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The Gift Of The Eye

Mortuary ritual performed by the Jādopaṭiās in the Santal villages of Bengal and Bihar, India

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The *Jādopaṭiā* has found a niche working among the Santals. The work he performs is connected with the fate of the deceased Santal. These ritual acts are firmly planted in the world-view and ritual context of the Santal as well as Hindu society. However, this event is not a compulsory part of the Santal funeral ritual cycle.

How is it then that the Santal generally accepts the *Jādopaṭiā's* visit, and complies with the *Jādopaṭiā's* demands when he performs his mortuary act?

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Bashudev Chitrakar describes the creation of the chitrakar: “When the elder son of Pilchu Haram and Pilchu Buri died, his parents cried a lot. The god Sin Bonga came and told them not to cry because he would do something for them. He created the first chitrakar from a ball of dirt from his forehead. The chitrakar asked: why did you create me? Then god said: I created the chitrakar because the son of Pilchu Haram and Pilchu Buri has died, you shall go there, you shall make a representation, a picture, *chitra*, of the son and you shall take the salary, *dan*. The chitrakar told him: I shall take the salary, but to what sign shall the parent recognise him? You shall do a mark on his forehead, with a ball of rice grains - And how shall I make the eyes that give life (Beng. *chakshudan*)? The god then gave him a pencil to paint the eyes”. (Faivre 1979:119)

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In North-eastern India there exist a group of scroll painters and performers known as *Jādopaṭiās*. They occur in West Bengal as well as in the bordering areas of Bihar. These male performers are of Bengali origin but operate mainly in the Santal villages where they show their scrolls in return for rice. The Santals belong to one of the many indigenous populations that inhabit the Indian Subcontinent. They number approximately 5 million people and are scattered throughout the North Indian subcontinent, including Nepal and Bangladesh. The Santals speak Santali, a language that belongs to an Austro-Asiatic language family (Gautam 1998:14). The *Jādopaṭiās* generally live in the outskirts of the Santal village, or in close proximity to it. Their mother tongue is Bengali or Hindi, but they speak Santali with great ease.

The *Jādopaṭiās* also have another source of income, a ritual service rendered in return for rice, as well other items and money. They eagerly await the news of any death that may have occurred in a Santal household. Some time later they visit that house and perform a mortuary ritual known as *cokhodān*[1]. One of the central events of this ritual performance, is the bestowal of eyesight to a pictorial representation of the deceased person. This picture is about the size of a hand. During the ritual invocations uttered by the *Jādopaṭiā* he puts a dot, representing the iris of the eye, in the blank eye space, with a pen. At the bottom of this picture are some representations of the remuneration that the *Jādopaṭiā* expects for his service. With the help of these actions the *Jādopaṭiā* claims to be able to assist the blind soul of the deceased person and render it a safe journey to heaven. These and other ritual doings of the *Jādopaṭiā* are firmly planted in the religious world-view and ritual context of the Santal as well as Hindu society. However, this ritual event is not a compulsory part of the Santal funeral ritual cycle. When the *Jādopaṭiā* describes his practice and his role as a funerary priest, he borrows categories from the Hindu context and glosses his role with these categories. The *Jādopaṭiā* calls himself the *purohit, agradanī* or Brahman of the Santal. He compares *cokhodān,* and the gifts he receives from the Santals for performing the funerary service, with the gift (*dān*) given to the Hindu funerary priest.

How is it then that the Santal generally accepts the *Jādopaṭiās* visit, and complies with the *Jādopaṭiā's* demands when he performs his mortuary ritual act? Are the relationship between the *Jādopaṭiās* and the Santals a parasitic one, rather than one of symbiosis? Many authors have described the *Jādopaṭiā's* practice as sheer exploitation of the Santal. W.G. Archer has

[1] In this work *cokhodān* is not transcribed *'cakṣudān'*, which is the way it would be transcribed following the "sanskritised" manner. The reason for this is that I want to stay closer to the colloquial pronunciation of my informants.

characterised the *Jādopaṭiā's* role in the funeral context by calling him a funerary beggar (Archer 1974:335). J. B. Faivre relates how the *Jādopaṭiās* try to impress and even threaten the Santal (Faivre 1979:111). Rosita de Selva focuses on the manipulatory aspects of *cokhodān* (de Selva 1994). I can see the validity of all these views. However, in my exposition of *cokhodān* I want to paint a broader picture of the *Jādopaṭiā* and the mortuary ritual event in the light of a variety of contexts. My account will contain the voices of *Jādopaṭiās* as well as Santals. The discourses of the *Jādopaṭiās* themselves will be contrasted with the various descriptions of *cokhodān* related to me by the Santals. I will describe the actual ritual, as I have been able to see it "in situ" along with the invocations of the *Jādopaṭiā* that I have tape-recorded at the time.

Many people, academic and non-academic, have assisted me in my endeavour to produce this thesis (originally submitted for a Cand. Polit. degree). I am greatly indebted to all of them. First, I want to express warm gratitude to my supervisor, Solrun Williksen at the Department of Social Anthropology at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. Particular thanks are due to my wife who have given me limitless encouragement and borne patiently with my many periods of absence. Many of my fellow students have helped me along the way. Among them, Øyvind Eikrem has proved himself a persistent reader, and Petter Grytten Almklov has functioned as a tireless combatant in many inspired discussions. Philippe Mainçon has undertaken the Herculean task of translating a number of French articles. Philippe and his wife Annette have also read through drafts of my manuscripts and supplied me with helpful criticisms. Lipi Biswas and Bidyut Roy have generously shared their time and knowledge with me. Lipi and her Santal friends has been a great help when it comes to the Santali translations that appear in this thesis. The staff at the NGO I.M.S.E showed me great hospitality at the time of my visits to Santal Parganas. Harald Tambs-Lyche and Marine Carrin have generously involved themselves in lengthy discussions that have been fruitful for me. Others who have offered encouragement, generous assistance and inspiration include, Arild Englsen Ruud, Jeanne Openshaw, Shakti Nath Jha, Ranjit Bhattacharya, Kumkum Bhattacharya, Pulak Dutta, Daniel Rycroft, Peter Andersen, Santosh Soren, and Lise Bjerkan. Andreas Granberg have kindly helped me to download the diacritical marks needed for the Bengali transcriptions and Antarin Chakrabarty have assisted me with these transcriptions.

I would also like to express my gratitude to; 'The institute of comparative cultural studies', for financial aid granted for my fieldwork, the Swedish Government for the financial support through my last three terms, the Centre for Environment and Development (NTNU Dragvoll) for supplying me with an office and a computer, the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies for granting me a 'Contact Scholarship', and the library staff at Dragvoll, NTNU for their faithful and excellent service.

Last but not the least I convey my hearty gratitude to all the *Jādopaṭiās* and the Santals who have shared so generously of their time and information. The warm recollections of the time spent with *Budhesvar Citrakar* will always be with me. I am very grateful to his family for the kind hospitality they showed me during my stay in their village.

Transliteration and translation

The standard system of transliterating the Bengali language, as exemplified by Andersen (1962), has been followed with minor modifications. ‘V/b’ is written ‘b’ when thus pronounced in the Bengali, and ‘v’ when not. Where other authors are cited, the diacritical mark system (or lack of it) of these authors are reproduced. When it concerns words that are common in Indological literature and in works on Hinduism, I have followed the conventions common in most of these works, rather than taxing the text with meticulous transcriptions. Indian words appearing in the text are 'pluralised' in the English manner by adding an ‘s’. When it concerns the Santali words that appear in the text I have been less consistent, partially due to lack (on my word processor) of the diacritical marks needed to follow the conventions of authors like Bodding and Campbell. Philippe Mainçon has undertaken all translations from French. Lipi Biswas has done the translations from Santali with the help of Santal friends from the village Baner Pukhur Daṅga. Santosh Soren has also contributed with clarifications in some cases. Except where otherwise stated, quotations are from my recordings or my field notes. The author has undertaken the translations from the Bengali. The author has taken all the photographs that appear in this work. *Budhesvar Citrakar* made the painting on the cover. The chapters 1 and 2 of this book will appear as separate articles in a different form.

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Photographs I-XIII (at the end of the thesis)

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Plunging into the field

When I enrolled at the Social Anthropology department in Trondheim in 1996, my choice of geographic region for my fieldwork was already given and obvious. In the eighties I spent six years studying north Indian classical music at the Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, West Bengal. During these years I gained a basic command of the Bengali language and a foundation of knowledge about this region that became a useful capital for my anthropological fieldwork. When I revisited Santiniketan in the winter of 1996-7 I met an old acquaintance, a scroll painter. With that meeting the idea of a fieldwork on the scroll painters was born. Via a series of trials, tribulations, and coincidences I finally came to focus on the *Jādopaṭiās.* I undertook my fieldwork focusing on these scroll painters from February 1998 to August 1998.

As I gradually explicated my plans for a fieldwork on the *Jādopaṭiās* and the role they play in the Santal community my senior Bengali anthropologist friend listened attentively, puffing on his cigar. When I had finished he politely remarked that due to changed socio-economic conditions among the Santals, he doubted that I would find any active *Jādopaṭiās* working in the Santal villages. However, he agreed with his wife's comment that it would do no harm to give the project a try. Much later I found out that there were, in fact several *Jādopaṭiās* operating in the Santal villages in the near vicinity of my friends house.

A few days earlier a friend and I had travelled in a rickety battered buss on the rough road across the boarder to Bihar and into what is known as Santal Parganas[2]. The road passed through a forest of Sal trees where some Santal women collected the fallen leaves for fuel. This virgin voyage was my first attempt to locate and establish contact with the *Jādopaṭiās*. Rain fell as we jumped off the buss in a small place, which consisted of a number of low houses in a long row on both sides of the road. A few odd stores, offices, workshops, and tiny shacks selling food and tea. From here we continued on foot over the dry rice-fields, later crossing a ford of the Maurakhi River to reach a number of Santal villages on the far side. As the rain stopped we could see the contours of the hills appear in the western horizon. A small number of Santal boys herding their cattle watched us with a sceptical countenance. In front of us a Hoopoe bird caught the mid-day sun in its

[2] Santal Parganas " … i.e. "Land of the Santal Chiefs". During the last century the area called S. P. was assigned to the 'tribal' groups by the British administration. The name S. P. remained in official use until 1984, when the area was divided into three separate districts (Andersen 1986:7-8). However, the term Santal Parganas is still used in a colloquial speech.

decorative plume as it landed on the edge of a field. In the Santal villages my enquiries (in Bengali) about scroll painters or *citrakars* gave us no further information. On our way back some Hindu boys could tell us that some Bengali scroll painters from the Rampurhat area had frequented their village. However, these boys could tell us nothing about any *Jādopaṭiās* who visited the Santals after a death. In the afternoon I chatted to an owner in the tiny teashop where we had our late lunch. This man told me that he had lived here for the last thirty-five years. He confirmed that there where still active *Jādopaṭiās* in this region. Without being asked he told me that these scroll painters show pictures of the dead Santals in the Santal villages. A glimpse of hope was immediately lit in me. I was determined to find some of these men. On the way back we had great luck and got one seat each on the government buss. Next to me sat a schoolteacher and his young student. In the midst of the noise the schoolteacher started a conversation with me in English. I replied in Bengali, but in spite of this the schoolteacher continued in English. "Tell this student how you became interested in Indian classical music". I willingly complied with their demands until they where satisfied. When I asked them about the *Jādopaṭiās* the schoolteacher replied that he knew very little about them. However, he introduced me to an old man that sat at the other side of the buss, who was supposed to know more about this matter. This old gentleman had previously worked for a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that worked for the welfare of the Santals in the region. Thus this old man gave me the name and the address of a Santal who still worked with this organisation at a centre located in the interior of the Santal country. Through this coincidence I got my first lead that would later bring me in contact with a small community of *Jādopaṭiās*.

A few days later I was ready to make another trip to Santal Parganas to follow the trail in front of me. The buss journey to the small NGO Santal welfare centre had to be undertaken in three laps, with three different busses where the size of the buss decreased (along with the quality of the road), whereas the precariousness of the travel increased considerably with every lap. It was not unusual to have to enter and leave the buss via one of the back windows, whilst the conductor ushered even more passengers into the overcrowded buss with his threatening cries. This journey could take anything from six to twelve hours, depending on one's luck. Once, starting my third lap, I got on top of the "mini-buss", stod on a sack of rice with no room to sit but on other people's bodies, or on goats or chickens, holding onto another bag of rice and my life with one hand and all my strength, trying to counteract the violent jerks of the vehicle. Having reached the final buss stop in the tiny town inside Santal Parganas one had to walk the last three and a half-km to the NGO centre. The lilac laterite road winded its course in between fields of wheat and rice. The expanse was broken here and there by clusters of date palms and rocks. Finally the road skirted a small hill and climbed onto the embankment of an irrigation dam. From this vantage

point one had a fine view of the surrounding landscape and a hill covered with Sal forest. Behind this hill lay the Santal welfare centre bungalow.

The mid day sun had already passed its zenith when I entered the yard of the centre. It was dead quiet and there were no people to be seen. I walked onto the veranda and called out through one of the open doors. Someone answered from inside. As I entered the room I found a Bengali man, seated behind a desk, smiling at me. I told him my errand in Bengali and he asked me to be seated. The Santal cook *Madan Hembram* from the village nearby brought us cups of sweet tea and joined the conversation. *Madan* told me that he had seen two *Jādopaṭiās* approaching one early morning, approximately one and a half-month ago, after a death in a Santal village in the area. He was certain that they were on their way to perform *cokhodān* in the household of the dead one. *Madan* also told me these *Jādopaṭiās* came from a small community consisting of about six or seven houses near a Santal village, ca 45 min cycle ride from the welfare centre. I was offered a bed in the same room as the rest of the staff and accepted happily. The following morning I borrowed one of their cycles to pay a first visit to the *Jādopaṭiās*. I went alone as I had decided to approach the *Jādopaṭiās* without any "gatekeeper" that could influence their initial opinion about me.

When I reached the village in question I inquired about the location of the *Jādopaṭiā* dwellings. Two houses at the edge of the village were pointed out to me. They were lower than the other Santal houses and lay hidden in the corner of a groove of mango trees. I made a large circle and approached the house from the other side, leaving my cycle at some distance and quietly walking up to the small courtyard where a young man was resting on a string-bed (*cārpāy*[3]). A faint wind rustled the tree leaves and as I looked up at the crowns of the mango trees I saw that they had not flowered yet. It had been an unusually cold spring this year. When the man heard my greeting he stood up and made a gesture with his arm stretched out towards the bed that he had moved into the shade under the mango trees; " -Sit down". The young man presented himself as; *Manjayī Citrakar*. After a while his wife and their four-year-old son joined us. They live in one of the houses and *Manjayī's* uncle lives alone in the other. *Manjayī* showed me the three scrolls he possessed at that moment. When I asked him about the pictures of the dead Santals and *cokhodān*, he answered that this practice did not exist any longer. However, I had a strong feeling that he was, for some reason, being secretive and on guard, trying to conceal the fact that *cokhodān* was still practised.

The rest of the *Jādopaṭiās* in this very area lived about a km further down the path next to some Santal dwellings. Here the *Jādopaṭiās* locality was separated from the Santals with approximately 150 meters. Seven odd houses were clustered around a small courtyard shaded by a Nim tree (*melia*

[3] Lit. "Four-legged". The most common type of bed used by the village people in India. It consists of a wooden or bamboo frame over which a net of sturdy string has been plaited.

azadirachta). In what follows I will describe some of my impressions from my first meeting with a few of them.

On my arrival at their locality I found two men, three women and a number of children in the courtyard. Naturally my presence created a stir among them. At this moment the first reaction that I could sense was suspicion. Nevertheless, they brought a string-bed for me to sit on. The two young men scrutinised me carefully with plenty of confidence. "What have you got in your bag?! A camera? Show us!" At this point one of them was well on his way into my bag with his hand. In fact, my bag only contained a notebook and my water bottle. During my first period of fieldwork I never brought camera or tape-recorder, gadgets that naturally would create an even greater distance between me and the *Jādopaṭiās*. On another later visit they would suddenly say; "give us your sandals" … "give us your cycle" … and so on. At that point I could tell them that the cycle did not belong to me. When I asked them if they expected me to return barefoot they just laughed. After some time *Manjayī* turned up. They asked him what I had been up to at his place. "He asked questions and wrote things down". This made them more suspicious. After some time they ignored me and continued some of their daily chores. When I returned the following day I met four of the five scroll painters that lived in that locality. The senior among them sat down next to me on the string-bed. I greeted him politely and asked for his name; "why should I tell you my name?" he replied. From what the other men had told me on my earlier visit I realised that he was *Budhesvar Citrakar*. He asked me what I was doing at their place. Thus started a long and interesting conversation with him. The younger men were still slightly suspicious of me. One of them said; "why are you here 'jesu-walla' [i.e., Christian]?" With that statement it became clear to me that they thought that I was some kind of missionary. I assured them that I had nothing what so ever to do with the missionaries[4]. I also told them that I had understood that the missionaries where ill disposed towards them and their activities among the Santals. They nodded approvingly; "that is so". I continued to contact this group of *Jādopaṭiās* for some time. Through them I also got in contact with some of their relatives who lived in another village. The prevalence of Christian Santals as well as Christian missionaries in the region where these Jādopaṭiās operated made them very secretive about their practice of *cokhodān*. During the time spent with them I learnt more about the art of scroll painting. However, could not manage to collect much information about *cokhodān*. A bit later on in my field-work several people told me that there existed a small group of *Jādopaṭiās* who lived in a village in Santal Parganas. This group stayed with regular frequency somewhere behind the central buss stand of Bolpur town, near Santiniketan where I had my headquarters during my fieldwork. It was not until I found this small group of *Jādopaṭiās* that I

[4] Which was in fact completely true. However, from then on I made it an explicit point not to have any contact with the missionaries in the area, to be sure not to evoke any more suspicion.

started to make headway in my search. Thus, later on when I found this new trail to follow I pursued that one, as I found it more fruitful in respect to my findings in relation to *cokhodān*.

One late afternoon I made a serious attempt to locate this group of *Jādopaṭiās*. I asked some people in a small hotel opposite the bus stand. Did they know anything about any scroll painters (*citrakar*)? "Those who show pictures", I clarified. The term *Jādopaṭiā* is not in currency in this area among the Bengalis, as the common ambulant scroll painters here are known as *paṭuās*. The hotel owner pointed towards a small restaurant on the other side of the road and told me to ask there. I asked the owner of the restaurant, the same questions. He replied; "Oh yes, but what do you want them for? I paint pictures myself". He insisted on showing me his own productions of a number of Bengali saints. When I had seen these and praised them I asked him once more about the scroll painters. Then he responded; "address? Listen, further down this road you will find an old rice-mill. Beyond that one you will find some people who are camping beneath a tree". Sure enough, down the road I found a small group of people who were cooking their evening meal next to their frugal temporary shelters made of cloth, plastic, and bamboo. Before I approached these people I asked a Bengali pan-seller about these people. This man told me that they where Muslims who make a living by tattooing the Santal women. I walked up to one of these men, sat down on my hunches like him and asked him who they were. He confirmed what the pan-seller had told me. They call themselves *ulki* and the Santals call them *khudni* (tattoo). The man told me that they come from Santal Paragnas near Dumka. When I inquired about the *Jādopaṭiās* he pointed towards a veranda of a concrete bungalow, a store, on the other side of the road, in a distance; "a few of them live there". I thanked him and crossed the road with great expectations. A few Bengali gentlemen sat on the veranda. When I asked one of them, the shopkeeper, about the scroll painters he pointed to the far end of the veranda and said; "yes, they live here. Those are their belongings"… "If you look over there you see their cooking utensils and other things hanging from the tree". "Where are they now?" I asked in wonder. "They have gone to do their work in some Santal village" … "They leave in the early morning and come back in the evening. However, sometimes they are gone for several days in a stretch"… "They are the gurus of the Santals"… "They come from a village in Santal Parganas". I asked if these scroll painters were Bengali people, but none of these gentlemen could tell. Finally I inquired if the scroll painters showed pictures of the dead in the Santal villages. "Yes, they do" was the answer. One of the gentlemen smiled enigmatically. "You come here tomorrow in the early morning and ask them yourself".

When I arrived at the veranda the following morning I was told that the scroll painters had already left. Sometimes they walked to Santal villages in the neighbourhood. At other times they caught a local buss or train to reach more distant villages. As I sat down at the tea-stall nearby to have a cup of

sweet milk tea I chatted to a cycle taxi puller (riksha puller). This man could give me two names of the *Jādopaṭiās* who stay at the veranda of the store. It is common that these riksha pullers consume local alcoholic beverages, for example rice-beer. The *Jādopaṭiās* are also fond of this drink and they frequented the same local "bar" as the riksha puller. That afternoon I returned to the area and was told by the shopkeeper that the two *Jādopaṭiās* had come back from their tour. One of them, a somewhat corpulent man above average height, sat on the terrace below the veranda. His companion had gone to visit a Bengali friend near Santiniketan and would return the next day. When I had introduced myself he told me that his name was *Jayīdeb Citrakar*. We talked for a long time whilst the day faded away in the pink twilight as darkness fell. *Jayīdeb* confirmed that they perform *cokhodān* in the Santal villages and he even explained the rudimentary form of the practice to me. He did not show any suspicion against me whatsoever. I took my leave and told him that I would return the following day in the late afternoon.

When I asked the Bengali shopkeeper about the scroll painters he pointed at a small and stringy figure that came walking towards us on the side of the road. The man had just taken a bath in the pond nearby. He hung his cotton towel neatly on a string stretched between two palm trees and came up to us at the veranda. I introduced myself and explained briefly that I planned to write a book about them and their work among the Santals. The man told me that his name was *Budhesvar Citrakar*. He was friendly but somewhat reserved. We sat outside the veranda and talked for about one and a half-hour. *Budhesvar* became one of my major informants. Bellow I will include a small portrait of him, based on some of the things he told me about himself and his life.

