniority being conspicuously

33 Compare Jena et al. (2002, 363): "Jamarani: The deity who created the entire Dongria world (goddess of life and death)."

absent – or tasks to be accomplished, but is an earth-born forest creature, and the mode of assuming office is rebellion. First, the forest king greets the Dom King with his feet and when the latter then attacks, the former overthrows him with his powerful forest weapons. In one version, the force of the battle is such that the capital is destroyed and shifted to Jeypore, where the king established Dasara, assuming his sacrificial responsibility with regard to the quest for life.

Following Ranajit Guha (1985), the brotherhood stories can be seen as ambivalent with regard to their definition of kingship and subjecthood. They do claim the tribal descent of the king but, while granting them senior status, they debase the subjects by relying on external values, portraying the tribal communities as of low, wild and demonic ancestry. As such, these stories subscribe to an elite representation of kings and tribes, the view of Brahmans and Kshatriyas, corresponding to the message of the King Vena story. The Dom Raja myths, by contrast, are subaltern narratives of sovereignty, not only independent of external moral valuations, but powerful and rebellious. The ambiguity is also visible in the intermediate versions that combine elements of the brotherhood stories with those of the Dom Raja myths.

What both tribal and Hindu views of kingship share is that the king, as divine being or metaperson, is the provider of well-being and order through sacrifice. Both speak the same language of sacrifice centering on the flow of life, especially with regard to the fertility of the earth, which may include sexual connotations and the idea of kings being husbands of the earth. In this sense, tribal and Hindu worldviews overlap and speak to each other, and it is this intersection, most likely, that historically enabled the various ritual relationships between kings and tribes that are the topic of the next chapter. They contrast, however, on a number of accounts, notably with regard to the character of their animist ontologies and the nature of subjecthood.

While both tribal and Hindu ontologies view the cosmos as animated, in the latter view life is ranked according to a chain of being, whereas in the former, there is only one kind of life. Hindu ontology represents what Sahlins (2014, 282), discussing and adapting Descola's (2013) ontological schemes, calls "hierarchical animism," while the tribal ontology might best be described as a combination of "classical" and "segmentary animism" (Sahlins 2014; see Arhem and Sprenger 2016; Hardenberg 2021; Vitebsky 2017b).

Hindu forms of life are ranked according to the theory of the "strands" (*guna*), or similar ideas, which entails that they have different physical, intellectual and moral properties. Ultimately, everything is created from a kind of cosmic protoplasm that is unstructured and universal, but in its concrete existence, being is always ranked. Moreover, this hierarchy of being has a soteriological dimension, where those who are most refined have the greatest chance

of release from the circle of rebirths. In contrast, in tribal ontologies, the same kind of life animates plants, animals and humans, perhaps even gods. In the ritual cycle of the Gadaba, human life is transformed into animal life, which in turn is transformed into plants, which feed human beings (Berger 2003, 2018; Hardenberg 2021). All life is of the same nature. The life-force that animates human beings circulates through the generations, but there are no moral qualities attached to it, nor can it be refined in subsequent rebirths, attaining liberation at some stage.

The hierarchy of the Hindu chain of being is manifested in concentric structures: the palace, the temple, the chariot (e.g., during the Car Festival of Jagannath; see Hardenberg 2008, 2011), the kingdom. All of them order beings according to their bio-moral qualities. Humans can share or participate in the radiant energy (*tejas*) of the king according to their proximity or distance from the center. The royal-divine power of the king is disseminated from the midpoint toward the periphery. Modes of participating in the king's *tejas* (or power, *shakti*, or auspiciousness, *subha*) focus on worshipping him when he moves from his center in a procession through his kingdom. This mode of partaking in divine energy is different from the tribal technique, in which possession is central in moments of ritual aggregation. The divine, conceptualized as king, is directly made present in the bodies of humans. Moreover, when this happens, all people profit equally from the divine presence, not in a graded manner according to status. Even though the Gadaba do conceptualize the former capital as "navel-place," where the King God came into existence, images of centricity and center-persons are largely absent. Also, the ritual media, whose bodies the deities temporarily inhabit, or the specialists who perform the sacrifices, are not "sacred," they are not deities themselves. This stands in contrast to *gurus* or ascetics in the Hindu context (Bailey 1981; Berger 2020). The flow of life does not depend on center-places or center-persons, although the king in the capital contributes to it on the global level. The tribal mode of participation in the power of non-human metapersons is instantiation, the making present of the powers themselves, not radiation of the power from the center.[34]

34 This may also be the reason why, among the Muria, the appointed royal official (*majhi*) in a district (*pargana*) had no authority and did not, in the view of the tribals, partake in the royalty of the king. As Simeran Gell writes (1992, 10): "The kingship was absolute; it could not be confounded with its representations, and the attributes that characterized it could not be affixed, in howsoever diluted a form, on to those who were said to 'stand' for the King." This corresponds with the situation in Keonjhar where *sardars* were appointed by the king as representatives of clusters of villages called *pirh*. McDougal (1963, 61) reports that a *sardar* had "virtually no authority" vis-à-vis the other Juang.

The valuation of center and periphery in the Hindu perspective has a direct consequence for the nature of subjects. Normal subject-householders may approach the outer space of a temple and thus are included differentially in the worship of the king or god, but they are merely "visitors" (Inden 2006, 207). Even further away from the center are demons or barbarians. It is significant that the Hindu texts regularly equate barbarians with demons, and it is likely, though impossible to prove, that the brotherhood stories here have appropriated a pan-Indian topos, which leads to the mentioned ambiguity with which the *raja-porja* relationships are expressed. On the basis of the evidence presented here, and more will follow in subsequent chapters, it is clear that the indigenous comminities do not consider themselves to be subordinate visitors to the royal-cum-ritual center. The attitudes expressed in the epigraphs to this chapter make this quite clear. Moreover, Dongria myth and rituals exemplify how they see themselves – first and foremost as sacrificers. Clanship, territory (earth) and sacrifice constitute their very humanity. When Dongria and other tribal delegations went to the capital during Dasara, they did not perceive themselves to be visitors, mere witnesses to the royal grandeur. They acknowledged the king as a metasacrificer and regarded themselves as linked to him as co-sacrificers – as subaltern sovereigns.[35]

35 Another example that stresses the crucial significance of the tribal identity as sacrificers is provided by Simeran Gell (1992, 9) with regard to the Muria of Bastar. In the region of her fieldwork, the earth-priest (*gaita*) was at the same time the *majhi* of the area, formally an official appointed by the king. Gell writes that he "did not stress his Majhi-hood, but rather his position as *gaita* (earth-priest) of his village and it was obvious that he regarded this office as conferring much greater prestige than his Majhiship."