Budhesvar Citrakar was born in a village in the Santal Parganas district of Bihar. The major part of the population of this village consists of Santals and *Jādopaṭiās*. Budhesvar's grandfather and great grand father also lived in this village where they owned a little patch of land. However, when Budhesvar was in his early teens, the family moved to a Santal village in the area of Raipur (ca 5 km west of Bolpur) in Birbhum district of West Bengal, where they lived for a number of years. Later on it became increasingly difficult for them to survive in that area, as they had no land to farm. At that time *Budhesvar's* younger brother died and finally the family, with their two surviving sons, had to move back to their original village in Santal Parganas. Even before this period of residence in Bengal, Budhesvar's grandfather used to travel to these areas of Bengal and do his work in the Santal villages. It is from this time onwards that some of their family members have stayed on the veranda of the Bengali Shop-owner in Bolpur, for longer of shorter periods[5]. *Budhesvar* told me; "Those times of our fathers were very hard,

[5] This was related to me by *Budhesvar Citrakar* as well as by the father of the Bengali Shop-owner.

both for us and the Santals. There was a lack of food. Our condition was like that. Nowadays you see how much paid work is possible. There is plenty of food available now. At that time you had to work as a day labourer, digging the fields for a meagre payment of rice. You would not get that kind of work every day. Those means would not suffice. So my parents could not support us and we returned to our own village". *Budhesvar* learnt the profession from his father in his youth. In those days the parents rather preferred that their children helped at home, herding the goats and cattle, instead of wasting time at school. *Budhesvar* relates what his father told him "Will you get a job or become a teacher if you go to school? That won't happen. You will [have to] work for your stomach and we will also get a little benefit." Thus, *Budhesvar* has got very little and irregular schooling. He had to heed his parent's words or face the cane. Thus he took up the traditional trade of the family as a scroll painter and a performer of *cokhodān*. Ever since he was young *Budhesvar* walked from village to village with his scrolls and recited his stories for a payment in rice. *Budhesvar* married young but as he was struck with an illness he and his wife got no children. Thus his wife left him and married another man. At that time *Budhesvar* decided not to marry again. Today he believes he has passed the age of fifty-five and lives together with his nephew's family in their ancestral village.[6]

[6] In the autumn of 1998 *Budhesvar Citrakar* suddenly became seriously ill on tour to a remote village and died shortly thereafter.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Santals

> The Santals with their cheerful disposition and love for hunting, singing and dancing, lead freer, less inhibited lives than do Hindu and Muslim cultivators. They speak their own pre-Dravidian language of Santali, worship their own Santal bongas or spirits, regulate their village life in a democratic manner and celebrate their own Santal festivals with dancing and feasting. (Archer 1977:15)

The quote by Mildred Archer above seems to evoke an image of 'the noble savage', the perfect target for an ethnographic account. However, as we ought to know, old categories enslave us, and we are constantly reminded of the fact that our conceptual tools capture us in an epistemological straight jacket. In what follows I will aspire to transcend some of the old categories, applied in the past, by placing them in a historical context. By doing so, I have gained awareness of the apparent risk of becoming enslaved by new conceptions.

The Santals[7], the largest tribal[8] community on the Indian Subcontinent numbers approximately 5 million people. They are scattered throughout north India as well as in Nepal and Bangladesh. In India the Santals are found mainly in the states of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Assam. Santals speak Santali, which belongs to the Munda group of languages of the Austro-Asiatic language family (Gautam 1998:14). The Santals prefer to call themselves *Hor* (Santali; human being. A common term in all Mundari languages) or *ādivāsī* (sanskrit; original settler). According to Andersen (1986:7f) the Santals have been recognised as a separate ethnic group since the end of the 18th century. An overwhelmingly rich documentary source of

[7] Santal was not an emic term originally. Later on it has been incorporated in the Santali language. There are several theories about the origin of the term Santal (see Gautam 1977:9ff and Andersen 1986:8). However, as Santal is used in most literature referred to here I will use this term in my text, leaving myself open to being criticised for reification of the 'misnomer' Santal. My Santal informants usually used the term *Hor* or *ādivāsī*. My *Jādopaṭiā* informants used the term *ādivāsī* or *mānhjī* (which is a word of Indo-European origin and means 'chief'). The latter is a polite form of address prevalent within the Santal community itself, as well as an address used by non-Santals addressing Santals (Andersen 1986:8).

[8] The category "tribe" is a British colonial construction of the 18th-19th centuries that has been further reified in ethnographic works by anthropologists. Peter B. Andersen, following Cohen, suggests that we ought to abandon this category and use the term *ethnic* instead of *tribal* (Andersen 1999). Further, Andersen traces terms like "tribe" and "animist", applied to the Santals, to the 19th century scientific theory of 'evolutionism' (Andersen 1986:8). When not citing other authors, whilst referring to the Santal community, I will use the expression 'Santal society'.

material can be found about the Santals. The earlier works have been systematised by Troisi in his bibliography (Troisi 1976). Accounts of the Santals are available in works by Christian missionaries, colonial administrators, anthropologists and in some works by educated Santals. The missionary work among the Santals was initiated around 1850 and gradually the missionaries conceived unanimous adaptation of writing the Santali language in Roman script (Anderson 1998:22). Among these missionary scholars the work of Lars Olsen Skrefsrud and Paul Olaf Bodding stand unrivalled. Both of them concentrated their data-collection from areas around Dumka in the Santal Parganas of Bihar, L.O. Skrefsrud from his arrival in 1869 up to his death in 1910, and P.O. Bodding from his arrival in 1890 until he returned to Scandinavia in 1934. Both these men worked on an astonishing wide range of topics as grammar, lexicography, folklore and anthropological descriptions of the Santals. One of their most precious legacies is Bodding`s *Santal Dictionary*, published in five volumes between 1932 and 1936. It was based on Skrefsrud`s vocabulary of 13.000 words which had been more than doubled during Bodding`s own work. This dictionary contains a marvellous source of information about the Santals as Bodding did not limit the account to a list of translations, but offered ethnographic descriptions of various kinds in the articles (Anderson 1998:22f). One of the colonial administrators who wrote about the Santals was W.G. Archer[9]. In spite of some reservations towards Boddings work, Archer paid his tribute to both Bodding and Skrefsrud in the introduction to his monograph on the Santals.

> Bodding`s reference to the Santals chief spirit, Maran Buru, as 'the devil' and his description of Santal poetry as 'often pure gibberish' were later to outrage me but his huge Santali-English dictionary staggered me by its encyclopaedic learning and gave me indispensable help. (Archer 1974:11)

2.2 Scroll painters in ancient India

Scroll painting and picture recitation is an old profession in India. In his pioneering work «Picture Showmen», Ananda Coomaraswamy (1929) points out that in the *Māhābhāṣya* of Pantanjali (second century B.C.), we have one of the earliest surviving textual references to the use of scroll for the purpose of picture recitation. In Banudatta´s *Harṣācaritā*, of the seventh century A.D., there are two passages in the poet Bana's account of King Harsa that give a vivid account of picture-storytelling of that period. Victor H. Mair provides

[9] We shall return to W.G. Archers work in the following.

us with an illustrating passage form *Harṣācaritā* in his informative book «Painting and Performance» (Mair 1988).

> No sooner had he [Harsa] entered than in a bazaar street amid a great crowd of inquisitive children he observed an inferno-showman [*yamapaṭṭaka*], in whose left hand was a painted canvas stretched out on a support of upright rods and showing the lord of the dead mounted on his dreadful buffalo. ... (Mair 1996:34)

These entertainers and minstrels, known as *Yamapaṭṭakās* (*Yama* = Sanskrit; the lord of death, *paṭa* = Sanskrit; canvas or cloth), showed painted scrolls which depicted the reward and punishments exacted by *Yama* in his purgatory. *Yama paṭas* have been one of the stock subjects of Indian and Bengali scroll painters up to modern times. In his book *Beast and Man in India*, John Lockwood Kipling paints a clear picture of the *Yamapaṭṭakās* theme from the late nineteenth century.

> One of the most popular pictures sold at fairs is a composition known as *Dharmaraj*, a name of *Yama*, the Hindu Pluto, and also used broadly for justice. The judge is enthroned and demon executioners bring the dead to receive their doom. The river of death flows on one side of the picture and those go safely across who hold a cow by the tail, while others are torn by terrible fishes. Citragupta, the clerk or recording angel of Yama, considered to be the ancestor of the *Kayasth* or clerkly caste, sits in an office with account books exactly like those of a Hindu tradesman, and according to the record of each soul, punishments or rewards are given. (Kipling 1892:111)

These images return, in various forms, in the media of the Indian scroll painters in current times. Horizontal scrolls are still produced in Rajasthan while in Bengal there has been an unbroken tradition of vertical scroll painting, illustrating stories in a series of descending panels (Archer 1977:15).

2.3 The scroll painters of Bengal

In Bengal the scroll painters are called *paṭuās* (from the word *paṭa* as above) or *citrakars* (*citra* = Sanskrit. picture). Bengali scrolls where made by such village artists chiefly in West Bengal in the districts of Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan, Hooghly, Midnapore and Murshidabad. Rare specimens on cloth,

illustrating scenes from Hindu mythology, have survived from the early 19th century, but since the second quarter of the 20th century painting on cloth has become obsolete and paper has taken its place (ibid.:15). The scrolls vary in length and width. Scrolls longer than 10 m is more unusual. The Bengali scroll is ca 40 cm wide, although the older scrolls tended to be wider. A show of a scroll can be characterised as an audio-visual performance. The *paṭuā* chants the story while he gradually unrolls the scroll, exposing the relevant register that illustrates the narrative. Covering a radius of ten to fifteen miles from his home, the *paṭuā* wanders from village to village, showing his scrolls for a small reward in the form of a measure of rice (ibid.:4).

Thanks to the passionate folk art collector Gurusaday Dutt (1882-1941) we have an invaluable source of data about Bengali folk art and crafts in general and Bengali scroll painters and their scrolls in particular. Dutt studied law in England and was later appointed to the Indian Civil Service. During the 1930s he spent his time as District Magistrate in Birbhum and had ample opportunity to study the *paṭuās*. In his article "The Art of Bengal" (first published in *Modern Review*, May. 1932) he mentions that each scroll of the *paṭuās* ends up with representations of the king of death and of the last judgement. In the article "The Tiger's God in Bengal Art" (first published in *Modern Review*, Nov. 1932) Dutt gives one of the first comprehensive accounts of the *Jādopaṭiās*[10], their art and trade (Dutt 1990:76,79-82). The Anthropologist Binoy Bhattacharjee has made an in-depth study of the *paṭuās* in the Birbhum district of Bengal. Bhattacharjee focuses on the ambiguous religious identity of the *paṭuās*, as oscillating between the Hindu and Muslim identity (Bhattacharjee 1980). According to Bhattacharjee, scroll painting is not a monopoly of the *paṭuās*, though it is regarded as their "cast calling" (ibid.:1). The *paṭuās* have a number of occupations but they claim scroll painting, scroll exhibiting and idol making as their traditional caste occupation (ibid.:1). Regarding the relationship between *paṭuās* and *Jādopaṭiās* Bhattacharjee makes an important statement about the relationship between the *paṭuās* and the *Jādopaṭiās* that tangents with some of the implications of my own field data (see below).

> Although there is no difference in socio-religious practice and social position or even in physical features, between the Patuas and Jadu Patuas, the Patuas of Birbhum emphatically denied any relationship with the Jadu Patuas. One informant said that in the past probably the two were one and the same caste. I also feel that Patuas and Jadu Patuas originated from the same stem. (ibid.:11)

[10] I will stick to the convention of calling these scrollpainters *Jādopaṭiās* in my text, as that is one of the titles that all of my informants used. Why I differ from some of the authors I quote will become clear further on in my thesis.

Bhattacharjee relates how he searched at length for information about the *Jādopaṭiās*, from Santals in particular, without much success. At last he managed to get in contact with a group of *Jādopaṭiās* in the Bolpur area, it was just before daybreak. They had halted under a tree for the night and intended to leave the place early in the morning. These *Jādopaṭiās* denied any relationship with the *paṭuās*. Bhattacharjee notes that the *Jādopaṭiās* have a nomadic habit and change their location frequently and he mentions that the *Jādopaṭiās* have become an endogamous community (ibid.:11-12). He also comments that "The Jadu Patuas specialised in exploiting the Santali people in this area and had earned a bad reputation for this" (ibid.:11)[11].

2.4 Descriptions of the Jādopaṭiās

One of the earliest references to the *Jādopaṭiās*, that I have been able to find occurs in the Bengal Census Report of 1901 (p. 413f), a source that Bhattacharjee and Dutt also refer to in their texts mentioned above. This source is quoted by L.S.S. O'Malley in the Bengal District Gazetteers, Birbhum district (1910), with some minor alterations[12]. It is an intriguing passage, which provides us with a valuable starting-point for a perspective of the development and change of the *Jādopaṭiās* identity. In the Gazetteer O'Malley refers to the *Jādopaṭiās* as *Jadupetiās*[13].

> The Jadupetiās are a community found only in this district and in Mānbhūm [i.e. today; Purulia] and the Santal Parganas, who occupy a place midway between Hinduism and Muhammadanism. They say they are the descendants of a Muhammadan *fakīr* by a low caste Hindu woman. They believe in Allah, but worship Kālī, Manasā, Devī and

[11] The *paṭuās* and the *Jādopaṭiās* do not intermarry. The *Jādopaṭiās* that I met told me that they are divided into four exogamous 'clans'/'septs' (*pāris*), who all have their respective totem; *paramāni*/turtel, *heṭmuriā*/pig, *khāsphul*/*palās*-flower or leaf (*Butea frondosa*), and *baṛāhāri*/*baṛā*-leaf (compare Singh 1998:1323, quoted on page 17f below).

[12] The reference in Census of India is introduced with these words; "The Jadupetias are a curious community …" (1901:413). O'Malley has omitted this characterisation (O'Malley 1910:38f).

[13] To draw attention to this slight variation in vowel transcription might appear as an unnecessary quibble over an insignificant trifle. However, I would like to point out some possible implications of these transcriptions. As far as *jādo* contra *jadu* goes, I will come back to this detail further on in my text (page 19, ff.). In the case of *paṭiā* contra *petiā;* this could either reflect the author's choice of transcription, and/or it could mirror a local dialectal variation in the pronunciation (The vowel '*a*' in *patiā* is sometimes pronounced as *e* in the English word pet (a tame animal kept for companionship). I have noted this variation in pronunciation among my informants, but in my data *paṭiā* is by far the most prevalent pronunciation.). Incidentally O'Malley has written 'Jadupatiās' in the table of contents to the gazetteers.

> other deities of the Hindu pantheon. Hindu priests sometimes officiate when they offer sacrifices to Kālī. They practise circumcision and bury their dead. On the other hand, many of them kill animals as the Hindus do, by severing the head from the body, and shave off their beards. Many again bear Hindu names, and their married women mark the parting of their hair with vermilion. Some also abstain from beef. They have a Kāzī who officiates at their marriages, but not necessarily at their burial services. By profession they are brass-workers and make trinkets, gongs, weights, etc., of metal. Some again are mendicants; they draw pictures of persons recently dead and exhibit them to the bereaved relatives who give them presents. (O'Malley 1910:38f)

First of all it is interesting to note the ambiguous religious identity[14] of the *Jādopaṭiās* described in the quote above. In this respect the *Jādopaṭiās* resemble the *paṭuās* of Bengal (see Bhattacharjee 1980). One of my Santal informants told me that he had noticed that the *Jādopaṭiās* who sacrificed a chicken at his house had killed it the Muslim way, by a bloodletting via a cut in the throat (*jabāi*). However, all the *Jādopaṭiās* I met vehemently claimed Hindu identity and I did not find anything in their behaviour that contradicted this claim. There are also *Jādopaṭiās* who follow a number of Muslim ritual codes in praxis, but claim Hindu identity in public[15]. Furthermore, O'Malley's quote contains data about the occupational identity of the *Jādopaṭiās*. In the Bengal Census Report of 1901 they have been listed as either brass-workers or mendicants who draw pictures of persons recently dead. In the Bihar District Gazetteers on Santal Parganas (1910) O'Malley also notes that the *Jādopaṭiās* of this area make metal measuring cups.

> *Baids* or measuring cups of a pretty though stereotyped pattern are made on a limited scale by Thatheris and Jadupatias of Paharpur, Afzalnagor and its vicinity in the Jamtara subdivision and at Jabardaha in the Dumka subdivision. (O'Malley 1938:277f, second edition)

[14] In the Census Report of 1901, 238 males (206 in Santal Parganas, and 32 in *Mānbhūm*), and 240 women (205 in Santal Parganas, and 35 in *Mānbhūm*) have been listed as Hindu '*Jadupetias'* (ibid.:218f). Whereas only 39 males (17 in Malda, 10 in Santal Parganas, and 12 in Birbhum), and 44 women (5 in Malda, 22 in Santal parganas, and 17 in Birbhum) have been listed as Muslim '*Jadupetias'* (ibid.:276f).

[15] Personal communication with Sitansu Mukhopadhyay June -98. Mukhopadhyay has been awarded a Ph.D. in art-history at the Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, in the year of 1991. His thesis focuses on the *paṭuās* and *Jādopaṭiās* of West Bengal, and is based on extensive fieldwork. I tried hard to get a copy of this thesis, but unfortunately I was unable do so. The thesis is written in Bengali and bears the title "The Jadu Pataus and Patuas of West Bengal".

I want to illuminate these references by O'Malley, concerning the occupational status of the *Jādopaṭiās* by comparing them with the references made by; Campbell[16] in his Santali English Dictionary (Campbell 1899), Rev. P.O. Bodding in his Santal Dictionary (Bodding 1929-36), Gausdal (1960), as well as with some of my own findings from the field.

Campbell writes; "*Jadopaṭia*. A caste of Hindus who deal in enchantment and profess to hold communication with the spirits of the dead." (Campbell 1899:249). "*Keṛe koṛe*. An aboriginal tribe who work in brass and bell-metal. The number of this tribe is very small. They have no settled habitation, but go about from place to place exercising their craft." (Campbell 1988:398, quoted from the third edition of the revised version by Macphail (1953)). In his dictionary Bodding writes; "*jadopaṭia*, n. A Hindu caste. There are two kinds, some support themselves as braziers (also called = *keṛe koṛe* or *luṛka)* and some who profess to have communication with dead people and make «pictures» of them to take to relatives and cheat them for money. (H. *jādav-patī*, one of Krishna´s title) … (Bodding 1935, vol. III:218)". Also in Boddings dictionary; "*luṛka*, n. Those who make *luṛka* and bore holes in the ear for them. Here the *jadopaṭia*, q. v., are also called so." (Bodding 1935, vol IV:192) (compare Gausdal below). Bodding also comments on the word *doroson*, which is very close to the word *dorson*, to see, to look, to visit a sacred shrine, to see a vision (Campbell 1988:205).

> *doroson*, n. Supposed images of dead people, of witches, and bongas, etc. These "pictures" are prepared by people of the Jadopaṭia caste. When a person is dead, they paint a picture supposed to represent the person dead. They take this to the house of the deceased, say that he (or she) has shown himself to them (the picture being of the one seen by the painter) and complained that he is in want of this, that or the other. People who believe this story will give the Jadopaṭia what he mentions. These same people also prepare "pictures" of spirits, marriage ceremonies, etc., etc.; taking these round to show them to people and ask for money. … (Bodding 1934, vol. II:115)

In his account "The Santal Khûts" (Gausdal 1960)[17] that deals with the totemic sub-clans of the Santals, Gausdal gives the following explanation of the word *luṛka*, mentioned by Bodding above;

[16] Rev. A. Campbell (1845-1919) was a Scottish missionary among the Santals. He was stationed at Pokhuria in the Manbhum district (current Purulia), not far from the Santal Parganas, west of Jamtara.

[17] Gausdal belonged to the Lutheran Santal mission and spent about forty years with the Santals. He has founded a large part of his book "The Santal Khûts" on ethnographic data collected by Bodding and Skrefsrud (ibid.:1,4f).

> The word *luṛka* has several meanings. It may be a kind of ear-ring which is said to be very seldom seen among the Santals, and it may be used about those persons who bore holes in ears for such rings. That type of work is mostly done by *Jadopatias* in the Santal villages. (Gausdal 1960:130)

The following quote from the "The Santal Khûts" by Gausdal casts some more light on things.

> *Lutur* is the Santali word for ear, but the word *rok´* may have many meanings, sew, stitch together, pin etc. In this connection however, it has the special meaning that the ceremony of the piercing holes in the ears of the children must be done by the *kumat*, that is the father's sister's husband. Otherwise the piercing of the ears of the children is usually done by the *Jadopatias* in Santal villages. I found Odga Haram of Jamugdia and he told that they are also called *Lurka*. We do not let the *Lurka* (*Jadopatia*) pierce the ears of our children… (ibid.:49-50)

During my own fieldwork in Santal Parganas (Dumka subdivision) I had a revealing experience. At an early stage of my fieldwork, when I was searching for the *Jādopaṭiās*, someone told me that I could find a small settlement of *Jādopaṭiās* in the outskirts of a distant tribal village. When I arrived at that particular village some of its inhabitants confirmed that there was one household of *Jādopaṭiās* nearby. As I reached that house I spotted a group of non-Santal people in the yard. I talked to them and realised that they where brass-workers, when they willingly showed me their ware. Their women confirmed that they pierce the ears of the Santal children. They had Hindu names and the women mark the parting of their hair with vermilion. However, these women did not wear the customary shell bracelets, worn by Hindu women. They told me that they where Muslims and that a *Kāzī* (Muslim priest) officiated at their weddings and funerals. One of the men told me his full name followed by the title *Jādopaṭiās* [18]. When I left their house they responded to my Muslim greeting. However, the men had shaved off their beard. Later on I talked to some Hindu *Jādopaṭiās* (scroll-painters) about these brass-working *Jādopaṭiās*. The scroll-painters told me that these brass-workers belonged to another "sub-caste" (*jāt*); *luṛka*/Muslim, and that they had nothing in common with them. One day the wives of these scrollpainters told me that they pierce the ears of the Santal children. These women wanted to sell me some of the ear-rings they had in store. When it

[18] A Hindu landowner standing next to us told me to write this mans first name followed by *sheik* (a Muslim title). However, the brass-worker told me to write *Jādopaṭiās*.

concerns the *keṛe koṛe* mentioned above, I could not find any data about them.

The data I posses cannot in any way suffice to judge if these brass-workers; *Jādopaṭiās* and the scrollpainters; *Jādopaṭiās* might have a common history. However, the fact that these two groups are called, and call themselves *Jādopaṭiās* points in that direction. When it comes to the religious identity of the *Jādopaṭiās*, as either Hindu or Muslim, I would like to make a few comments. The increasing communal trend, with an increasing polarisation between Hindus and Muslims in contemporary India, reflects upon the religious self-attribution of the *Jādopaṭiās*. The fact that all the *Jādopaṭiās* I met claimed Hindu identity was also confirmed by the scarcity or absence of any «Muslim» themes in their scroll paintings. These informants also denied that they visited Muslim villages. My findings in this respect stands in contrast to the data reported by Millred Archer (1977) and J. B. Faivre (1979). Several of the *Jādopaṭiās* that Archer and Faivre met painted and displayed Muslim themes and visited Muslim villages[19].

The most recent reference I have found about the *Jādopaṭiās*, is from 1998, and occurs in Vol. V of a series called 'People of India' (edited by K. S. Singh), published by the Anthropological Survey Of India. Here the *Jādopaṭiās* are listed as Jadupetia/Jadupati.

> A community of **Bihar**, they are also referred to as Chitrakar by their neighbouring communities, and Jadababa by the Santal. They speak khotta [a dialect of Hindi] among themselves and Hindi with others and use the Devanagari script. … They are divided into a number of [exogamous] clans, such as Kashfule, Hetmure, Mejasthane, Bourahari, Mundhantanga and Matabaha. … Most of them work as agricultural labourers while some work in the collieries. They profess Hinduism, though some influence of an indigenous faith is still prevalent. An iron rod with a branch of simul tree (mohangiri) is considered to be the family deity while the sal tree with a stone (gaondevata) is worshipped at the village level. (ibid.:1324f)

In an earlier publication by the Anthropological Survey of India (People of India, National Series Vol. VIII, 1996. Edited by Singh), the 'Jadupetias' is reported to have an earlier distribution in Bengal, and a present distribution in Deogarh district of the Santal Parganas of Bihar (ibid.: *Appendix A*; page 413). In the reference published 1998, cited above, it is noted that other communities call the 'Jadupetia' Chitrakar. However,

[19] The Muslim festival of *muharram* occurs depicted with processions of *tāziyas*, symbolic of the tombs of Hasan and Hussain, the martyrs of *Kerbela*. *Barekhan Gāzir*, a Muslims *pir*, a holy man worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims as a protector against tigers (Archer 1977, Faivre 1979).

nothing is mentioned about the 'Jadupetias' profession as scroll-painters or exhibitors of scrolls. Thus one can assume that this group of *Jādopaṭiās* have abandoned their traditional occupation. I have seen this trend among the younger generation of *Jādopaṭiās* that I met during my fieldwork. The mentioning of an indigenous faith of the 'Jadupetias' above is interesting. As far as such a faith goes, I have not got any data that corresponds to the observations reported above.

The *Jādopaṭiās,* and the corresponding types of scroll-painters referred to in the following occur chiefly, in Bengal in the districts of Bankura, Bardwan, Birbhum, Midnapore and Purulia, and in the state of Bihar, in the district of Dhanbad, Jhargram, Mayurbhanj, Singbhum and Santal Parganas. Some of these male picture showmen are of Bengali origin[20] but operate mainly in the Santal villages where they show their scrolls in return for a measure of rice[21]. Some of them own or rent a small piece of land for cultivation. Their women also gain an income by piercing the ears of the Santal children. The *Jādopaṭiās* generally live in the outskirts of the Santal village or in close proximity to it. Their mother tongue is Bengali or Hindi, but they speak Santali with great ease. Thus the *Jādopaṭiās* recite their scrolls in Santali visiting the Santali village and in Bengali or Hindi when they recite and exhibit the same scroll in a Hindu or Muslim village. The *Jādopaṭiās* also have another source of income. They eagerly await the news of a death that may have occurred in a Santal household. Some time later they visit that house and perform a mortuary ritual or funerary work[22] that focuses around an act which has become known as '*cakṣudān*' in the literatur[23]; **«the gift of the eye».** This act has lent its name to the entire funeral ritual complex performed by the *Jādopaṭiās*.

[20] Faivre noted that several *Jādopaṭiās* were able to pinpoint precisely the village of birth of their grandparents or great grandparents in Bengal, in the areas of Bankura, Birbhum or Burdwan. Twice, his informants have given a reason for the migration from Bengal ca 60-80 years back in time. These where conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in the district of Bankura and the industrialisation in the area of Asansole (Faivre 1979:111). Non of my *Jādopaṭiā* informers could tell me anything about a migration by their forefathers from Bengal. Other authors suggest that the *Jādopaṭiās* "…belonged to a purely aboriginal stock but subsequently converted to Hinduism." (Dutt 1990:80), or that they "…are perhaps tribals who have only become identified with these castes [i.e. as *Jādopaṭiās*] in the past few generations." (Parkin 1992:41).

[21] Usually one *pao*; a measure equal to ca a quarter of a *ser* (by weight or dry measure). One *ser* is equal to about one kg (these measures vary with locality). The Santals measure their rice in brass measures made by artisans known as *Jādopaṭiās, luṛkas, keṛe koṛe* or *dhokras*. Such brass utensils are made by the hollow casting method known as *cire perdue* (Reeves 1962:36-54).

[22] My *Jādopaṭiā* informants referred to this funerary work simply as "work" (beng., *kāj*). However, in this work, dealing with *cokhodān* and related matters, I take the liberty to use the terms ritual and mortuary ritual in an uncommiting 'common sense' manner. The aim of this thesis is not to theorise about the use of the term ritual.

[23] *Cakṣudān* is a Sanskritised version of the colloquial *cokhodān*. Whilst the former is constantly reified in the literature about *Jādopaṭiās*, the latter is consistently used by the

2.5 Cokhodān in the text of the ethnographer

As far as I know, the first detailed account of this ritual event, performed by the *Jādopaṭiās*, appear in Gurusaday Dutts account of them in his article «The Tiger's God in Bengal Art» (Dutt 1932), mentioned earlier. This passage gives us several important clues to how Dutt conceived these doings of the *Jādopaṭiās*.

> Whenever a Santal man, woman or child dies, the *Jādu Patuā* appears at the house of the bereaved family with a ready-made sketch of the deceased drawn from his own imagination. There is no attempt at verisimilitude, but the picture merely represents an adult or a child, a male or a female, according to the age and sex of the deceased. The *Jādu Patuā* presents the picture, wholly drawn in colour, with one omission only, viz. The iris of the eye. He shows the picture to the relatives and tells them that the deceased is wandering about blindly the other world and will continue to do so until they send gifts of money or some other articles through him, so that he can perform the act of *chakshudān,* or bestowal of eye-sight. The Santals believe this to be actually true and give themselves up to weeping at the misery of their deceased relative wandering about blindly in the other world. They protest that they have already given him gifts on his death, but the *Jādu Patuā* sticks to his point and tells them that King Yama has taken away the gifts made earlier, and so they must send the deceased more things through him in order to satisfy his needs. So the relatives are persuaded to make presents of money or some articles of domestic use to the *Jādu Patuā* for transmission to the deceased. He then puts the finishing touch to the picture by performing the act of *chakshudān*. It is perhaps from this semi-magical practice that the *Jādu Patuā* derives his name (*Jādu* = magic; *Patuā* = painter). (Dutt 1990:80)

The picture that the *Jādopaṭiā* presents at the Santal house after a death has occurred is usually known as *mṛtyu paṭ* (Bengali; *mṛtyu* = death, *paṭ* = picture. See plate 2). Some authors have referred to these pictures giving the name '*haribol mānā paṭa*[24]. The reason for this latter name is the simple fact

Jādopaṭiās, as well as by the Santals, that I interacted with. I will use the emic term *cokhodān* in my text (sometimes pronounced *cokhdān*).

[24] *Haribol mānā* means; the name of the Hindu god Vishnu (*hari*), call (*bol*), honour (*mānā*) ("honour in the name of god"). It is customary to repeatedly call *haribol* at Hindu

that *haribol mānā* name has been written, in Bengali, by the painter, on some of these representations of the dead. Such pictures made by *Jādopaṭiās* from Binpur village of Midnapur district in Bengal are reproduced in the book "Folk Painting of Bengal" by S. Datta (Datta 1993:117,147). Some of these pictures of the dead have a Hindu imagery and are much more ornate and elaborated than the pictures of the dead mentioned so far (ibid.:73-4). At this point I want to underline that pictures like these have been shown by scroll-painters of this type to other ethnic groups as well, such as the more Hinduised *Bhumij,* and others (note that the quote by O`Malley on page 13-14 does not mention any specific group that the pictures of the dead are shown to). Ray speaks of 'different tribal groups' (Ray 1961:52). Rycroft suggests that we should speak of *paṭkar*, scroll-painter, and *Kheroal,* a term that includes several groups from the Munda family (personal communication -99). Never the less; the *Jādopaṭiās* I met, as well as the *Jādopaṭiās* Dutt describes above, have specialised on Santal clients (see further fn 25).

Dutt´s account of the *Jādopaṭiās* has gained great authority over the years. Many writers refer to the passage above when they write about the *Jādopaṭiās*. In his account Dutt establishes a trend that has been followed by most authors after him. Here he gives the *Jādopaṭiā* the epithet *jādu*; the magic painter. However, "perhaps" and "semi-magical" temper Dutts statement. Never the less, as we shall see, this trend has perpetuated itself in most of the following accounts about the *Jādopaṭiās*. We may ask ourselves from what source Dutt got his data. Well aware of how difficult it is to get the chance to see the funerary work done by the *Jādopaṭiās* "in situ", it is unlikely that Dutt saw it himself. It is most probable that he got his information from a secondary source.

Another Civil Servant who took a similar interest in Indian popular painting, folk -culture and art was W.G. Archer. He was appointed Deputy Commissioner of the Santal Parganas in December 1942 and after two and a half years he was placed on a special duty to record and codify Santal civil law. He held this post until June 1946. During these three and a half years he worked among the Santals, he learnt Santali language, organised a collection of Santal poetry, legends, stories and addresses. W. G. Archer also collected an invaluable ethnographic material about them. Some of this material appeared in the book "The Hill of Flutes" (Archer 1974). This monograph is one of the famous accounts of Santals and Santal life. In this book Archer writes a brief passage about the *Jādopaṭiās*. It appears in chapter XX, that deals with death in Santal society, where he gives us a detailed description of Santal funeral practice and ceremonies.

> While these ceremonies are proceeding and sometimes even on the day of death itself, the house of the dead person is

funerals, when the dead one is transported to the burning ghat. The Santals utter *haribol* thrice after having completed the funerary rites at the Damuda River (Bodding/Skrefsrud 1942:183).

> visited by a jadupatua, a humble member of a Hindu painter caste. This individual combines the roles of itinerant minstrel and funerary beggar. He brings a few scrolls of paintings depicting the Santal myth of creation, the Baha festival, life in Deaths kingdom and sometimes the goddess Kali and the Krishna cycle. He squats in the courtyard, unrolls his pictures, entones a recitative and finally produces a sketch in which the dead person is shown with blank and sightless eyes. In the corner of the drawing is a picture of a cow, a fowl, a bowl or a brass plate according as the jadupatua assesses the wealth of the family. At the end he exacts the animal or utensils as his tribute for restoring sight to the dead and only when it is given does he put the eyeballs in the sketch and leave the house. (Archer 1974:335)

This passage is the only reference to the *Jādopaṭiās* in Archers entire book, with the exception of an occurrence in the glossary. One proof of the fact that the *Jādopaṭiā* make very little fuss of himself and avoids any attention to his person, is that many ethnographic accounts concerning the Santals do not mention the *Jādopaṭiās* at all. The plain reason for this negligence is that most of the authors of these accounts never noticed the *Jādopaṭiās*. It is interesting that Archer gives the *Jādopaṭiās* the epithet **humble.** This characterisation stands in contrast to the common notion of the manipulating *Jādopaṭiās* who forces the Santal to comply with his demands. Archer is the first author who mentions anything about the exact time when the *Jādopaṭiās* makes his visit to perform *cokhodān*. His account gives us the feeling that he had some rapport with the scroll painters.

Between 1943 and 1945 W.G. Archer and his wife Mildred obtained a fine collection of scroll paintings from *Jādopaṭiās* in Santal Parganas with whom they had regular contact at that time. The *Jādopaṭiās* often traded their scrolls with the Archers, for paper on which to paint new ones. Since it was wartime, paper was in short supply and access to fresh stocks was vital for the scroll painter's existence. Thus Archer and his wife had a unique opportunity to study and learn more about the *Jādopaṭiās*. Some years later Mildred Archer published the book “Indian Popular Painting in the India Office Library” (Archer 1977). The chapter “Jadupatua Paintings: Santal Parganas (Bihar)” contains the fruits of their investigations from the period mentioned above. Except for the information on the *Jādopaṭiās* in general and the minute details about the scroll paintings, their themes and content in particular, this article contains some valuable details about *cokhodān*. In the book one also finds an illustration of a “mortuary” picture (*mṛtyu paṭ*) (Archer 1977:64, No. 45,46). Mildred Archer’s account tallies with her husbands (Archer 1974:335), but it is longer and more detailed. I will include some excerpts below. Mrs Archer starts this description by pointing

out that the *Jādopaṭiās* has another more lucrative source of income than scroll painting and performance.

> Wherever they operated, they where eager for news of the death of any Santal. On obtaining such news, the painter would bring out a stock of small 'mortuary' pictures (no 45) depicting men, women and children of all ages, complete except that in each case the eye lacked a pupil. Besides the figures were small drawings of various objects, such as a cow, goat, chickens, brass dishes, ornaments and money... On arriving at the house, he would be politely welcomed, given a cot to sit on and supplied with tobacco… sight could only be restored if he, the jadupatua, supplied the blank and sightless eyes with pupils. He would be prepared to render them this service in return for the objects indicated in the picture. It was this magical act of bestowing sight, which had led the Santals to call the painters jadupatuas or magic painters. (Archer 1977:16)

It is interesting to note that Archer refers to the same rationale for the name *Jādopaṭiās*, (i.e. magic painters) as Dutt does in his account. However, in her introduction to her book "Popular Painting" she words herself somewhat differently. "This act was supposed to involve *jadu* or magic and for this reason the artists were called jadupatuas or magic painters" (Archer 1977:7). I dwell on this fact because my own data contrasts to Dutts and Archers accounts. All of the informants I asked (both Santal and *Jādopaṭiā*) denied that the name of the painters should be *jādupaṭuā* or *jādupaṭiā*. They claimed that it should be *jādopaṭiā*, *jādobābā*, or simply ***jādo***[25]. The meaning of ***jādu*** being magic in Bengali, they said, refers to something different not concerning the *Jādopaṭiās*. These scroll painters were called *jādopaṭiās*, *jādobābā* or simply *jādo* by the Santals. When I enquired (as I did ever so often) what the meaning of ***jādo*** was, my informants answered either that they didn't know, or that it did not mean anything in particular, but that it was the Santali name for the scroll painters. I will return to this discussion later in my thesis. Incidentally the *Jādopaṭiās* also call themselves, and are called, *citrakar*, "painters", in a Bengali, or Hindi-speaking context. Mrs Archer writes; "As part of an attempt to raise themselves in the social scale, a number of jadupatuas had recently discarded this name and had taken to calling themselves chitrakar (painter)."(ibid.:16). All the *Jādopaṭiās* I met

[25] This type of scrollpainter is also known by other names as *jangli* (jungle), *duāri* ('of the door'), or Santali *paṭuā* and in Purulia district he is known as *paṭkar* or *pattikar* (de Selva 1994:63, Rycroft 1996:72, Sen Gupta 1973:49). My *Jādopaṭiā* informants also used, *jādopaṭiā jādobābā, jādoṭhākur, jādoguru* and *jādoharam* (among others).

called themselves, and where called *citrakar*[26] or *jādopaṭiā* by members of their group. It is important to underline the fact that the *Jādopaṭiās* never refer to themselves as *citrakar* in the Santali context, when they speak Santali. At that time they use the same attributions as the Santals do.

In her account Mrs Archer mentions yet another income that the *Jādopaṭiās* could get from the Santals. Her observation is as far as I know the first of its kind in this regard.

> In certain cases, yet another fee was exacted. Traditionally the charred bones of the Santal are supposed to be immersed in the sacred Damodar River, the 'sea' of the Santal legend. This, however, is often far away and the family cannot afford the time to go to the river or to pay the fees which the Doms who attend there would demand. The Santals therefore sometimes pay the jadupatuas to go to Damodar and make a symbolic immersion of the bones consigning the drawing to the water. Some of the jadupatuas claimed that they could earn forty or fifty rupees a month by these methods. (ibid.:17)

At this point we may ask ourselves how the Santals perceive the *Jādopaṭiā* and the work he does in the Santal village after a death has occurred? We have seen that the Bengali society seems to regard the *Jādopaṭiās* as a charlatan. Archer called him a funerary beggar in his account above (Archer 1974:335). Other authors called the *Jādopaṭiā* a priest. "Originally the Jadu Patuas were a class of tribal priest painters whose art was intimately connected with magical mortuary rites." (Sanyal 1984:134). However, none of these authors gave us any sound grounding from the field, for giving the *Jādopaṭiā* the status of a priest. The folklorist Sankar Sen Gupta presents an interesting picture of this kind of scroll-painter in Purulia district of Bengal, where they are known as *pattikars* or *paṭkars*.

> The *pattikars* in the district of Purulia call themselves as *patua* Brahmin. They have their *jajmans* in the manner the Brahmins have their clients. No one is allowed to disturb other's clients. These *patuas* are not as neglected in their society as the Hindu or Musalman *patuas*, rather they have a dignified position. A Santal, a Bhumij and the type of people think that the *pattikar* has some supernatural power and he himself too claims so at the time of painting the Supreme God Marang Buru. When a *patua* comes to his

[26] One *Jādopaṭiā* informant called himself *śilpī* (artisan). By calling themselves *citrakar* (painter/artisan) the *Jādopaṭiās* associate themselves with the *naba sāyaka* caste group (as the Bengali *paṭuās* do). This caste category of artisans has a higher reputation than the castes that the *Jādopaṭiās* usually are associated with.

> clients a *Majhi Haram* or the village chief will always oblige him with a *dhuti* [a loin cloth] and a *Pargana Haram* or the chief of a few villages will offer him more than a *dhuti*. (Sen Gupta 1973:49. Data supplied by P. P. Mahato (see ibid.:47))

The first persons who are known to have lived among the *Jādopaṭiās* for some time are Jean-Baptiste Faivre and his friend Utpal Chakraborty. Faivre was an artist and Chakrobarty is an art historian. From December 1978 until Mars 1979 they did fieldwork on the *Jādopaṭiās* in the region of Santal Parganas (Bihar). This resulted in the first extensive ethnographic article on the *Jādopaṭiās* (Faivre/Chakroborty 1979). Faivre wrote in French but the article starts with an abstract in French as well as English. I include a part of the English abstract below.

> Though the Jadupatuas know how to amuse and entertain, the concern to impress and even threaten (they live almost entirely by gifts) is never absent. One of their main activities among the Santals is a parody of the funeral ceremony through an assumed image of the deceased. These proceedings, which are accompanied by often considerable “honorariums” are doubtless at the origin of their name of magicians (jadu or jado) and the Santals persistent distrust of them. (Faivre 1979:111)

It is clear from the passage above that Faivre had no doubt about the origin of the epithet *jādo* as being magic. In the heading to his article and in the abstract above, Faivre writes 'jadupatuas'. In his text he sticks mainly to the term *citrakar* (with a number of exemptions). “The terms chitrakar and jadupatua are not synonymous and stand for two distinctive statuses (still we use them here without distinction for commodity).” (ibid.:111). It is uncertain what Faivre means by this statement. Is he talking about attributed status, or of self-ascribed status? I believe that we must take in account both attributed status, as well as self ascribed status in our ethnography. Faivre lets us know that the *Jādopaṭiā* himself refuses the explanation that *jādo* means magic. Faivre relates how a scrollpainter rejected this denomination, and claimed that *jādo* was the Santali translation of the word *citrakar* (ibid.:112). I have got a similar explanation from a Santal informant. The fact that Faivre notes the term *jādo,* reflects his closeness to the field, the *Jādopaṭiās* and the Santals[27]. However, in spite of this closeness Faivre

[27] In the footnotes no. 2,3 to his article, he also quotes some of the citations of Campbell, Bodding and Gausdal given above in my text (ibid.:121). I suspect that one reason why Faivre did not notice the nuances in the title given to the scrollpainters in the field (i.e. *jādopaṭiā* contra *jādupaṭuā*) could have been due to the fact that he neither spoke Bengali, nor Santali, and relied on Chakroborty as an interpreter. This may also be the reason why Faivre wrote

chooses to equate *jādo* with *jādu* and perpetuates the tradition of previous authors like Dutt and Archer. "This last denomination is frequently abbreviated to *jādo*, the magician. This should tell much about the opinion one has of this picture shower." (ibid.:111f) Faivre's article includes several photographs of the *Jādopaṭiās* and their habitat, as well as a rich ethnographic description of their art, craft and doings among the Santals. In Faivres account the *Jādopaṭiās* are portrayed with their personal names. He manages to come closer to them and their real life than in any of the earlier accounts. One of Faivres informants says, "The chitrakar is the priest "Brahman" of the Santals." (ibid.:112)[28]. The rationale behind this statement was explained by the *Jādopaṭiā* informant in the following way; "-as we are present after a death, and our women pierce the ears of the Santal children after birth, we are their priests/Brahmans" (ibid.:112). This is the first time in an account of the *Jādopaṭiās* that this kind of statement comes directly from the mouth of an informant. It is an intriguing claim that becomes a vital part of Faivres exposition of the *Jādopaṭiās*. Several of Faivres *Jādopaṭiā* informants compared the traditional salary (*dān* = Bengali; gift) of the Brahman at the funerary ceremonies to the payment the *Jādopaṭiās* receives from the Santal after his mortuary work (ibid.:120). The final part of his account concerns the images of the dead (*mṛtyu paṭ*), and includes an illustration with examples of drawings of deceased Santals. All of these drawings include representations of bowls and plates. One of them has an illustration of a hairy creature, a witch, next to the dead Santal (compare Bodding above, page 8.). Faivre had not witnessed *cokhodān* or the funerary work done by the *Jādopaṭiās* himself, but refers to a description made of it, given to him by a Santal Catholic priest, who had seen it many times.

> In the past, when someone died, the jado came to the house. He showed the picture representing the dead, and waved it in his hand and saying: - he suffers in hell, do you recognise him? Specially the women would believe this. So, he would ask for the belongings of the dead to be able to help him to get out of hell and find the way back to his ancestors. (ibid.:120)

Before I started my own fieldwork in India, this account of the mortuary work by the *Jādopaṭiā*, is the only one I found that was related by a Santal. It is interesting that the Santal mentions the fact that the dead one should be able to find his way back to the ancestors. The Santals constantly remember their ancestors. The idea that the dead one later becomes an ancestor is an

"The painter always refer to himself as chitrakar" (ibid:112). Faivre has not noticed that the *Jādopaṭiās* also refer to themselves as *jādopaṭiā, jādobābā, jādoguru, jādoharam, jādoṭhākur* or *jādo*.

[28] The *Jādopaṭiās* I met also made similar claims.

important motivating factor for many of the Santals actions after one of their kin has died.

> If they are speedily forgotten or conventional tributes is withheld, they are liable to visit the family with sickness, loss and worries. For this reason, the immediate ancestors must constantly receive oblations and whether it is a time of drinking water or rice-bear, eating a meal, celebrating a festival, a birth or a wedding or placating the bongas the recent dead must be given their small offerings. (Archer 1974:341)

I have often seen Santals as well as *Jādopaṭiās* pour a few drops of any beverage to be consumed on the ground, before they drink it, while they utter the name of the great *boṅga* or spirit *Maran Buru*. "Lit. The great mountain, the principle national godling of the Santals; he has a peculiar double position, as he is also worshiped (especially libated to) together with the ancestors (Gausdal 1960:206).

Faivre asks why the Santal comply with the demand of the *Jādopaṭiā*. He suggests that the Santals fear of death (as well as the fear of the *Jādopaṭiā*) is so strong that they dare not refuse the demands of the *Jādopaṭiā* (Faivre 1979:112,120). The final part of Faivres article includes some concluding remarks about the vistas of research, concerning the *Jādopaṭiās* and the Santals, that he would like to undertake in the future. Among other areas he feels that we lack data about the Santals attitude to, and understanding of, the doings of the *Jādopaṭiās*.

> This would allow one to judge if this is only a confusion caused by the jadupatuas to achieve their aims, that is to impose themselves even more on the Santals, or if the Santal beliefs really have remained unknown to the chitrakars, only [being utilised] as easily exploitable material. Hence, to try to find out if this game of associations, which they have invented, is without consequence for them. (ibid.:120)

In a short epilogue to his article Faivre extends his gratitude to a number of persons who helped him in the process of his research. Among these people Rosita de Selva appears. She stayed in Bengal from 1973 until 1977. During her stay she did fieldwork on the *paṭuās* and *Jādopaṭiās*. In 1994 de Selva published an ethnographic account focusing on the funerary role of the *Jādopaṭiā*[29] (de Selva 1994). A central idea in de Selvas description of the

[29] De Selva undertook her research in several districts of West Bengal (Birbhum, Midnapur and Purulia).

Jādopaṭiās becomes overt from the very first word in the title of her article; "**Forcing**, the Funerary Role of the Jādu Paṭuā, Painter-**Magician**" (ibid.:43, emphasis added). In this article she includes a detailed description of *cokhodān* and the funerary work, done by the *Jādopaṭiās*, based on an account of this event as related to her by a Bengali *paṭuā* from "the plains" (ibid.:67). The article also portrays the *Jādopaṭiā* as a painter-magician and further develops the analogy between the *Jādopaṭiā* and the Brahman, based on Faivres ethnography mentioned above, and elaborated by grounding this analogy in indological and ethnographic works by Kane (1974) and Toffin (1990) (de Selva 1994:53). De Selva lets us know that she has not witnessed the *cokhodān* and the funerary work "in situ" herself. However, she treats the description of this event by the Bengali *paṭuā* as an "authentic text", and includes it sentence by sentence (in transcribed Bengali as well as in French) with a detailed and lengthy analysis of its grammatical form and content (ibid.:68). Through this linguistic analysis de Selva uncovers the many ambiguities in what is being said by the *Jādopaṭiā* to the Santal. According to her analysis the play with words, persons and personifications is part of the *Jādopaṭiā's* clever manipulation, which enable him to force the Santal to comply with his demands. De Selva compares these tactics with those of street vendors and con men. Her article with the testimony by the Bengali *paṭuā* supplies us with further clues and valuable data about the doings of the *Jādopaṭiā* in the Santal community. In the following I will include an English translation of the testimony by the Bengali *paṭuā*, translated into English by myself from the Bengali transcript in de Selvas article (see appendix I). Here the *Jādopaṭiā* addresses the oldest son of the deceased Santal[30]:

> '-Bring some water, bring some water. It is I, your father [that] have arrived. The *jādov patuā* have made him rise on one of their pictures. Your father is arriving. [He] is arriving/[I] am arriving. You don't believe me, bring some turmeric water and I will show you.' [The narrator relates the following]; Some turmeric water was brought. '-You put it in a small bowl. No, this will not do. Over there are big brass plates, bring one of those. Your father has told: bring one of those plates here. With that I will show you. Is my yellow chicken there? [He] have told to give your good yellow chicken. Your father has told: one plate, one chicken, give well.' [The narrator relates the following]; That brass plate and a little turmeric water were brought. Being brought, [he: i.e. the *Jādopaṭiā*] showing a little false/imaginary [he] said: '- Look at your father and give five roupies, give five kilograms [*ser*: aprox. = kg] of rice

[30] The role of the oldest son after the death of the father is important, a fact that I will comment further on in this thesis.

> and give one plate, and all your fathers sin, that was there, will be reduced… The old one has farmed and kept the harvest, he didn't eat. With difficulties he farmed, and so he has died. Look and give. I have a guru. [He] will do the work for your father. [The narrator relates] A plate, a bowl, what [he] wants [They] will give…'. (de Selva 1994:70-82)

The *Jādopaṭiā* in this description assures the son that all his father's sins will be reduced. This statement has several implications. It connects the doings of the *Jādopaṭiā* with the judgement and punishments meted out by *Yama* in hell[31]. It also introduces the Hindu concepts of '**sin' (***pāp*). The concept of 'sin' is connected to the law of cause and effect (*karma),* and are intimately tied up with the Hindu eschatological notions of reincarnation (*samsāra)* and liberation (*mokṣa*). How does the Santal make sense of this allusion to the father's 'sin'? Sen Gupta notes the following about the *Jādopaṭiā's* actions in the Santal household: "…He also narrates as to how the soul of the dead is suffering for his misdeeds. Thus in order to set the soul free he performs certain magical rites…" (Sen Gupta 1973:50).

In the introduction to her article, de Selva makes it clear that her presentation focuses on the precise actions and speech of the *Jādopaṭiās.* She remarks that whether Dutt had noticed these preliminaries or not, they have never been published in any literature. De Selva suggests that an examination of these circumstances will make it possible to judge to what extent the *Jādopaṭiā* is a magician on one hand, and some kind of Brahman on the other (ibid.:48,49). Further on in her article de Selva makes it clear that her goal is not to examine the justification for the comparison between the Brahman and the *Jādopaṭiā,* or to ask herself to which type of Brahman the *Jādopaṭiā* is comparable. Neither does she want to try to establish from what universe the *Jādopaṭiā* is borrowing his tools. De Selva gives us the following explanation; "In order to achieve this it would be necessary to know the Hindu world as well as the world of the Santal" (ibid.:54, note 17).

2.6 Enlarging the perspective

It is obvious that more fieldwork is needed to enable us to cast further light on the topics covered above. Interviews and accounts of these matters, related by *Jādopaṭiās* as well as Santals, coupled with field observations of interaction between these groups, can help to enlarge our perspective of the funerary role played by the *Jādopaṭiā.*

At this point I would like to make myself clear. I do not want to give the impression that there is an event, called *cokhodān* that has an essential form

[31] As we have seen, the theme of king *Yama* and the punishments in hell is one of the major themes on the scrolls of the *Jādopaṭiā* that he displays in the Santal village.

and content, a stable object out there for us to capture with our ethnographic tools. 'The gift of the eye' should rather be seen as an act of importance that plays a central role in a changeable event, which can take many forms and contains an ever-changing message. In my presentation I would like to enlarge the perspective of this event and continue some of the discussions and queries left open by the researchers before me. My aim is to present a multifaceted view via the many voices of my informants and their discourses. The accounts and descriptions from other sources, like the ones presented in the literature above can also illuminate the exposition that I aspire to give in the following. Moreover, my view is that to be able to understand why the *Jādopaṭiā* is called the Brahman of the Santal, we have to conceptualise this statement as the *Jādopaṭiā's* discourse about himself. It is a statement by a professional about himself and the status of his guild. In that perspective it is of great interest to find out from what universe the *Jādopaṭiā* has borrowed his imagery.

Further, I would like to give a more subtle presentation of the *Jādopaṭiā,* his ways, and how the Santal perceives him. What does the *Jādopaṭiā* represent? Is he a humble beggar as Archer relates in the quote above? Does the *Jādopaṭiā* with his forcing and magic represent *Yama*, master magician and the king of death, as de Selva suggests in the end of her account (de Selva 1994:84)? Or is the *Jādopaṭiā* just a person, offering the best of the common man at his task, as Faivre wants to have it at the end of his article (Faivre 1979:120). In the following chapter I will explore the various claims of homology between the *Jādopaṭiā* and the Brahman.

3 THE JĀDOPAṭIĀ AND THE BRAHMAN AS FUNERAL PRIESTS

Budhesvar Citrakar told me: "we do not go [to perform our work] to the Bengali locality. We live with the Santal [*ādibāsī*] and we go to their locality"… "This is the work of our caste [*jāt*] … this is our livelihood [*saṅgsār cala*] ".

I inquired if they were Bengali. "Yes, we are Bengali and we are the priest [*ṭhākur*[32]] of the Santal"… "We are two different groups. We are their priests [ṭhākur]. We can not intermarry with them. *jādobābā*, they call us *bābā*[33], *jādopaṭiā* and *ṭhākur*".

I asked him in what way they where the priest [*ṭhākur*] of the Santals. " We are the priest of the Santal because we do the "*cokhodān*". They do not have any Brahman [*bāman*]. They do not keep peace with the Brahman … They had a Brahman. *Murmu*[34] was their Brahman. *Murmu* was their priest [*ṭhākur*]. This has been rejected". I interjected: in their place you have come. "Aha, that is so"[35].

As we have seen, the *Jādopaṭiā* claims that he is the Brahman (*ṭhākur*) and the priest (*purohit*) of the Santal. The work (*kāj*) and service that he renders the Santal relatives after death is equated with rites performed for the dead, and the service offered by other funeral priests after a death has occurred. Thus the Santal, his patron, is compared to the patron (*jajmān*)[36] of the Brahman and the purohit. The gift (*dān*) the Santals give to the *Jādopaṭiā* are compared to the gifts that the Brahman and the purohit receive for his funerary work. In this manner the *Jādopaṭiās* borrows categories from the Hindu system and glosses his professional role with concepts from a Hindu

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[32] *Thākur* can have many meanings; a god, a deity, an idol or a lord, master or king. However, in this context the informant uses *ṭhākur* interchangeable with the word Brahman or priest (Samsad 1985:373).

[33] *Bābā*; father, … a respectful title applied to ascetics (Samsad 1985:650).

[34] *Murmu* is one of the major twelve clans (*paris*) of the Santals. This clan has got it's name from the totem of the clan, the *murum jel*, an antelope (see fn 28).

[35] I will return to the fact that *murmu* has lost their authority as priest further on in this chapter.

[36] *Jajmān* is a patron of a ritual specialist, especially of a Brahman priest (Parry 1994:xxiii). The Hindi (or Bengali) term *jajmān* derives from the Sanskrit term *yajamāna*, 'patron of the sacrifice', for whom the priest performed the ritual. In parts of northern India, the term *jajmān* has been extended to cover 'patron' in a more general sense (Fuller 1989:39). In the contexts discussed in this thesis, the term *jajmān* refers to a relationship between patrons and artisan/priests prevalent in northern Indian villages, where payments (*paona*) for a service rendered is paid in kind. These types of relationships are more or less formalised over time (Fruzzetti 1982:43). The description of the term *jajmān*, given here by me, mirrors my informants use of the term. For a discussion and a critique of anthropological understanding of the 'jaimani system' see Fuller (ibid:33-63), and Parry (1994). In the later part of this chapter I will return to the claim that the Santals are the *jajmān* of the *Jādopaṭiās*.

context. I would like to illuminate these and other glosses made by the *Jādopaṭiā* by comparing these and other ethnographic data by H. H Risley (1891) and J. Parry (1989/1994), collected in North India, that deals with funeral priests and Brahmans who perform mortuary rituals.

Several of my *Jādopaṭiā* informants told me that the mortuary work they performed where agradān and that they where the agradānī priest of the Santals. In his ethnographic glossary "Tribes And Castes Of Bengal"[37] (first published in 1891) H. H. Risley (1851-1911) gives us this exposition of the agradānī.

> ***Agradána***, *Agradáni*, *Agrasráddhi*, a degraded sub-caste of Brahmans, ranking slightly above the A´chárji. They read *mantras* at the cremation of Brahmans and members of the Nava-Sákha, and take gifts (*dán*) at the first *sráddh*[38] on the eleventh or thirty-first day after death, and the subsequent monthly *sráddhas* for a year, after which time no more presents are given. Pure Brahmans will eat sweetmeats with the Agradáni, but not rice. In Bengal they bear the ironical designation of Mahá-Bráhman, Mahá-purohit, Mahá-sráddhi, Mahá-puttra, Marui-porá Brahman and in the rare instance when they have a smattering of Sanskrit, Pandit. In Behar they are called Mahá-Bráhman and Kántáha. (Risley, vol. I, 1981:11)

First of all it is important to notice that this type of Brahman is degraded. This fact reflects on the ironical titles that this Brahman has been given. The prefix Maha- means great (Samsad, 1985:741). The ironical scorn of this epithet is obvious here. Further, Risley points out that the Maha-Brahman is known as *Kāntāha* in Bihar. *Kāntāha* or *kāṇṭā* means thorn (ibid:189). This metaphor is also a proof of the contempt with which this type of Brahman is treated[39]. We are informed that this type of Brahman rarely knows any Sanskrit. If he does, it is this smattering of Sanskrit that would give him the venerated title of Pandit, usually reserved for those Brahmans who are respected for their command over this language of the Hindu holy scriptures. Risley has listed Maha-puttra as another title given to this Brahman. The translation of '*puttra*' given in Samsad Bengali-English dictionary is son (Samsad 1985:573). However, I suspect that this could have been a miss-

[37] This work, useful as it may be, has to be read as sign of its time. Ronald Inden makes this comment. "Here in these tomes of alphabetised empiricism, then, is to be found what I would refer to as the hegemonic discourse on caste of the Anglo-French imperial formation." (Inden 1990:58).

[38] *Śrāddha* "n. a respectful and well-wishing offering to the manes … " (Samsad 1985:838).

[39] Parry (see further below) also notes this derogatory meaning of the title *kāṇṭā* (Parry 1994:76).

transcription of *pātra*; vessel or a minister (ibid.:559). Maha-patra, then, could be the great vessel. "In the drama of death the Funeral-priest is a vessel for the rancorous greed of the ghost. Worshiped as the deceased, he is dressed in the dead man's clothes, is made to wear his spectacles or clutch his walking stick, and is fed his favourite foods." (Parry 1994:76). Secondly, we also notice in Rislye's account of the *agradānī*, the gift (*dān*) that the Brahman is given and accept in connection with his role as the funeral priest. The concept of gift in this context is important. A point that I will return to, several times further on in this chapter. To get a more detailed description of this kind of funeral Brahman I will utilise some more of Jonathan P. Parry's ethnographic data from his book "Death in Banaras" (1994). In this book Parry exposes material that is based on his fieldwork done in the North Indian city Banaras over the last fifteen years (ibid.:xix). In chapter three, named "Shares and Chicanery" (ibid.:75-118), Parry describes the division of mortuary labour between various groups of occupational specialists, who earn their living on and around the burning *ghāts*. One of the groups of mortuary workers that Parry introduces in this chapter is the Mahabrahman.

> At death the soul becomes a disembodied ghost or pret, a hungry and malevolent state dangerous to the survivors. On the twelfth day after death a rite is performed which enables the deceased to rejoin his ancestors and become an ancestor (pitr) himself. The Mahabrahman Funeral-priest presides over the ritual addressed to the ghost during the first eleven days after death, and accepts on behalf of the ghost the gifts intended for it. (ibid.:75-76)

The fact that the Mahabrahman accepts gifts on behalf of the ghost of the deceased is of great importance here. One of the major roles of this type of priest is to atone for the sins of the dead one by accepting these gifts. Thus the Mahabrahman will have to 'digest' this sin and serve as a kind of medium or vehicle for the transmission of the moral filth of his patron (ibid.:123)[40]. It is also of interest to note that these Brahmans who have close communication with the pret or ghost – are in many contexts treated much like untouchables. They are "described as *achhut* ('not to be touched')" (ibid.:77). "The Mahabrahman is regarded with a mixture of fear and

[40] Parry comments that the word *pāp* [sin] and *doṣ* [fault] are used for sin in this context. But the most common term for sin is the Hindi word *prāyashchitt*. This term stands for expiation or atonement of sin. However, Parry also underlines that the term *prāyashcitt* also, in colloquial use, by the Banaras sacred specialists, has the additional sense of the 'sin' which is expiated, and is used interchangeably with *pāp* and *doṣ* (Parry 1994:281, n 3). My *Jādopaṭiā* informants used the Bengali *prāyaścitta* as a term for the action of purification from 'sin' (*pāp*), or as a general purification from something inauspicious. Because they perform this act of expiation they claim to have a status of some kind of funeral priest or Brahman.

contempt." (ibid.:78). In addition, that the Mahabrahman is associated with death and the polluting corpse in general also ads to his ambiguous status.

> The Mahabrahman's presence is, however, essential. He confers salvation, and allows the soul to 'swim across' to the other world. For the successful conclusion of the rites he must be satisfied with the gifts offered. … Without his blessing the deceased will remain in limbo of pret-hood to plague his family with misfortune and further bereavement… (ibid.:79)

The rational involved in the Hindu context referred to in the citation by Parry above is an important part of the parcel of ideas that the *Jādopaṭiā* invoke when they refer to themselves as the Brahmans of the Santals. In the Hindu context, described by Parry above, the 'true gift' (*dān*) is voluntary donation made without any ostentation or expectations of this-worldly return (ibid.:120). However, this kind of calculation does not exclude the notion of reciprocity (as envisaged by Mauss 1990 [1925]), in relation to the gifts given to the funeral priest, in the case of the *Jādopaṭiās* and the Santals. Even if the giver of a gift is not supposed to expect any this-worldly returns, he certainly expects that the fulfilment of his filial duties will result in a successful 'ferrying across' of his mane into the next world. He also hopes that the work performed by the funeral priest will result in a pacification of any kind of sin, inauspicious force, or evil influence that could plague the deceased or the relatives otherwise.

3.1 The degraded priest placed in the Santal context

In what follows I will illustrate how the *Jādopaṭiās* plant themselves firmly within one of the most pivotal institutions of the Santals, the *Karam* ritual and the *Karam binti*; connected with the "story of the creation". The recitation of such *Karam bintis* are compulsory at a number of life-cycle rituals among the Santals such as; the ritual purification and initiation of children as persons of the Santal society (*Caco chatiar*), marriage and at the time of the performance of the Santal mortuary rituals (*Bhandan*) (Bodding 1942, Archer 1974). "Each ceremony focuses on the magical properties believed to be inherent in the Karam tree [*Adinia cordifolia*] and by honouring the Karam seeks to obtain and increase in wealth and progeny" (Archer 1974:256). The narrative that I include below is a mythological narrative by *Rām Bilās Citrakar*, one of my *Jādopaṭiā* informants.

At the time of recording this myth the Rām Bilās introduced himself with these words; "I am the purohit and ṭhākur of the Santal. By reading and

knowing the Santal scriptures and the tradition of Santal ancestors (*hapram*) I do the expiation (*prāyaṣcitta*) work (*kāj*) for them". Having said this he told me the name of his *Jādopaṭiā* teacher (*guru*), as well as the name of his Santal teachers (*Karam gurus*[41]) who had taught him his trade and the traditions of the Santals.

"*Maran Buru* created the world, seven girls and seven boys[42]. Later on *Maran Buru* saw that these people in the world had multiplied into large numbers. - Who will protect these people? The wealth and possessions of the people will be mischievously taken away by thieves. For this reason *Maran Buru* thought; who is going to protect these people? For this purpose he made two animals, each with four legs. However, *Maran Buru*, the creator, could give them life, but to do *cokhodān* [lit. gift of eyesight] was the duty of *Kāl Bhairab*. *Kāl Bhairab* means; from the lineage of Shiva. One of Shivas names is *Kāl Bhairab*[43]. He used to do *cokhodān*. –Who will protect the people of *Cac Campa Gar*[44] during the night? Fore this reason I have created some animals. Now *Kāl Bhairab* will give them eyesight [*cokhodān*]. *Maran Buru* sent his sepoy [beng. *sipāhi*; soldier/messenger] to fetch *Kāl Bhairab*, but the sepoy could not find him. The sepoy returned and said; – *Maran Buru, Kāl Bhairab* is not in his house. One day passed thus. The second day *Maran Buru* asked the sepoy to go and fetch him again. The sepoy did not find him in his house. In this manner six days past, but the sepoy did not find *Kāl Bhairab* in his house. *Maran Buru* became angry and said; –Today six days has passed since I gave life to the animals. They passed six days in difficulties. Why does not their eyes open! Where has *Kāl Bhairab* gone? For all the creatures that I give life, I have allotted the task of *cokhodān* to *Kāl Bhairab*. Why doesn't he come? Today six days has passed. Were ever you find him, bring him here. The sepoy said; - Were ever he is residing I will search, catch hold of him and bring him here. The sepoy went, but did not find *Kāl Bhairab* at first. He had gone fishing. There he found him. The sepoy said; you have to go, this is the order of *Maran Buru*. You have to leave whatever task you are doing and go to him. He has created two animals, and six days has passed without their eyes opening. Who will do *cokhodān*. That is your work. I will go said *Kāl Bhairab*. He and the sepoy quickly went from that place to *Maran Buru*. *Maran Buru* angrily told *Kāl Bhairab*; - six days has passed and these animals have had a difficult time. Why couldn't you come? Give them *cokhodān*! Thus *Kāl Bhairab* gave them

[41] *Karam guru* is a Santal who knows the *Karam binti*, the oral tradition of the Santals and their ancestors. This oral tradition has gradually been 'canonised'; transformed into written texts, like in the case of the material collected by Skrefsrud from the *Karam guru Kolean* (the source referred to in fn 58, below).

[42] This starting point is a variation of the creation myth of the Santals. See "The ancestor's Story" in "Traditions and Institutions of The Santals" (Bodding 1942:3 ff).

[43] *Kāl Bhairab* is a 'terrible' form of Shiva. This is an interesting claim that may induce fear and respect with the Santals.

[44] According to the Santal myth this was one of the main original dwelling places of the Santals (ibid.:10).

cokhodān. This is the cause of the six days that pass before dogs open their eyes. Because *Kāl Bhairab* delayed his work for six days. When dogs have puppies it takes six days before their eyes open. Because of *Kāl Bhairab's* negligence *Maran Buru* gave him a curse. - Why did you delay your work? Your lineage will start from *Ainto* and *Jainto*. They will go to the Santal in *Cac Campa Gar*, to 'eat' [digest] the sin of their dead ones. *Kāl Bhairab* said; - do not cast such a curse on me! I have done a big mistake … *Maran Buru* said; - you can not avoid this curse. Why did you delay the *cokhodān*? *Kāl Bhairab* said; - well, be it so then. I have sinned.

When the people of *Cac Campa Gar* became to many, one of the seven girls became pregnant, and gave birth to *Madho Sin*[45]. *Madho Sin* started oppression and tyranny in *Cac Campa Gar*. He spread fear among the Santals. *Maran Buru* told the Santals; - do not stay here any longer. Your *dharma*[46] will be destroyed here. In the midst of the night they prepared twelve carts to bring the people, and escape from there … *Maran Buru* saw the big waves on the *gaṅgā* river that was full of water. He thought to himself; - if the people of *Cac Campa* will be stopped … *Madho Sin* will kill them all. *Maran Buru* said; - listen! The river will dry up. But for this to happen you have to undertake worship [*pūjā*]. He said; - look here; to enable you to cross you have to fast and worship. Then they sacrificed a brown fowl to *Jaher Era* and *Gossain Era*, so that they [the Gods] would grant their wish and make the river dry up so that the twelve carts could pass … Like *Maran Buru* had said, so it happened and the river dried up at one place and there was enough space for the Santal people to cross over with their twelve carts. When *Madho Sin* reached the shore of the river the big waves stopped him from crossing … This was due to the might of the *boṅga*, the divinities to which the sacrifice was given by the Santals. Madho Sin saw that the Santals had passed and understood that he could not catch them. *Maran Buru* said [to the Santals] ; look here; - however, first of all you have to do worship at the *jaher than*[47]. That one is called spring festival [*baha porob*]. If these divinities had not assisted you today *Madho Sin* would have killed you. Their [the Santals] dharma would have been destroyed. That is why *jaher* worship

[45] At this point the narrator integrate his main theme into one of the themes in the Santal myth. *Madho Sin* was an illegitimate child. A result of an affair between a Santal girl and a Hindu (a young man of the "king") who threatened to kill her if she revealed the fact that he was the father of the child. The mother left this child in the jungle. Some girls of the *Kisku* clan found the child and adopted it. The *Kisku* people kept the secret. *Madho Sin* grew up and became intelligent and clever and the king gave him office. However, when *Madho Sin* demanded a Santal wife, none was offered, because the Santals did not know to what clan the bastard belonged. The Santals where afraid of having their daughters ravished and secretly prepared to escape from the land of *Cac Campa* (see Bodding 1942:21). According to Campbell; "Madhosin is said to have been the person who first broke up the unity of the Santal people." (Campbell 1988:498)

[46] *Dharma*; refer to religion in a wide sense. It can also stand for truth and justice.

[47] *Jaher than* (the sacred grove) is the place where the Santals worship three of their main divinities; *Maran Buru, Moreko-Turuiko* and *Jaher Era*. Here these divinities are said to reside in three *Sarjom* trees (*shorea robusta* or Sal) (Troisi 1978:81-82).

[*pūjā*] became their major worship. At the jaher than they worship and sacrifice a brown fowl. *Maran Buru* said; listen; - you have come out from here. Then your *dharma* could be destroyed. Who knows what will happen? Who can tell? The one who will perform the worship [*naeke ṭhākur*] will be *Murmu ṭhākur*, *Sada Murmu* and *Nij Murmu*[48]. He will do the worship. He will fast and make a ring out of copper and iron. This one he will wear. The day he will worship he will take it of and place it in the tree of the *jaher than*. There he will do the worship. *Jaher Era* will come there. That is the goddess *Durga* of Hindu religion [*dharma*]. They call *Durga pūjā* for *Jaher Era*. If you do not place that ring there you can not do the *Durga* or *Jaher Era* worship there. That is why, also today, that the ones who do *naeke* worship at the *jaher than*, wear that ring. They fast and wear the ring. Then they install[49] the ring, place it in the tree and worship. Many days passed one after another. Then the people of *Cae Campa Gar* had become manifold. *Maran Buru* told himself; - I will go once more and see in what condition these people are living. *Maran Buru* saw that they had built many houses. But they where drinking alcohol. They ate cows meat. The *naeke*[50] *ṭhākur* slowly destroyed the *dharma* and *karma*. They have lost the power of earlier times. One day a cow died. They went and ate it. The *naeke* ate it all. At that time the *naeke* was a priest [*paitā*[51]] a Brahmin type of priest. That has fallen out of practice[52]. *Maran Buru* found out about this bad state of affairs. They could not continue to do worship. Thus *Maran Buru* went there quickly and told them; - listen! Do not touch me! You have destroyed the *dharma*. You can not continue to be priests [*ṭhākur*]. The naeke *ṭhākur* will continue to do worship, but at the weddings he will not do the priestly work any longer. At the time of weddings the *babne* will play the part of the *ṭhākur* or the *bāman*. The older *babne*, that is, the older son-in-law[53]. *Maran Buru* said that the older son-in-law should become *bāman*. In the midst of the wedding, in the end when they have presented the turmeric cloth, than this older son-in-law will be the *bāman*. The *Murmu ṭhākur* thought to himself; - what is *Maran*

[48] *Nij* means original (here, original clan). "The original sept from which the sub-septs of all Santal septs have been derived." (Campbell 1988:551). *Nij Murmu* is the first of the *Murmu* sub-clans from which all the other *Murmu* sub-clans have originated.

[49] Install it (*sthāpan*) by consecrating the place of worship.

[50] Among the Santals the naeke is in charge of conducting religious sacrifice to the *boṅgas*. However, the narrator refers to *Murmu ṭhākur* here. See further on in the text.

[51] "The holy thread slung over the shoulder in the fashion of a cross-belt by upper-caste Hindus, especially Brahmans… (Samsad 1985:524). Here *paitā* means Brahman priest.

[52] The narrator means that the *naeke* priest (*bāman*; i.e. the *Murmu ṭhākur*) has lost his position due to drinking alcohol and eating cows meat (a Hindu point of view). In fact, the Santals look on the rice beer (*handia*) as a compulsory offering to some of their deities. They also drink rice beer at the time of worship, festivals and social gatherings. Concerning the consumption of cows meat; Santals eat cows meat, but see further on page 38 about the Murmu sub-clan status.

[53] "…best man. The Santal word is the same which they use for a brahman (*babre*), generally a relative, especially a brother-in-law". (Bodding 1942:44)

Buru saying? -What will be the solution for this? The *naeke* will fast, use the ring, take it of at the *jaher than* and do the worship. Thereafter if the *Murmu ṭhākur* will go, we have been cursed. When your mother or father will die, the people of the lineage of *Kāl Bhairab* will come and do the expiation [*prāyaścitta*]. *Ainto* and *Jainto* are there, *Kāl Bhairab* is long dead. The descendants of *Ainto* and *Jainto* will come. After a death has occurred they will come there and collect what has become defiled; plates and pots, clothes and money. And they will give *jībdān*[54]. Mother and father will pass the river [*Baitaranī*[55]]. Before one used to give a cow as *jībdān*, they give goats and some will present a fowl for the crossing. If they give *jībdan* to the descendants of *Kāl Bhairab*, to the *jādo*, than their mother and father will cross over the river *Baitaranī*. Thus they will not suffer in hell. *Maran Buru* said; listen! You should heed the *ojhā*[56] guru. Without him you have no doctor. He can perform the *jhāṛphuk*[57] against the evil. ... The *jādos* will come. To them you have to give something, otherwise, mother and father, those who have died, will not be able to cross over. The Santal [*ādibāsī*] then thought to themselves; should we call *Maran Buru*? – Do not call him! Their [the *Jādopaṭiās*] lineage have been cursed. They will come around on their own accord. They will consult the scriptures [*śāstra*], the house [*ghar*] will be purified ... Having said this *Maran Buru* went on his way. When the people of *Cae Campa Gar* became so many, to many, they lost their customs and rules. The older brother-in-law became *thākur*, *bāman*. The *naeke* was the *Murmu*. They used to do the worship at the *jaher than*. Many things has changed since then. *Hembrom, Tudu* and *Soren* have taken the role of *naeke* instead of *Murmu*. However, earlier the creator *Maran Buru* has said that except for *Murmu* there was no other naeke. But this has changed."

The discourse about the priests in the Santal context, presented by *Rām Bilās* above is a good example of the *Jādopaṭiās* eclectic use of a broad spectrum of ideas and elements from various contexts. With the aim of presenting himself as a worthy priest of the Santals, *Rām Bilās* utilises an amalgam of mixed ideas that blur into each other. At the time of recording

[54] Here; the gift (*dān*) of life through a sacrifice (usually a fowl). *Jīb* "n. an animal, a creature, an organism; life ; a corporeal or embodied soul ; a living being ; a soul of a living dead being… (Samsad 1985:352).

[55] *Baitaranī* literally means "she who crosses over". It is the name of a horrid river that one has to cross to come to heaven according to the Hindu eschatology. It is also the name given to the cow that one needs for this crossing (Filippi 1996:111). I shall return to this point later on in this chapter.

[56] "*Ojha*. A medicine man, a charm doctor, an exorcist, a diviner." (Campbell 1988:564).

[57] "n. exorcising of evil spirit by uttering charms and incantations." (Samsad 1985:362). The Bengali words *Jhāṛ* means to brush and *phūk* means to blow. This type of healing is performed by brushing the body of the patient with the hands, an object (a feather of the Adjutant bird or a peacock, or straw of sirom, *Andropogon muricatus*, or saparom, *Nyctanthus arbor-tristis*, L.) or blowing on it, while uttering the charms. Bodding suggests that this practice involves hypnotism as well (Bodding 1986:14. Original 1925).

this myth I asked *Rām Bilās* if there were any reason for the *Murmu* clans loss of priest status. He said that there is one and continued his narrative.

"Before there was one type of *Murmu*. When they became to many, this type was divided into many groups; *Sada Murmu, Bitol Murmu, Obor Murmu*. Think about this; - if there is no *Sada Murmu*, there will be no Brahman. But now any caste [*jāt*] can fast, keeping the *dharma* [the precepts of the religious law]. On that day one will fast and get shaved by the barber [*nāpit*]. Having been shaved one fast and then one can perform the worship properly. That worship will be proper. However, *Maran Buru* has cursed the *jādo* of *Kāl Bhairab's* lineage so that they will live from begging, showing scrolls and the gifts of the dead [*marār dān*] of the Santals."

When *Rām Bilās* had completed his narrative he told me from what written source he had got it. Thus he gave this myth extra authority. "This was from the *Hapram phuti*[58] story, by the author, servicer *Hasdak´*. He wrote it in 1991. I got it from him".

Before I proceed I will make a few comments concerning the narrative by *Rām Bilās* included above. He has made a great point about *Murmu* clan, the Brahman (*ṭhākur*) of the Santals, and their loss of priestly status. Let us compare his statements with the data included in Gausdal's account about the Santal clans, which includes many illuminating statements by informants recorded by Bodding (Gausdal 1960). First we will look at one account of how the first *Murmu* sub-clan got their totem and how highly they regarded the same.

> When the first boy and girl met, their first boy died when he had grown up; and on his burial place a beautiful *karam* tree (Adina cordifolia) grew up. A female *murum jel* [Nilgae antelope[59]] ate of the tree and became heavy with child and gave birth to a boy, and that boy went about hunting. One day a hunting party caught the boy, and they gave him the *khût* name *Nij Murmu*. ". (Told by an old Santal near Kearabani, 1940.). (Gausdal 1960:53-4)

> If at a hunt a *Murmu jel* should come our way, we let it pass by; we do not shoot at it And those who agreed to eat the *murum* meat is outcasted. … When they hear that a *murum* has been killed, they perform sacrificial cleansing as if a

[58] *Hapram* = Santali; the ancestors. *Puthi* = Bengali; book. This is the same type of oral account that Skrefsrud collected from the *Karam guru Kolean* in 1871, and later wrote down in the form of a book (Traditions and Institutions of the Santals, Oslo 1942).

[59] *Nilgae* (Hindi; *nilgāi*); lit. blue cow (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) the largest of the Asiatic antelopes. Hindus do not eat the flesh of this "blue cow". Among the Hindus the killing of this animal generaly results in religious sanctions.

> person were dead. If a *sosam* [a female *murum*] has been killed and there was a calf in her, they also perform the last rites, as when a member of the family has departed." (Paika Murmu of Kodam, near Mohuopaharia, 1949.). (ibid.:54)

Further we will see how the *Murmu* clan was perceived as the Brahman of the Santals and some accounts of how they lost that status.

> The present-day Santals speak about their forefathers as having had a "golden age" when they were in a country called *Champa*, and there the *Murmu* folk were the priests of the community, and therefore even today they are called *Thakur Murmu*. (ibid.:53)

> I found Phogra Haram of Jugya and asked him if he could tell me about their *khût* and he said: 'Under the Capakia fig tree *Pilchu Haram*[60] gave us this name, and we are the original *khût*. When we were in *Champa* we were the priests for all the people, just like *Brahmins*, and everybody showed us respect. The worship of the *Bongas*, the fasting etc. was entirely in our hands, and other persons could not do it like us, even the *Bongas* – so they say – were agreeable to us. We therefore took precedence everywhere. But since we have come out of that country all our honour has gone. (ibid.:54)

> They were originally *Nij Murmu*, but when they once ate flesh of a *murmu jel* they were separated. … I asked Baka and Cunda of Simra about this *khût*, and they said: They tell that in the old days we ate flesh from the *murum jel*, and so we were outcasted, otherwise we were *Nij Murmu*. (ibid.:54)

In the work "Studies In Santal Medicine & Connected Folklore" (Bodding 1986), Bodding has recorded a great variety of meat that the Santals eat. In fact they eat meat of most of the animals, snakes, reptiles, fishes and fowls in their habitat, including cows meat. However, they do not eat any kind of monkeys, vultures, horses, parakeets or the *jalo* falcon. Here Bodding notes that the Nilgae (*murmu*) is taboo to people of the *Murmu* clan (ibid.:478,484).

[60] *Pilchu Haram* was the first man according to the Santal myth of creation (authors comment).

> The Santals have no objections to eating the meat of cows and bullocks, in fact they relish it, but owing to the landlords and their Hindu neighbours they have to exercise restraint, and they will mostly go about obtaining, preparing and eating it at night. Bullocks may be sacrificed. The writer once came across a large number of Santals who had cut up a couple of cattle who had died from some disease. He tried to warn them not to eat such meat; but they had no fear of anything happening to them; and so far as is known no harm came to them. (ibid.:478)

It is obvious that *Rām Bilās*, in his narrative myth above, has had plenty of material from the Santal mythology and world view to his disposal, from which he could elaborate the presented picture of the degraded Santal Brahman; the *Murmu ṭhākur*. With this discourse he strives to justify his own position as the Brahman of the Santals. I have heard similar discourses from other *Jādopaṭiās*.

3.2 Crossing the river

Rām Bilās mentioned how they help the dead Santals to cross over the river *Baitaranī.* As I have noted earlier *bai taranī* literally means "she who crosses over" or "she who makes one cross over" (Filippi 1996:111). In other words; *Baitaranī* can be the name of the cow presented for the purpose of crossing, as well as the name of the river to be crossed. "*Vaitaranī* is also the name of the river of blood and excrements that, at the southern extremity of the human world, marks the boundary line with the kingdom of the god *Yama*. (ibid.:112). In Benares it is still usual to present a cow (or the partial/full cost of one) to the funeral Brahman to enact this crossing (see Parry 1994:173 and Justice 1997:166). Parry describes how the Mahabrahman leads this enacted crossing, which is executed over a dug out trench, filled with water and red powder (suggesting blood), representing the awful *Baitaranī* river. Both Parry and Justice point out that this bloody river is also a metaphor for the birth passage of a child (Parry 1996:200).

> The Vaitarani is, at one level, a metaphor for the body. Falling into the Vaitarani River is falling into the womb and taking rebirth; successfully crossing the Vaitarani is achieving *moksha* [salvation]. (Justice 1997:165)

> Most everybody at the Muktibhavan agreed that giving a cow before death helped the soul to cross the Vaitarani

> river, which by extension of the metaphor, means avoiding rebirth. (Justice 1997:166)

> *Vaitaranī* is brought into the old man's room, and her tail is held mightily in his right hand. He then consigns the gift to the brahmana. Up until recently, the dying man held on to the cow's tail with all his strength, in order to be pulled along for a few meters. (Filippi 1996:112)

I have seen several illustrations of the river *Baitaranī* and cow in scrolls made by the *Jādopaṭiās* and shown to the Santals. This topic does not appear as the theme of an entire scroll. It usually figures in a single register as an additional theme to the major theme of the scroll in question. Two of the scrolls I have collected contain such single registers with themes of a "river crossing". The first one shows a number of people swimming in a river next to a cow. *Budheswar Citrakar*, who made the scroll gave the following comment (in Bengali) to this scene; "These ones cross the *Baitaranī* river. The righteous has crossed over. The sinners swim and sink." The second example depicts a man who holds on to a cow by the tail with his right hand. Next to this man stands a man with a large axe, raised in the air, ready to strike (plate 3). *Rājen Citrakar*, who made this scroll, gave the following comment (in Bengali) to this scene; "This one is crossing the *Baitaranī* river. When crossing the *Baitaranī* river the righteous people went on their way. The righteous people crossed over and left. This one was a big sinner. He tried to cross several times, but could not do so. He was stuck in the river. Therefore he was brought to hell [*yampurī*] to be punished. That is the cow [*kapil gāi*'[61]]. This cow will be sacrificed so that this sinner can cross over the river." In this last description there is an interesting overlap of idioms and ideas. On the one hand the sacrifice of the cow is executed for the expiation of the sinners sin. On the other the sacrifice is destined for the ancestors. In the Santal context it is not uncommon to slaughter a cow in the name of the ancestors, at the time of the *bhandan*, the final funeral ritual (Archer 1974:337). In the Hindu context, where cow-slaughter is a great sin, the cow is presented as a gift to the Brahmin. In *Rājen's* narrative these various ideas blur into each other, a topic that I will explore further in my next chapter.

[61] *Kapil gāi*; literally means a brown or tawny coloured cow. It also means a wishing cow. In other words a cow which can grant wishes (Samsad 1985:176). The *Jādopaṭiā* points out that this cow is slain by a blow on the neck with the axe (santali; *kutam*, lit. to strike with axe or a hammer). "Sacrifice to *bongas* are performed by beheading the sacrificial animal, whilst to the *hapramko* [the ancestor] it is always done by a stroke of an axe-head on the neck (Bodding 1986:17). *Kutam dangra*, lit. 'felled bullock', is a sacrifice to the Ancestors, performed due to a vow, after a grant has been favoured [here; the crossing] (Bodding 1925:228, fn 2).

3.3 The Jādopaṭiā as a Brahman

At this time I would like to stop and reflect about some of the facts and factors that enable an association between the *Jādopaṭiā* and the Brahman. As I have already mentioned in the previous chapter de Selva tries to find reasons for how the *Jādopaṭiā* is related to a Brahman by consulting some Indological and ethnographic textual sources. In her article she has a chapter with the heading "The *jādu paṭuā* and the brahman". In the beginning of this chapter she establishes an association between the *Jādopaṭiā* and Brahman with reference to the term '*cakṣudān*' or "the gift of the eye". De Selva claims that this term corresponds to the Sanskrit *nayanamilan*, "the opening of the eye". "This word refers to a precise Hindu context: it stands for the Brahman's gesture during the Hindu ritual of "installation" (beng. *pratiṣṭhā karā*) of the divinity, at the location and for the time where it will be asked to exercise its power." (De Selva 1994:49). The term *nayanamilan* is also used to designate the sequence of the rite of which this gesture is a part. This rite is practised in the whole of India. At this point de Selva lets us know that this rite has been described and commented in several treatises in Sanskrit and that it is well known to indologists. She also comments that this rite is old but still regularly practised, and that it is easy to observe, in contrast to the "gift of the eye" of the *Jādopaṭiā*, which is difficult to observe. The gesture can be practised on an idol in a permanent public temple, or on one that is manufactured at the time of a given celebration (ibid.:49). In the latter case this image will be immersed in a river or a tank (beng. *Biṣarjan*, Samsad 1985:678). De Selva comments that such images are (in the latter case) made of clay, but it could also be a painting. Further she points out that it is said that the eyes of these images do not see. The Brahman shall activate this faculty during the rite of '*cakṣudān*'. It is only after '*cakṣudān*'have been executed by the Brahman, that the worship can start (de Selva 1994:49-50). In this respect de Selva support her claims on data from Renou (1947, I:572-73), Talwar (1979:106-7) and Ostör (1980) (ibid.:50, n.10). I agree that these sets of associations produce a plausible picture of how we can associate the *Jādopaṭiā* with the Brahman on a general theoretical plain. However, these corresponding data seem to be far from the particularities of the field, and the discourses and doings of the *Jādopaṭiās* themselves. As far as these discourses are concerned, de Selva utilises the statements that *Basudev Citrakar* makes (in Faivres article cited earlier in my text) about the *Jādopaṭiā* as a Brahman. She recognises that the *Jādopaṭiā* can be associated with the Brahman that officiates at the funerary rites of the Hindus. De Selva also notes that the gifts that the Hindu funeral Brahman receives in this context are with few exceptions the same as the *Jādopaṭiā* presents on the picture of the dead, and claim from the Santal. However, de Selva does not go out of her way to look for examples of other funerary priest, Brahmans and specialists in contemporary ethnography, but finds them mainly in

indological texts[62]. At this point in her article De Selva asks herself how one can establish a relationship between the iris applied by a Brahman on an image of a divinity and the one that the *Jādopaṭiā* applies on the picture of the dead (ibid.:53). In fact, once *Rām Bilās Citrakar* used the word installation (beng. *pratiṣṭhā karā*), when he talked about *cokhodān* ("the gift of the eye") that they, the *Jādopaṭiās*, themselves do on the picture of the dead. In his discourse about his practice, he himself (like a native creative "anthropologist") made the analogy between his practice and the one of the Brahman installing a deity! However, below I will include some more common statements, made by the *Jādopaṭiās* I met, concerning their professional role.

One of my *Jādopaṭiā* informants once compared the picture of the dead (*mṛtyu paṭ*) with the calendar or the ephemeris (*paṅji*[63]) of the Brahman. Thus linking the use of this picture to the art of astrology utilised by Brahmans and funeral priests. The *Jādopaṭiā* who supplied me with the myth, cited above, told me this about the picture of the dead (*mṛtyu paṭ*) that is used at the time of *cokhodān*; "This picture is called *agradān*. Just like in the Hindu religion [*dharma*] where those who do *agradānī* make effigies in wood. With these the Brahman [*bāman*] do the expiation [*prāyaścitta*]. In the same manner we have to make a *agradānī* picture in the name of the deceased for that purpose."[64]. The Bengali shopkeeper, on whose veranda some of my *Jādopaṭiā* informants resided regularly, gave me a similar account. He said that the *Jādopaṭiās* are the *gurus* or Brahmans (*bāman*) of the Santal. "They utilise astrology to judge and estimate the sin [*pāp*] of the Santal and the cost of the expiation. The Santals give them gifts for this purpose". This mans father told me that the *Jādopaṭiās* exorcise ghosts (*bhūt chāṛāy*) for the Santals. In the book "Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies" (first published in 1816) Abbé Dubois recorded that if a death occurs in the last five of the twenty-seven constellations it is very inauspicious for the relatives of the dead one. The house must be carefully purified by a *purohit* (priest) and a meal plus presents must be offered to the Brahmans. If death occur on a Saturday, it is a hundred to one that another

[62] De Selva thus takes a position where she leaves herself open to being criticised for a potential reification and essentialisation of the idea of the Brahman portrayed in this literature. She refers to Toffin 1990:137 (an analysis cast in a Dumontian mould), and Kane 1974: II, 843 (dealing with the *Dharmaśāstras*) to show the types of presents that the Brahman receives for his funerary service (de Selva 1994:53).

[63] " n. a calendar, an almanac, an ephemeris (Samsad 1985:553). "Ephemeris … a table giving the future positions of the planets, comet, or satellite during a specified period (Collins 1988:372).

[64] My Bengali father-in-law's mother (age 86) told me that the Brahman (*bāman*) consults the constellations of the planets at the time of the death. This will enable the Brahman to estimate the sin of that person as well as inauspiciousness generated by those constellations. On the basis of these calculations the *agradānī* Brahman can make a wooden effigy which along with the many gifts presented to him at that time will effectuate the expiation. Such wooden sculptures are planted next to the funeral ground (*sasān*) of her native village were I have seen them myself.

member of the same household will die before the year has passed. The only way to prevent this from happening is to sacrifice a living animal, such as a ram, a he-goat or a fowl as a burnt offering (Dubois 1996:564, the fourth impression).

3.4 The Santal as a patron

Finally, I want to focus on the *Jādopaṭiā's* claim of the Santal being his *jajmān*. Among all the Bengali authors that have mentioned the *Jādopaṭiās* M. K. Gautam and Sankar Sen Gupta[65] differ from the rest in their more positive description of the relationship between the *Jādopaṭiās* and the Santals. Gautam characterises this relationship as friendly (Gautam 1977:38). In contrast to high cast Hindus and landowners, considered as outsiders by the Santals, the *Jādopaṭiās* are described as one among the many groups of low cast artisans and service rendering professionals (like for example the barber), who coexist in symbiosis with the Santals. Gautam has categorised these groups as 'Santal cognates'. The Santals embrace these groups into their history and tradition. Thus, Gautam relates that the *Jādopaṭiās*, like these other service rendering groups, receive customary dues (*paona*) at the time of feasts, festivals and harvest, in the common manner of a priest-patron relationship (i.e., as a *jajmān*) (ibid.:148). It is interesting to note that the *Jādopaṭiās* have been described to achieve such a status among the Santals in other areas of Bengal as well (compare Sen Gupta 1973:49). Daniel Rycroft relates the existence of such symbiosis between the scroll painters (paṭkars) and the tribal people of the Purulia district of West Bengal (Rycroft 1996). However, non of the Santals who I inquired about this matter acknowledged a '*jajmān*-relationship' between themselves and the *Jādopaṭiās*. In contrast, the *Jādopaṭiās* who frequented the villages of these Santals questioned, adamantly claimed such a '*jajmān*-relationship' with the Santals of those areas. "Certainly they are our *jajmān*. Our grand-fathers and great-grand-fathers have visited these areas …" *Budhesvar Citrakar* told me. He also explained that other *Jādopaṭiās* from other villages than his own would not venture into his territory. These statements by *Budhesvar* rather describe the pragmatic organisation of the funerary market of the *Jādopaṭiā* than a formalised '*jajmān*-relationship'. One possible reason why some scroll painters have developed a closer tie with their patron might be that these scroll painters live in close proximity to these patrons. The majority of the Santals who I interviewed live far away from the villages of the *Jādopaṭiās* who visit these Santals. I will continue this discussion, concerning a potential symbiotic relationship between the *Jādopaṭiās* and the Santals, in my last chapter.

[65] Sen Guptas description is quoted on page no 24 in introduction to this thesis.

From the data presented above it becomes clearer how the *Jādopaṭiā* can find a foundation for his claims of being the Brahman of the Santals. In the eyes of the Santals the *Jādopaṭiā* is definitely regarded as some kind of priest with special powers. As I have shown in my previous chapter, several authors have noticed that the *Jādopaṭiā* is treated with respect and received accordingly in the Santal households (Archer 1977:16, Sen Gupta 1973:49). I have also observed how the *Jādopaṭiā* are received with respect, offered a seat and tobacco[66] whenever they make a call at a Santal household. Sudhansu Kumar Ray gives the following characterisation of the *Jādopaṭiā* as a priest-painter with undisputed authority.

> A Jadu-*patua* is an undisputed authority on the semi-magical mortuary rites of the deceased. He knows how a man is put to death by a *pisacha*, an evil spirit … It is he who can lead the dead bodily from this world to heaven – an act for which he himself is ritually capable. (Sudhansu Kumar Ray 1961:54)

In order to understand better how the *Jādopaṭi*ā has gained such a status among the Santals we have to look closer at some of the conceptions and beliefs that the Santals and the Hindus have about death, the fate of the deceased in the after-world and the prevalence of an idea of reincarnation.

[66] It is a common practice among santals and *Jādopaṭiās* to chew tobacco. A piece of a tobacco leaf and some lime is put in the hollow of the hand. This is thoroughly mixed by grinding it with the thumb and a generous pinch is than thrown into the mouth to be chewed. To offer or ask for tobacco is an invitation to stop and have a talk.

4 THE JOURNEY TO HANAPURI, THE LAND OF THE DEAD AND BEYOND

Sona Murmu, one of my Santal friends, whom I have known for 15 years, told me; "- I would like to know how they [the *Jādopaṭiās*] know what has happened to the dead ones. I asked them many times, but they would not tell me. They said; '- we keep water in a plate. Thus we get to know. They [the dead ones] come to us via the water[67], in the night during our sleep, in the dream.' They get to know about their fate in their dream. They say; '- in our dream the fate of the dead one is revealed to us.' Can anyone get in contact with the dead ones in their dreams, or is it only the *Jādobābā* who can meet the dead ones in their dreams? Why can't we meet them in our dreams?"

> The Santal complain that they cannot see the faces of their dead in their dreams, and for this reason they consult a caste of painters, the jadu patua, whom they call "our guru of death". They ask these craftsmen of the castes who can "see" their dead "in dreams" to paint the picture of those would have just left them, and to imagine their condition. (Carrin-Bouez 1986:181)

> When the Jadupatua hears that a Santal has died – and he generally keeps his ear pretty close to the ground – he immediately prepares himself. He must now cook his own food and get his own water – not even his wife may help him. He allows everyone else in the house to go to bed; then he pours some water into a dish, colours it yellow with turmeric, and drops into it a few grains of rice. He puts it under his bed and goes to sleep. He then has a dream which reveals to him the features of the deceased. He wakes and gets up, lights a lamp and gazes into the water in the dish. There he sees reflected on the surface[68], not only the same face that he has just seen in his dream, but various objects which he may legitimately claim as his share of the

[67] "It is a common idea with Santals that, when a man is taken away to the netherworld, the transition is made through water…" (Bodding 1923:54, fn 2).

[68] The santali word *umul*, meaning shadow, shelter or reflection, is one of the terms used for the soul of the deceased (Campbell 1988:807). "This shadow is the human's "double", it is not fixed to the body. When the funeral rites are over, the *umul* is appeased, and the dead becomes an ancestor (Carrin-Bouez 1986:89, fn 17). Carrin-Bouez also relates that, for the Santal, *umul* is their own reflection in the water (personal communication, March –99).

> inheritance. He sits down and makes a small drawing of the dead person … (Elwin 1952:9f)

Rāmon Marandi a Santal acquaintance in Santiniketan, well known to me since 18 years, told me the following; "The *jādobābā* is there only for the Santals. When one of us dies in any village they will go there. In the night they will have a dream. The dead ones will go to their house … The *jādobābā* will not see them [i.e. with open eyes], but he will see the dead one in his dream. The dead one will say; - in my house there are two or three sons, or daughters. '– You should go there.' If they [the Santal relatives] are wealthy people … they will have plenty of farmed land, cows and goats … He [the dead one] will say; '-I have many goats, fowls, rice and paddy. Everything is there. You come and ask for these things.' Then the *jādobābā* will go there the following day and call the name of the oldest son." Having told this, my friend related how the *Jādopaṭiā* does the *cokhodān* in the Santal household. *Bhutka Marandi* (a Santal farmer from a Village in Santal Parganas) gave me this account of how the *Jādopaṭiā* learn about the fate of the dead Santal; " -When someone dies in a Santal village the *Jādopaṭiā* will dream of him in the late part of the night, nearing dawn. He sees the dead one, blind in the land of the dead, via a plate of water."

> Death is the privileged subject of faith, since death is a problematic theme, poorly defined for the Santal who lack a proper eschatology. This problematic theme is, so to speak taken over by the Hindu thinking, through the mediation of the jadu patua who paint the picture of the Santal dead, as well as concepts related to "ethics", such as the notion of merit or fault, modalities of the karma, theory of individual fate. (Carrin-Bouez 1986:181)

It is important to keep in mind that, among the Santal society in question, as well as in Hindu society, there are many parallel ideas and theories about the destiny of the 'life principle' or a soul, and afterlife in general. One of the reasons for this, in Hindu society, is the wealth of textual sources as well as an abundance of ideas from different periods of time. "Here, as in most other cases, Hindu practice and belief does not simply follow from a logical extension of one basic idea but of a plurality of basic notions from which, quite logically but not always in mutually compatible fashion, specific beliefs and practices flow." (Klostermaier 1989:162). In the article 'The After-Life in Indian Tribal Belief', Fürer-Haimendorf (1953) gives us some clear examples of the trend mentioned by Klostermaier above.

> Many a Hindu of today believes that a dead man's *jiv* ['life principle'] manifests itself in the crows which eat the food offerings put down at the cremation-ground, and if no

> crows touched the food it is taken a sign that the Departed is angry or distressed. At the same time he believes that the *jiv* must go before Yama's court of judgement, and if able to show sufficient accumulated merit or *karma*, will be admitted to the company of the sainted dead or *pitri*. Yet he also believes that a dead man may be reborn in a grandchild; and besides holding all these apparently inconsistent beliefs, he acknowledges his duty to perform for his deceased father a series of rites, known as *sraddha*, which are aimed at providing and sustaining a new, ethereal body for the departed. (Fürer-Haimendorf 1953:47)

Hindu and Santal society have probably imposed mutual influence on one another when it comes to the understanding of soul-concepts and their eschatological belief (Fürer-Haimendorf 1953:44). Some regional facets of this extremely complex issue of co-existing models and variations in practice will be reflected in what follows[69].

At this point it has become evident to the reader that the distinction I make between 'Hindu society'/'Hindu context' versus 'Santal society'/'Santal context' rely on an abstraction undertaken for the sake of clarification. Through the ethnography I have cited and presented so far we have become aware of how ideas from various contexts 'blur into each other'. The description of what is witnessed by the ethnographer in the field mirrors the categories utilised in the analysis of the event in question. Likewise, the discourses presented to me by my informants mirror the attributions they chose to apply to a certain event at a certain time, as they describe this event to me.

We can ask ourselves how it is possible that the *Jādopaṭiā* has got the privileged position to see in his dream the dead Santal and play the part of some kind of priest medium for the Santals? To gain more ground for any understanding of this phenomenon I will take a closer look at some of the ritual events that the Santal perform after a birth or a death has occurred in their community. The beliefs and practices connected with the these rituals of the Santals can supply us with data that will also illuminate some of the doings of the *Jādopaṭiā* in connection with *cokhodān*. The main purpose of this chapter is to expose some important parts of the universe from which the *Jādopaṭiā* has borrowed a large amount of his imagery, in connection with *cokhodān*.

[69] A penetration of this grand issue of origin of the notion of karma is far beyond the scope of this thesis. However, for an extensive discussion the origin of Karmic Eschatology in the Indian setting see Erik Af Edholm 1988 and Fürer-Haimendorf 1953.

4.1 Life and death, a continuos alternation between complimentary poles

> At first sight, 'mortality' suggests the organic and fleshly nature of humans, our predisposition to fall ill, to decay and to create our own replacements through sexuality. But the Sora[70] will also force us to ask what it is that dies and what it means to be dead. The interpretation which I shall offer is that for them, death is not a negation or absence of life. Rather, 'life' and 'death' are both phases of a person's total existence and close relations between persons are maintained across the line dividing these two states. (Vitebsky 1993:4)

The quotation by Vitebsky above, establishes the kind of approach that he has taken in his book "Dialogues With The Dead, the discussion of mortality among the Sora of eastern India". Vitebsky's book focuses on the Sora's relations with the dead from death to attainment of status as an ancestor. In this context Vitebsky stresses the continuity between life and death, conceptualised as a separation from the deceased rather than his or her annihilation. The relationship between the deceased and the relative goes through qualitative changes that can be marked by identifiable breaks but is characterised by continuity (Parkin 1994:319). In what follows I will apply a similar approach to that of Vitebskys, referred to above, in an attempt to sketch an outline of some events in the Santal life cycle. By doing so I want to illuminate some important rituals that enables the constitution and continuity of the Santal person[71]. In this exposition I base myself mainly on ethnography collected by other authors. I will also attempt to show that there is a clear analogy between the belief and practice connected with birth and death. Thus there is a continuos complementary relationship between life and death. This relationship is epitomised in the pregnant symbolic pair of the flower and the bone.

[70] The Sora (Saora) are a "tribal" people of the Munda branch, who live mostly on the borders of Ganjam and Koraput districts in the State of Orissa in Eastern India (Vitebsky 1992:172).

[71] In the context I refer to here, the Santal person is conceived as the relational identity of any Santal, as a member of the Santal society (i.e. its cultural representation, referred to by Mauss as *personnage* (Parkin 1992:220)). I do not wish to enter into an epistemologic discussion of the category of an individual in the Santal society. That is beyond the scope and focus of this thesis.

4.2 The flower and the bone; some Santal conceptions about birth and death

The Santals see life as a gift from *Bidhi Bidhānta*, a manifestation of *Thākur* (Carrin-Bouez 1986:65). The god *Thākur* measures out to everyone his share. "The life of man is, according to this belief, predestined by God" (Bodding 1986:1). *Rājen Citrakar* told me; "When god [*bhagaban*] comes to take man away nobody can stop him … *Thākur* has measured the life of everyone". The Santals believe that *Bidhi Bidhānta* writes the fate of the newborn on its forehead at the time of birth. Bodding suggests that this belief in some kind of fate have been taken over from the Hindus in the past (ibid.:27).

> Thakur, the Supreme Being, previous to creation of man, created two beings, *Bidhi* and *Bidhanta*, and appointed them to be his *muhril* (the Santali form of a Hindi word *moharrir*), i.e., writers. When the human being is born these two beings have to attend at once, immediately after birth, to write on the forehead of the newborn babe what is to be his or her fate. (ibid.:28)

One of the important ritual events in the Santal funerary cycle is the immersion of the bones of the dead in a river[72]. This event marks the final transition of the dead, from being some kind of "spirit" to becoming an ancestor. These bones are known as *jaṅ baha*, which literally means bone flower. Following Carrin-Bouez[73], I will call these bones "flower and bone" (Carrin-Bouez 1986). In the funerary context, during the transitional phase of the dead one, these bones serve as the "life index of the dead. It is here that the dead man halts and his soul is, for the time being, contained." (Archer 1974:331). In a larger perspective of the life cycle of a Santal the flower and bone serve as a conceptual matrix for the complimentary pair of the feminine and the masculine, as well as the complimentary pair of life and death. The flower and the bone serve as focal representations, which enable a conceptualisation of the various elements of the person in relation to the rest of the community. Depending on the context, the flower can represent the flesh, the foetus, the menses or the feminine, and the bone can represent grain, a stone, and the feathers of a bird or the masculine. There exists an analogue relationship between the associated conceptual qualities that the

[72] The Santals have forgotten their original megalithic culture. In contrast to other Munda "tribes", who place the bones of the dead near the funeral stones of the clan, the Santals immerse the bones in a river like the Hindus (Carrin-Bouez 1991:10, Klostermaier 1989:181).

[73] Carrin-Bouez has done regular extensive fieldwork among the Santals of Orissa and West Bengal.

Santals ascribe to the flower and the bone; external/internal, soft/hard (Carrin-Bouez 1986:65-9).

Among the Santals creation of the child is seen as a result of the mingling of the male and female reproductive fluids, that stems from the marrow, and their transformation into blood (*mayam*) in the matrix of the flower (*baha*). The life principle (*ji*) swims in the blood (ibid.:65). The Santal vision of the ontogenetic development moves from flesh to bone. The foetus gradually becomes harder. Only at the age of three months, the word *jaṅ* is said to represents the skeletal part of the body and *baha* the flesh. Thus, a growing human body consists of a skeletal frame that is covered with flesh. After death the flesh (flower : life) of the dead body decompose and reveal the bone (bone : death). At the same time the bones, the remaining product in this process, constitute a great value as the vehicle for the "life principle". The constitution of the body thus extends and privileges the generative positive role of the bone. In contrast, the Santals do not acknowledge the masculine role explicitly, when it comes to fecundation[74]. They are more preoccupied with the development of the foetus (flower) (ibid.:68-9). A midwife, usually of some Hindu community (*Dom*[75] etc), assists the Santal women at the time of birth. As birth is generally believed to be polluting, among the Santals as well as among Hindus, these Hindu communities belong to a low caste. A birth of a child also makes the entire Santal village community impure and polluted. No festivals, sacrifices or rituals can take place until a proper ritual purification has been observed. In the cleansing ceremony (*nim dak´ mandi*) after a birth, the midwife rubs the head of the child with oil, washing-earth and turmeric[76]. One of the threads that is rapped around the arrowhead with which the midwife cut the umbilical cord of the child, is also soaked in oil and turmeric. After the women has washed themselves this thread is tied around the child's waist. Rice is also boiled and some of it is offered to the immediate ancestors (Archer 1974:34-5). Gautam[77] relates that the midwife and the other ladies of the household goes to the river bank and makes five marks with vermilion, which are the symbolic means of acquiring a place near the river bank (*ghāt*). This ceremony signifies the fact that the patrilineal clan is purified and that the child has obtained agricultural and funeral rights as well as a formal

[74] This is an interesting parallel to Malinowski's observations of belief about procreation among the Trobriand people (Malinowski 1968:145ff). However, one may ask oneself if the playing down of the male role, when fecundation is concerned, is connected to the fact that Carrin (a woman) based her facts on statments made by female informants?

[75] The Dom men attend at funerals among the Hindus.

[76] Turmeric (*curcuma longa*) is common ingredient in various rituals and is believed to have a auspicious and cleansing property both in a Hindu and a Santal context. The use of oil plays a similar role (see note 85, page 55). Turmeric used in the wedding context symbolises the hoped fecundity of the union (Carrin-Bouez 1986:88, fn 14).

[77] Gautam made fieldwork in Santal Parganas in the villages of Kuschira and Jiyapani. These villages are situated north of the area where I did part of my fieldwork.

admission into his/her fathers clan[78]. The women return to the home of the child and the thread that has been soaked in oil and turmeric is tied around the waist of the child to purify and protect it from the evil spirits (Gautam 1977:136-7).

> At the place of the bathing the midwife throws one thread together with the child's hair [a barber has shaved of all the hair which is considered to contain impurity] into the water and lets it float away, after she has made five marks of sindur [vermilion] at the descent to the water. This they call to buy way down to water. (Bodding 1994:23)

The act of buying the right to the place of descent (*ghaṭ kirin'*) also occurs at other major ritual events in the Santal life cycle, such as marriage and funeral when the bones of the dead one is immersed in the Damuda river. The name-giving ritual that follows a few days after a birth is also an important act of purification.

> The *narta* or *janam chatiar* is the name-giving (birth-) ceremony, in the case a boy is born, five days after birth, and a girl, three days after birth. Until this ceremony is gone through, the village is unclean; no sacrifice can be performed in the village, and no outsiders can take any food in the house of birth. This is the first purification, and, having gone through this ceremony, the new-born babe so to say becomes a recognized human being, belonging to a family and a sept. (Bodding 1929:282)

The child is given the name of his or her grandparent of the same gender as him or herself (ibid.:137). Gautam states that this is a clear manifestation that the Santals believe that "those who go to heaven come back to earth in the third generation as a 'Hor' (man or a Santal) (ibid.:150). The Santal author Hansda also makes the same point.

> They believe that the newborn babies are the prototype of the grand parents and that a baby resembles the figure, the posture and the activities of the grand parents concerned. In [the] case of deceased grand parents whose name is inherited by a baby, it is believed that the same soul is being in the baby and hence first preference is given in

[78] The full patrilineal clan rights are not granted until the *caco chatiar* initiation ritual (see further on in my text) has been performed. However, the announcement of the child's name at the *nim dak´ mandi* proves the child's legitimacy and gives the child the protection of the paternal sub-clan gods (Gautam 1977:137, Troisi 1978:87).

> selecting the name to [of] the deceased grandparent. (Hansda 1983:184)

The term *gorom* is used for a namesake, mainly about grandparents and grandchildren having the same name. These relations are intimate and friendly. Thus these persons are permitted to joke and jest with each other (Bodding 1927:398, fn 16). These type of relationships are known as *landa sagai* in santali (lit. joking relationship) (Campbell 1988:458). Incidentally, Troisi notes that most Santals are given two names. One name is 'inner' (*bhitri nutum*), a 'private' or somewhat secret name, and the other is 'outer' (*cetan nutum*), a kind of nickname commonly used. The 'inner' name must correspond to that of the relative after whom the name has been inherited. The 'outer' name is used in order to avoid the usage of the 'inner' name. The use of the latter is feared to cause harm to the referent Troisi 1978:162)[79].

The naming ritual admits a boy or a girl to the outer sphere of the Santal community. However, it is not until the children has gone through the *caco chatiar*[80] initiation ritual that they are allowed to shoulder their responsibilities as full-fledged members of the Santal society in general, and of their fathers sub-clan in particular. The *caco chatiar* is usually performed when the child is eight to ten years old. Having gone through this initiation they benefit from the full affiliation with the boṅgas of their sub-clan (*khūt*) and are also allowed to partake in the ritual worship of these *boṅgas*, and receive their protection. That is, after this initiation the girl is allowed to clean the *bhitar*[81] or family shrine and smear it with cowdung, a proper preparation for various types of worship. Similarly the boy is allowed to approach the *boṅgas* with customary offerings and share in sacrificial feasts.

[79] The *Jādopaṭiās* usually manages to get hold of the names of the dead Santal and his relatives by a process of persistent ferreting. I suspect that the *Jādopaṭiās* usually uses the 'outer' names, but I have no data to support this supposition. However, if a *Jādopaṭiās* could get hold of an 'inner' name it would certainly serve him as powerful tool at the time of the performance of *cokhodān*.

[80]" *Caco* is the Santal word for toddling, a child's first successful attempt to walk. As the name implies, the *caco chatiar* may be performed with a child, as soon as it is able to move about" (Bodding 1942:25, fn 6).

[81]" Inside every Santal house there is in one corner a small place divided off from the rest of the (one-roomed) house by a small wall. This is a place especially sacred to the Ancestors [as well as sub-clan gods (*abge boṅgas*) and household gods (*orak´ boṅgas*)]. Food is placed here for these, and beer is also libated. Outsiders are not permitted to go in here, as they might make the place religiously unclean; up to the time of marriage, daughters of the house may go inside; afterwards several of the Santal subsepts do not permit married daughters, when on visit to their old home, to enter the *bhitar*, as the room is called " (Bodding 1927:260, fn 3). *Bhitar* is an Indo-Aryan word that means 'within'. The rational behind the married daughter not being allowed to enter the *bhitar* of her fathers family is that the household gods are inherited patrilineally. Thus, after marriage, the daughter will have a new set of household gods. The names of the household gods and the sub-clan gods are a well-protected secret that is transmitted from father to son, who whispers them to his eldest son before his death (Troisi 1978:88-92). Santal women are generally excluded from partaking in any sacrifice, except the worship of their husband's ancestors (Carrin 1998:5).

Moreover, when the girl marries she can have vermilion smeared on her forehead and thus exchange her own *boŋgas* for those of her husband. The adolescence brings to youngsters a necessary sense of "tribal" discipline. They must thus be instructed in the traditions of the "tribe" and made to realise what it means to be a Santal (Archer 1974:58, Troisi 1978:159). Bodding remarks that as this communal feast involves some expenses, a man will generally go through this ceremony for all his children at one time. A Santal can neither be married nor be cremated after death without going through the *caco chatiar* initiation. Bodding relates how he has heard that the ceremony has been performed with a dead body to ensure its being cremated and the bones being taken to the sacred river (Bodding 1929:283, fn 3). However, the rule is that all the children who have not been made full members of the Santal community by the initiation *caco chatiar* will be buried. These children become ghosts (*bhūt*) and will not transform to *boŋgas* or ancestors (Bodding 1923:72-3, fn 6).

> The ceremony [i.e. *caco chatiar*] is brought to a close by recitation of the history of mankind (acc. to Santal traditions), brought up to date; the person concerned from now on belong to Santal history. The recitation is always wound up by application, that they now be permitted to be parties to all social events and ordinary life's work, whereupon it is said: 'We implore you Five (i.e. the Santal community), we were like crows (i.e. black), we have become white like paddy-birds, so you Five be witness.' Thereupon they drink and sing. (Bodding 1929:283, fn 3)

4.3 The mortuary rituals and connected ideas

On the high hill
The vultures hover
Show me the bones of my father
O she vulture
Take the gold from my ear
Show me my father's bones (Archer 1974:331)[82]

The funerary ceremonies serve as a node for the representations and conceptions of life and death simultaneously. The complimentary pair of the flower and the bone manifest itself in the language about, as well as in the

[82] This is a version of an invocation sung by the Santals while they pick up the bones (Bodding 1942:177).

practice of, the funerary ritual. The bones[83] of the dead (*jaṅ baha*), are collected after the initial mortuary ritual event, the cremation[84]. These bones can flower again through the regeneration of the flower (Carrin-Bouez 1986:66). We see here how the conceptual pair of the bone flower becomes a pregnant vehicle for ideas in the mortuary ritual context. Archer relates how the chief mourner holds the flower bone in his clenched fist, whereupon some oil, a little milk and ashy water is poured over them[85]. After this he knots the flower bones into a piece of cloth (Archer 1974:331). These bones are often stored up in the rafters under the ceiling of the house, beyond the reach of smoke. Before I go into further detail about some specific parts of the mortuary rituals, I would like to present an overview of the major parts of the Santal mortuary rituals. Carrin-Bouez divide the Santal mortuary rituals into five major parts:

1) Cremation of the dead body, which usually takes place near a river on the same day, or on the day after the death occurred. After the cremation the bones for making *jaṅ baha* are collected.
2) The "first purification" (*tel nahan* = lit. oil bath) takes place five days after the death has occurred. The sub-clan members, the ancestors and *Maran Buru* have to be purified.
3) Possession: the dead one possesses the chief mourner.
4) The worship of the household god (*orak´ boṅga*), which is performed nine days after the death has occurred.

[83] "The chief mourner then picks out three pieces of bone – one from the skull, one from the upper arm and the third from the collar bone" (Archer 1974:331).

[84] Sitakant Mahapatra, who writes about the Santals of Mayurbhanj in Orissa, relates that burials are more common in this area due to scarcity of funeral timber (Mahapatra 1986:95). Mahapatra notes a number of variations in the funerary praxis; " - Sometimes only the head of the deceased is put on a meagre amount of fuel-wood procured, and a piece of bone is taken out from there after the burning. The rest of the body is then buried. – Sometimes a piece of bone from the dead man's body is scooped out by a pick-axe or other cutting weapon, and the body is then buried. – Sometimes a coin is taken and the head of the deceased is touched with it and that coin is symbolically treated as a bone. This is an instance of the belief in trans-substantiation by ritual contact. – Sometimes no bone is taken out immediately after the burial to be preserved in an earthen pot. Instead, at the time of *Bhandan* [the final mortuary ritual], a close relative digs out either a piece of bone if they are lucky to find one, or even a little bit of the soil from that area as the symbol of the bone for the purpose of the ritual" (ibid.:97). In Badagobra village the *Bhandan* ceremony is held once a year and all the ritual bones that are preserved in the village are taken out at that time. To save money one performs the immersion of the bones and the *Bhandan* in nearest river or stream, instead of going to the Damuda river (ibid.:98). "The ritual basis of the Santal death-ceremony is thus getting more and more diluted. Its economic and pragmatic aspects are becoming more important, and the strictly ritual aspects are being relegated to the to the secondary level (ibid.:99). "Like disease and sickness, death is also being looked at more rationally [with another rationality], and without the trappings prescribed by religious belief and ritual prescriptions (ibid.:99).

[85] Turmeric water and rice beer is also used for this purpose. Both these substances are auspicious and are applied in several life cycle rituals as an aid to regeneration and fecundity (Bodding 1942:177, Carrin-Bouez 1986:71,88, fn 14).

5) Immersion of the flower bones into the river, which constitutes the final purification of the deceased, the agnates and the friends of the dead one. This ritual can take place some months after or a year after the death occurred. (Carrin-Bouez 1986:70)

A death that strikes the Santal household makes it impure. Sacrifice to the *boṅgas*, drinking of rice-beer and celebration of marriage is made impossible. Purification through funeral rituals is crucial to re-establish the social order that has been disrupted (Archer 1974:329,337).

The notion of impurity (*bisi* = poison) in the given contexts above, is connected to the dangers inflicted by, and attracted by, the dead one and death itself. The dead ones impose a potential threat to the living and it is of uttermost importance that the mortuary rituals are performed properly, to ensure that these "poisonous" dangers are purified and neutralised. Thus, during the cremation the Santal addresses the deceased (body) with the following invocation; "O dead body, do not dally now. Go like the wind. Burn like a flame. We have given you wood and fire. Be consumed and go." (Archer 1974:330). At the time of the final mortuary ritual (*bhandan*) the family of the dead one invokes the deceased with these words; "Keep us in peace. Do not trouble us. Do not take anything away." (ibid.:336). The dead body attracts malignant spirits that can harm the living. In order to detract such evil spirits the Santals also employ a diviner-priest (*ojhā*) to exorcise the house of the dead one. If the death was a sudden an unexpected one, this diviner-priest tries to find the reason for the sudden demise. He will sacrifice a black fowl to win the favours of the benignant boṅgas[86] for protection against any evil (Carrin-Bouez 1986:70-1).

An occurrence of a death in a village is marked by the beatings of a drum. The relatives and the rest of the village thus informed co-operate in disposing the body and mollifying its outraged spirit. The family breaks into bitter grieving songs and lamentation. At this time, as we have seen, the world of the *boṅgas* is abruptly brought into sharper focus (Archer 1974:327-9). What is the faith of the dead person? "He remains a Santal. He is still a member of his family but until he has safely reached the country of the dead, he is a man with a grievance. … He is 'out of position'. … He is now much more a bonga than a man – a ghostly force invisible but intimately real." (ibid.:329). Carrin-Bouez explains that there are several souls or soul substances within the body. Out of these, it is only the skeleton that is conceived as immortal, thanks to the "life principle" or the "big breath" (*maran ji*) which gives it life and resides in the cranial bone. The

[86] *Bulau*, another type of exorcism, is applied at the time of cremation. "A fowl is sacrificed by means of a twig of a mohua tree passed through its eyes, and hung on one of the posts round the pyre." (Mukherjea 1943:222). Campbell notes that this type of offered fowl is nailed to one of the posts by the neck (Campbell 1988:104). Gautam notes "The idea is that the sacrificed eyes will give the dead man light to see in the other world." (Gautam 1977:143).

other "breath" (*ji*), called "little breath" (*hurin ji*), resides in the stomach and shelters the "soft soul" (*roa*[87]). The latter leaves the human body after death and enters into the body of animal or a plant (Carrin-Bouez 1986:67). Of these souls, mentioned by Carrin-Bouez, it is the "big breath" (*maran ji*) that we are interested in here. The "big breath" or the "life principle" is the personalised soul that later becomes an ancestor (*hapram*) (Parkin 1992:203). What are the instances or forces that can hinder or make this transformation of the personalised soul difficult or impossible?

4.4 'Bad' death

As I have mentioned earlier, the Santals believe that *Thākur* has measured out the length of each individual life. At the same time misfortune, disease and death is believed to be the result of the displeasure and maliciousness of *boṅgas* and witches (*dan*).

> They acknowledge natural causes of illness [and death] ; they cannot avoid seeing effect and immediate cause ; as a rule they can also see the material nature of a disease [and death]. But there is always a suspicion that the natural cause is not the original one, but that evil influence are at work in the first instance. (Bodding 1986:2)[88]

Evil *boṅgas* and witches are said to 'eat' people. Witches, more specifically eat the liver of people and thus cause illness or death (ibid.:1,7). "*Boṅgas* and witches know how to 'eat'; they do not know how to make well." (ibid.:3). As we have seen, children who have not been made full members of the Santal community by the initiation *caco chatiar* will become ghosts (*bhūt*) and will not transform into ancestors. Women who die in childbirth or pregnancy can turn into dangerous ghost (*curin*) (Bodding 1923:73, fn 1). Likewise, the stillborn child will turn into a ghost (*bhūt*). The witches are always female (Bodding 1929:40). "The Santals are mortally afraid of a certain class of women, believing that after death they are always on the watch for men. They are supposed to lick their victims to death, filing off the flesh with their rough tongues." (Cole 1878:274).

Another force to reckon with is *Yama*, the king of death himself. "*Jom raj* or *raja* is the regent of the netherworld. The word is the Skr. For *Yamarāja*, the idea being very hazy with the Santals." (Bodding 1929:95, fn 3). The

[87] *Roa* is loan from Oriya language (used in Orissa) and means "rice seedling" (Parkin 1992:273).

[88] Compare Evans-Pritchard (1937) observations in Witchcraft, Magic and Oracles among the Azande. The Azande operate with two types of explanations for unfortunate events that answer the question how and why respectively (ibid.:72).

Santals also conceive of the netherworld as a prison-house were the dead one is imprisoned behind the large door, guarded by the assistance of *Yama* (Bodding 1942:187). The underworld (*norok´ disom*) is full of dangerous animals such as snakes, insects, crocodiles and the likes (Gautam 1977:149). Gautam states that his Santal informants told him that; "Those who follow the Santal tribal customs and fulfil their obligations of clan and lineage bonga worship and offer the sacrifices go to heaven. Those who are against exogamy and tribal endogamy go to hell (ibid.:149). Troisi states that the main object of the Santal's funerary rites is twofold. One objective is to rid the living survivors of the death pollution and the malicious influence of the potentially dangerous spirit of the deceased and other evil powers. The other is to release the departed spirit from the underworld and help it to unite with the ancestors (Troisi 1978:196-7).

We have seen that every status/sate transition in the lifecycle of the Santal is fraught with danger of various kinds (compare van Gennep 1960, and Turner 1967). This calls for apt attention and participation, of the Santal community, as well as, assistance from various ritual specialists, such as the *ojhā* and the *Jādopaṭiā*. As we have seen earlier, the *Jādopaṭiās* often attribute these bad influences to the concept of 'sin' (*pāp*). The Santals generally lack a concept of 'sin' connected with a system of 'ethic' ideals like those of the Hindus (Carrin-Bouez 1986:181). Irrespective of how these malicious forces are attributed (i.e., either as 'sin' or 'pollution'), the Santals feel the need for a purification to pacify these dangers. In this connection I would like to point out that Parry underlines the following find from his own research in the Hindu context in Banaras; "my own evidence overwhelmingly suggests that notions of 'sin' and 'pollution' commonly shade seamlessly into each other, and that both are a source of misfortune." (Parry 1994:136).

4.5 Representations of the succession of life death and life

As we have seen the complementary relationship between life and death expresses itself on many conceptual levels and in several contexts in the Santal belief and practice. For example we see it in the naming and conception of reincarnation in alternate generations, as well as, in the conceptual pare of the flower and the bone. In several contexts the alternation between life and death expresses itself in odd and even numbers respectively. An obvious example of this is the three bones collected to make the flower of the bone. Another example is the five marks of vermilion put by the river by the ladies of the household after a birth. I will try to illuminate this numeral phenomenon further in what follows.

Whilst out on the fields with the herd, young Santal boys perform a burning with a glowing rolled up cloth on their left-forearm. This results in

round marks resembling a vaccination scar. Such marks are known as *sika*, and are important marks of Santal identity for males. Females have tattoos (*khudni*) on their palms, arms and breasts, with corresponding significance. These male burnt-marks always appear in odd number, which is associated with life, and never in an even number, which is associated with death. The Santals also believe these burn-marks and tattoos please king *jom* of the netherworld. Anyone, who dies without these decorations on their body will have to go through gruesome torture in hell, executed by caterpillars big as logs or drums[89]. The burn-marks are also a requisite to ensure a 'god death' and to become a *boŋga* or an ancestor (Parkin 1992:205). Gautam suggests that for the Santals in Kuschira-Jiyapani, death is an end, static and impure, whereas life is open, moving further, dynamic with the energy of the *boŋgas*, signifying purity (Gautam 1977:141)[90]. Further, the alternation of generations and appearance of odd numbers is also present in the practice of purification after the cremation of the dead; on the fifth (!) day with oiled leaves put in the river, on the ninth (!) day with an offering in the inner portion of the house to the house gods, and as a part of the final funeral rite of the dead, before the immersion of the bones in the river. Several Santals, as well as Rājen Citrakar told me how three leaves of Sal (*shorea robusta*) or *Bherenda* (*jatropha curcas*) are placed on the three mounds of earth on the ground in the house or near the river. The significance of this practice is clearly stated by Parkin below.

> *Sal* leaves are planted in a row upon an altar representing the Creator (*marang buru*), followed by the mythical ancestral couple (*prodhol haram* and *prodhol budhi*) and the household god (*orak´ boŋga*), followed by three human beings, one from each of the ego's set of alternate generations: *gorom ayo* (PM [paternal mother]), *bokea* (B [brother]), and *jae kora* (CS [child's son]). (ibid.:1992:205)

Archer relates how after the cremation, the mourners bath in the river or a tank. After this the main mourner places five leaves by the water's edge and performs a similar ritual with the following invocation.

> Pilchu Haram, this man has fallen. He is dead and gone. Do not consign him to ash. Keep him in your care. Bathe and

[89] Bodding explains this belief as follows; "As the operation is painful, the boy is persuaded to stand the pain by being told that if he has no sika, he will in the next world get a *tejo* (caterpillar) as big as a log placed in his arms.". The same reasoning is given to the Santal girls at the time of tattooing (Bodding 1936, vol V:270).

[90] One day when I was talking to *Rājen Citrakar* I noticed that he had three such sika burnt-marks on his left for-arm. When I asked him about them he told me that some Santal boys had put them there in his youth. When I asked him if he believed that he would be tortured in hell without these he said nothing and smiled (see Plate 5).

> wash your hair.' 'O dead one, today in your name we have bathed and rinsed our hair. Do not dwell in the ashes. You have left your home, your children and your cattle. When all is ready we shall bear you to your home.' (Archer 1974:331)

This type of invocation is known as *bakher* or *bakhen* in Santali (Campbell 1988:48, Mahapatra 1992:31). Such invocations are performed at any type of worship, agricultural rite and life cycle ritual. Mahapatra points out that the invocations of the Santals are intimately concerned with family and kinship interest, as well as with social and village institutions. Thus these invocations reveal something of the social life of the Santals and their sense of community-solidarity (Mahapatra 1992:54-5).

4.6 Fertility, fecundation and regeneration

Finally I want to make a few comments about some of the potent symbolic vehicles that occur in many of the Santal rituals and life-cycle rites, and carry potential ideas about fertility, fecundation and regeneration. One of the major focuses of Santal society and subsistence is rice cultivation. Connected to this cultivation and facilitating it is water and manure (cowdung). Water is a life giving substance that appears in several contexts in all the various life cycle rituals that I have mentioned above. Cowdung is smeared in a circle at the place of worship or sacrifice. Cowdung water is also used to sprinkle on any spot as an act of purification. The bones can be conceptualised as fertile corn or grain. Grains of rice are often fed to sacrificial fowls before they are slaughtered. Rice preparations also appear in many offerings at various life cycle rituals. "The little breath" (*roa*), the soul seated in the stomach, literally means rice seedling and can be reincarnated in a rice plant. There are many more examples like this. However, one of the important products of rice that is used in all the Santal ritual contexts is *handi* or rice-beer. The attitude that the Santals have to this drink can be epitomised in the following statement made by them about it. "Give me rice-beer (*handi*) or give me death" (Troisi 1978:125). The fondness among Santals for this beverage is well known. For worship of the major *boŋgas*, gods and ancestors libations of rice-beer is compulsory. The Santal tradition emphasises the divine origin of rice-beer. "Nobody drinks of freshly brewed rice-beer before offering libations to *Maran Buru*, the first couple *Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Budhi* and other ancestors." (ibid.:125). As an important social customs generous quantities of rice-beer are always served at festivals, important worship and lifecycle rituals. As we have seen earlier rice-beer is also poured over the flower bones in a gesture of regeneration. In the Santal myth of creation (*binti*) it is told how the original couple *Pilchu Haram* and

Pilchu Budhi learnt to make rice-beer from the god *Lita*. Later they drank this, became very drunk, lied down and made love. The next day when *Lita* paid them a visit they where very ashamed and realised their nakedness and what had happened during the night. Later they got seven boys and seven girls. The generation of the first seven Santal clans started (Bodding 1942:6). Thus, the use of rice-beer is connected with a strong notion of fertility, communion and regeneration. The notion of fertility that is suggested in the examples I have included above tallies with the approach to this concept taken by Bloch and Parry (1982) in their comparative essay about death and the generation of life. In this essay they underline that "If death is often associated with a renewal of fertility, that which is renewed may either be the fecundity of people, or of animals and crops, or of all three." (ibid.:7). In line with Bloch and Parry's reasoning is also the idea that the rice-beer, appearing in various contexts in the Santal society, is closely tied to an idea of the reproduction of social order (ibid.:7).

In the following chapters I will show how the *Jādopaṭiā*, when he performs his mortuary ritual play, utilises a wide repertoire of imagery from the Santal (and Hindu) universe that I have attempted to describe above. However, before I conclude this chapter I will describe another important background or context associated with the *Jādopaṭiās*, the scrolls depicting the kingdom of the dead, and the punishments of the sinners in hell.

4.7 'Jom paṭ', the scroll of hell and its horrors

> The belief in ultimate rewards and punishments is not really native to tribal India, nor is the idea of hell. But today it may be found, not very clearly formulated perhaps, but still present, in most of the tribes. (Elwin 1952:29)

'*Jom pāṭ*', the scroll of '*Jom Rājā*', the king of death, and the punishments of the sinners in hell, is one of the major themes that appear on the scrolls displayed by the *Jādopaṭiās* in the Santal villages. As I have witnessed several times, this scroll attracts the rapt attention from any Santals audience, especially if the audience consists of women and children (plate 1). Several authors have suggested that the scroll of hell make the association between the *Jādopaṭiās* and death even stronger. "The jadupatua strips also exploit the fascination which horror has for most human beings, and they are in general highly moral in their teaching" (ibid:29). In these scrolls there is a strong tendency to focus on punishments, rather than on rewards. If good and moral people appear at all, it is usually in a single register at the end of a scroll. The punishments allotted by '*Jom Rājā*' and the torture performed by his attendants are illustrated in grisly detail. The show mesmerises the onlookers, and evokes amusement as well as fear. *Budhesvar Citrakar* comments his '*Jom paṭ*' thus; "- God sees everything and

punishes accordingly. 'What one has sown, one will have to harvest'". He relates how one is punished for lying, another for stealing rice or not behaving according to the moral code of the Santal community. In his article, J. B. Faivre cites several examples from scrolls of hell, shown to him by *Mukundra Citrakar*. In his article Faivre makes it clear that the lack of generosity is severely punished. In this connection rice is evoked for a large number of punishments. The condemnation is to carry a heavy pot of rice, being tortured by the rice thresher, or having a rice plant growing out of the chest. Faivre notes that it is not necessary to insist on the effect that such a presentation can produce in a house of the mourning (Faivre 1979:115,117). Verrier Elwin gives this account of the *Jādopaṭiās* advise to Santal sinners, as it appears in one the scrolls of a *Jādopaṭiā*, addressed to the son of *Pilchu Haram*, via the mouth of the king of death.[91]

> "You are a sinner … Four annas [an anna is a quarter of a rupee] in the rupee of your life have been sinful. The rest is all right, but unless you get rid of this four annas' worth of sin, I will have to punish you." "Whatever shall I do?" asks the unhappy youth. "If," replies the Raja, "you had any good or beautiful thing in your possession when you were alive, have it burnt or buried with you. That will rid you of one anna's worth of sin." … "Then" continues Yama Raja, "if your family eat a feast in your honour, that will dispose of another anna. If they take your ashes and bones to the Damodar River, there will go another anna. And as for the fourth anna, if your relatives give proper gifts to the Jadupatua, you will be free of that and all your other sins.". (Elwin 1952:29)

Elwin characterises the practice of the *Jādopaṭiās* as "spiritual blackmail", and cites several instances appearing in the scrolls of hell, displayed by *Jādopaṭiās*, were Santals have been punished for; - not paying the *Jādopaṭiā* to take the picture of the dead one to the river, - refusing to give the *Jādopaṭiā* anything at all, - never entertaining the *Jādopaṭiās* with traditional hospitality, - or stopping a family from handing over the inheritance of a dead Santal to a *Jādopaṭiā* (ibid.:29).

[91] It is most natural for the *Jādopaṭiā* to associate himself with *Yama*, the king of death, as well as being the one who precedes over the ritual that 'gives life' (i.e. *cokhodān*). In a scroll by a *Jādopaṭiā* (*paṭkar*) of Purulia district, the *Jādopaṭiā* shows himself in the iconography as *Yama*, next to the doorway of ancestral house of the deceased. This illustration appear next to a register that depicts *cokhodān* (Daniel Rycroft; personal communication). Another particular scroll, illustrating Death's kingdom, collected by W. G. Archer (Santal Parganas, Bihar, c 1920), is signed by a *Jādopaṭiā* in an interesting way. "Inscribed in Bengali characters: *sri pranesvar* [*citra*]*kar malik* (The revered God of Death. (By) *Malik* [*Citra*]*kar*)" (Archer 1977:36). The *Jādopaṭiā* in question has given himself the epithet 'the lord of life' (*prāṇ* = life, *isvar* =lord), i.e. the one who takes and gives life.

The examples presented above illustrate clearly how the scrolls of hell relate to the mortuary work performed by the *Jādopaṭiā* in the Santal community. As I have already mentioned in my introduction, Faivre suggests that the Santal's fear concerning death is so strong that they will not refuse a request made by the *Jādopaṭiā* (Faivre 1979:120). Furthermore Faivre and Elwin underlines how the *Jādopaṭiā* exploit the fear that the Santals have concerning the possible punishments meted out by the lord of hell.

Some *Jādopaṭiās* also exhibit scrolls of the Hindu goddess *Kālī*. She appears in her hideous four-armed form, with her black face, hanging tongue and grisly necklace of skulls. She often holds a skull-topped staff, a sword and a severed head in her hands. *Kālī* symbolises eternal time (*Kāl*), and hence she both gives and destroys it. The severed head in her hand denotes that there is no escape from time or death. Thus *Kālī* is also associated with death and cremation grounds, and it is not surprising that some *Jādopaṭiās* include images of *Kālī* in their scrolls of hell. As we have seen in chapter 2., the *Jādopaṭiās* associate themselves with the god Shiva in his terrible form; *Bhairab* or *Kāl Bhairab*. *Kālī* is the spouse of *Kāl Bhairab*. The Santals believe that the *ojhās* get their healing power from the worship of various boṅgas, and *Kālī* is one of them. Thus it is not unlikely that the Santals also believe that the *Jādopaṭiās* receive special powers from *Kāl Bhairab* and *Kālī*[92].

With the data presented above I have aspired to expose some of the social and symbolic imperatives that influence the actions taken by the Santals at the time of their performance of the mortuary rituals. In the chapters that follow I will take a closer look at the mortuary work performed by the *Jādopaṭiā*. Thus, the descriptions by the Santals, the discourses given by the *Jādopaṭiās*, and my observations of *cokhodān* will be placed in relation to some of the data presented in this chapter.

[92] Marine Carrin states that the Santals sometimes believe that the *Jādopaṭiās* are possessed by Hindu goddesses. The goddess *Manasā*, the 'one-eyed' goddess, is one of these (personal communication 1999). "*Manasā's* left eye is her poison eye with which she can kill with a glance …" (Smith 1980:17). The notion of the evil eye and 'dangerous powers' is tied to *Kālī*, as well as *Manasā*.

5 VOICES FROM THE FIELD

In the initial stages of my fieldwork I cheerfully cherished the idea that I would get a chance to witness *cokhodān* performed "in situ". However, as several months passed without this opportunity materialising, my hope gradually faded away. The habits of my *Jādopaṭiā* informants were illusive and unpredictable. If I asked them where they were going the next day, they would reply in an imprecise manner. Time and again I came to the shop veranda where some of them used to stay, to find that they had left in the early morning for some unknown destination. Initially the *Jādopaṭiās* were unwilling to disclose any details about *cokhodān* to me. Gradually, as they became more open, I spent my time collecting various descriptions of *cokhodān* by *Jādopaṭiās* as well as by Santals. One monsoon afternoon when I sat and chatted with *Jayīdev Citrakar* and *Sivu Citrakar*, the latter suddenly spoke the following words out of the blue; "I have got some news. There is some work [*kāj*; i.e. *cokhodān*] to be done in one Santal village. I will go there on Friday…". I could not believe my ears! When I asked *Sivu* if I could join him and see the work, he agreed without any hesitation at all. At that moment I told myself that I would not believe this until I saw it happen. In my notebook I wrote; "we will see how this develops…". I had spent more than four months collecting various data about an event that I was now about to witness myself. Some days later as I sat next to *Sivu Citrakar* on the local buss this prospect seemed very unreal. However, before I describe what I witnessed that day I will include some of the descriptions of *cokhodān* related to me by some of my Santal informants. In the latter part of this chapter I will contrast these with some narratives and discourses about *cokhodān* presented to me by some *Jādopaṭiās*.

5.1 Santal views of cokhodān and the mortuary practice of the Jādopaṭiās

Parvati Besra, a middle aged Santali woman from a Santal village near Santiniketan gave me the following account of what happens when the *Jādopaṭiā* comes to a Santali household.

"… First he [the *Jādopaṭiā*] utters the name of the son, the oldest one. He calls that name when entering the house … The inhabitants of the house ask the *jādoharam* [*Jādopaṭiā*] to sit down in the courtyard … The people of that house ask; '- how did he die?'. The *jādoguru* says; He will tell you where your kinsman was eaten by a witch; '- over there by the field he was involved in a fight with the witch or a ghost.' That was the reason for your mother or father's death. [The account takes the form of a narrative] '- What

shall we give you *jādoharam*? We have nothing in our house, no rice, no goat and no sheep. *Jādoharam* says; '- whatever is there you have to give. Give one kilogram of rice and one chicken. From that chicken I will cook some food here. I will cook food and give everyone a little share together with some rice cooked in a vessel in the house. After that I will eat and take my leave.' … He says; '- [when] I the *jādoharam* will cook, the dead ones will get their share.' … We leave some food for the dead ones in the house so that they will get it later. For that reason the *jādoharam* cooks and eats in our house … He will bring a picture drawn by him. If it is a female [who has died] he will say; '- [she] is tattooed. There is a tattoo.' If it is your mother he will mention all that she is wearing ... and what she looks like. '- Is this your mother [on the picture]?'… '- She had a tattoo on her arm. She wore a necklace'. You see these things looking just alike [your mother's] and recognise her. If there is a necklace you will recognise it. If there is a tattoo you will recognise it. You will recognise everything. Then [the *Jādopaṭiā*] says; '- isn't this your mother? The people whose mother has died replies; '- yes it is certainly our mother'… ".

When *Parvati* had told me this much she described how the *Jādopaṭiā*, speaking as if he was the dead one, related to his or her relatives how he or she had died[93]. She also told me how the people of the household in question ask the *Jādopaṭiā* to tell them what belongings the dead one has left behind, and where they were located, or hidden, in the house. "The people of the house ask the *jādoharam*; '- Where are his or her things?' The *jādoharam* says; '- There, in that corner.' … ' How shall we find these things [asks the relatives]?' The *jādoharam* says; '- You should dig them out of there'… 'If you do not dig them out from there your house will be struck by unrest [*aśānti*]. Dig these things out and give them to me, than your house shall be left in peace. But if you leave them there, ghosts shall most certainly pester your house! You shall fall ill, and you there would fall ill.' In this manner the *jādoharam* scares the inhabitants of the house … Thus the scared people of that household reason; … 'We have to show the *jādoharam* these things and give them to him.' ".

[93] S.K. Ray (Ray 1953) describes two pictures made by *Jādopaṭiās*, depicting a necrophagous malign spirit [*piśāca*]. One of these is illustrated with his article. It shows a dead Santal next to a hideous evil spirit with a long penis, erected towards a vessel (ibid: plate IIA,2). The other picture is included in a later publication by Ray (Ray 1961:plateXXII;fig.c) depicts an equally ugly evil spirit, who pisses into a plate. Ray relates how the *Jādopaṭiā*, requested by the insistent relatives, displays the picture to the bereaved ones, and narrates the following story;

"The Pisacha once entered without anybody's knowledge inside the man's house by possessing the domestic animal (cat or ass or any other animal as the case may be) of the family and befouled the tumbler by urinating in it, and the man died of drinking out of the same tumbler without knowing it." The Jadu-Patua is immediately given the tumbler and the 'possessed' animal by the bereaved family to be rid them. In this story we find the exploitation of a primitive belief by magic." (Ray 1953:304). Ray's attitude towards this event is clear enough.

When my Bengali friend Lipi, who was present at the time of this talk, asked *Parvati* if Santals believe in the words of the *Jādopaṭiā* these day's, she replied; "If he comes one day [i.e., soon] after the death has occurred we believe him. But if he comes long after the death has occurred, we do not believe him." Having said this *Parvati* voluntarily started a vivid account of her father's death, which took place when *Parvati* was about ten years old. She started by addressing *Lipi*, who was very well known to her;

"But *Lipi*, when my father died I was very young … I was tending the cattle of the neighbour household … My father was going to take one of a number of jack-fruits stored in our house and give it to a neighbour … Inside that jack-fruit there was a snake … When he caught hold of the jack-fruit the snake bit him ... My younger brother went to fetch the medicine man [*ojhā*], but he could not find him … My father was struck unconscious and died that evening … The next day when they were burning him at the cremation site the *jādo* [*Jādopaṭiā*] appeared … He called the name of my older brother and entered … He called out the name of my uncle [as if he, the *Jādopaṭiā*, was the dead one speaking] … '- my brother is that one, my son is that one.' … The *jādo* was offered a seat. He told my mother; '- do *cokhodān*.' [Mother] said; '- with what shall I do *cokhodān*? We have nothing.' [The *Jādopaṭiā*] said; '- there is one large plate.' My mother said; '- If I give you that plate, from what will my son eat?' [The *Jādopaṭiā* said]; '- You have to give the large plate.' So that plate was brought. He did *cokhodān* and he brought a picture of [my] father, that he showed everyone. '-Look [said the *Jādopaṭiā*], is it really he?' Everybody saw [it] and confirmed; '-yes, it is certainly him.' The *jādo* spoke like this [talking as if he was the father, and explaining why he died]; … '- a witch followed me … two witches stayed behind and one witch followed me and entered into the house.' All that the *jādo* said was just right … " *Parvati* told us how the *Jādopaṭiā* had described the exact looks of her father and that he was a healthy man. The fact that he was healthy explained why the *Jādopaṭiā* had been able to get the news of his death so quickly and arrive at *Parvati's* home within a day after the death had occurred. *Parvati* explains; "The [dead] ones, that can walk, come walking to the *jādobābā* [*Jādopaṭiā*]. Those who die very sick will go [come] after five-six days, and those who are not ill will come to the *jādo* very quickly." This explanation given by *Parvati* is interesting. Her father was not ill and could thus reach the *Jādopaṭiā* within a day. The cause of *Parvati's* father's death was snakebite, but the reason for the occurrence of the tragic event was the witches' evil influence. *Parvati's* description above is strongly coloured by her personal involvement, and gives us a feeling of her unquestioned belief in the practice of the *Jādopaṭiā*.

My old Santal acquaintance *Rāmon Marandi* told me how a *Jādopaṭiā* paid a visit to their house after his father had died, about eight years ago. "What he [the *Jādopaṭiā*] said was correct. He did not talk any nonsense …

He came five days after [the death had occurred][94]. The *jādobābā* mentioned my name and entered. We offered him a seat … as required we brought a bowl with water and *dhubi*-grass and everyone poured some water from it. [He, the *Jādopaṭiā*] said some invocations [*mantra*[95]] and the water was given. After that we gave him what was there [of my fathers belongings]; some old clothes … [The *Jādopaṭiā*] did not ask for much, money or such things. We gave him the customary 1-2 kilograms of rice [1-2 ser]." I asked *Rāmon* if they had given the *Jādopaṭiā* a chicken. *Rāmon* replied; "He did not ask for a chicken. If he would have asked for a chicken I would have said that we do not own one … He [the *Jādopaṭiā*] would have got to know from my father if there would have been chickens. He [my father] would have said [to the *Jādopaṭiā*]; '- I have many chickens. Take one chicken.'" *Rāmon* laughed and said; "That is how it is. I believe in them [the *Jādopaṭiās*] up to this day. I believe in them, but if I die I do not know if my son will respect the *jādobābā* … Maybe he will drive him away. But I will heed my duty [towards my father and the *Jādopaṭiā*]. … I have seen it [*cokhodān*] since my childhood and I have done it. It has is from old times and I heed it ... "

Later on, during this interview, *Rāmon* told me how a *Jādopaṭiā* at one occasion, whilst entering a Santal household in his village after a death had occurred, spoke as if he were the deceased and asked for water from all the members of that household. This practice also occurs among the Santals themselves, where the role of the dead person is played by one of the chief mourners. Two villagers will also take part and play the role of *Maran Buru* and the spirit of the first man (*Pilchu Haram*), the general ancestor. During this type of "possession" it is customary that the dead one asks for water to drink from all the relatives present at the time[96]. At this time it is also customary to ask the dead one why he died. He will then reply and explain the reason for his death. This kind of event usually takes place some time after the first purification (see earlier chapter) has been performed and, once more, during the final Santal mortuary ritual, known as *bhandan* (Archer 1974:334,336, Bodding 1994:179)[97]. From the interviews I had with the

[94] *Rāmon* explained that it is usual that the *Jādopaṭiā* comes about three to five days after the death of a Santal has occurred. If he comes much later people will not believe him. The timing of the *Jādopaṭiā's* appearance, in this context, is closely tied to the mortuary rituals that the Santals perform after a death has occurred, as well as to the beliefs connected with these ritual observances (confer chapter 3.). However, as we will se in what follows, the timings of the *Jādopaṭiā's* visit are far from fixed, and the practice of the *Jādopaṭiās* vary considerably.

[95] Earlier during the interview *Rāmon* had explained what type of things the *Jādopaṭiā* would say when the water was poured (i.e. the invocations uttered by the *Jādopaṭiā*, named *mantra* by *Rāmon* here). If the oldest son would pour water out of the plate or bowl, the *Jādopaṭiā* would say; '-I your oldest son offer you today in plenty, with both hands … ' etc.

[96] The Santals believe that the dead ones are very thirsty (Carrin-Bouez 1986:72).

[97] In is of interest to note how the various authors describe this practice. Bodding and Carrin-Bouez describes it as possession (1994:179, 1986:72), Archer calls it acting (1974:334), Mukherjea writes "some men will fall in a trance ('*jhupar*') and impersonate *Maran Buru* and the deceased…" (1943:223), whilst Troisi formulate himself "… two persons are said to become possessed …" (Troisi 1978:194). The Santals themselves call this practice

Santals cited above I got the impression that these Santals accepts the *Jādopaṭiās* and many of their ways[98]. Below I will include some statements from Santals that were more critically inclined to the *Jādopaṭiās*. These informants reside in a Santal village near Santiniketan.

My Bengali friend *Bidyut* asked, a Santali farmer *Cunko Besra*, how it was that the *Jādopaṭiās*, being Hindus, had come to the Santal community to do their work. *Cunko* replied with a laugh; "That is the question. They have done it [i.e. their work] since earlier times as a business and a livelihood." I asked *Cunko* why the Santals had to perform *cokhodān*. "If we do not do the gift [*dān*], then the one who has died will be without eyes, will be blind, in his next life [he laughs], that is why they [the *Jādopaṭiās*] have given it the name *cokhodān* …" Earlier on in the interview he also said that *cokhodān* is performed for the salvation or release [*muktí*] of the Santal in question. I asked *Cunko* if the Santals believe in these things today. "Many do … It is something which has continued from earlier times. But we have heard it from the *jādo*, it may not be right, it will not happen. [*Cunko* makes a pause] Nevertheless, we have become accustomed to do this since earlier times. So we continue to give the gifts ... If we do not give it, no difficulties will appear … If they [the *Jādopaṭiās*] come we will have to give, if they will not come we will not have to give." At this point I asked *Cunko* what would happen if the *Jādopaṭiā* would come three months after a death had occurred. Would they give him anything then? "Yes, if they come to our house we will have to give. But the actual custom is that they come within three or four days ... However, when *Sumilens* daughter died … then our 'brother' *Budhesvar* [*Citrakar*; see chapter one] came so many days later to collect gifts [laugh] … after one or two months." Further on I asked *Cunko* how the *Jādopaṭiās* get the news [of a death]. "They have people here and there that they give a share [of their income] and thus get the information. If they get a big plate [they will sell it] … or they will ask for a cow, a goat. Those who have many will give them. These [animals] they will not keep. They will sell them. From these [earnings] they will give them [the informers] … How else could they get the news? It is unthinkable … ". *Cunko* told me that these informers could be Santals as well as Bengalis. I have also seen such informers chatting with the *Jādopaṭiās* at times. My Bengali friend told me how he once had seen and heard how a Santal women told *Budhesvar Citrakar* about a death that had occurred in a village near by. *Budhesvar* replied the women; "- very well, I will go. But you will not tell anyone." She was clearly a messenger [peon], *Cunko* said, and continued. "They will get the news from the informers … Within a few says …two to three days after

rum. "*Rum*. To be possessed with a spirit which is evidenced mainly by shaking of the head" (Campbell 1988:666). Both my Santal informants as well as my *Jādopaṭiā* informants used the term *rum* for such a possession in the Santal context mentioned above.

[98] Carrin-Bouez states that the Santals reluctantly accepts *Jādopaṭiās*. However, she also agrees with R. de Selva that the *Jādopaṭiās* sometimes manipulates the Santals (personal communication 20/3/99).

they will appear … They will even visit the daughters [married into other households, or sub-clans, in other villages] … If I die they [the *Jādopaṭiās*] will find out where she lives and go there. In my daughters house they will also collect something [i.e. gifts] … [the *Jādopaṭiās* will say] '- Your father wanted this … give us that.' … It is like a business. Clear business … thus they will call the correct name while entering the house. If I die, they will call the name of my oldest son. How will they now his name? But they have an assistant [i.e. an informer] … They [the *Jādopaṭiās*] talk very sweetly and 'dress' their talk beautifully. It is due to their practice. How could they do their business otherwise."

The account given by *Cunko* above differs considerably from the narrative presented by the Santal woman earlier in my text. *Cunko's* description of the *Jādopaṭiās* is detached and more 'objective' in character. It is an account of the practice perceived from the 'outside', so to speak.

On another occasion *Paremisvar Tudu*, a young Santal in his late twenties gave me this description of the ways of the *Jādopaṭiās*. I asked him what work the *Jādopaṭiās* do in their Santal village. "He usually comes to the locality and ask people questions. He asks who has died where, in what house someone has died. He asks about these things … Sometimes we told him incorrect things, some days we told him the proper [information] ... This is the search they are mostly up to … But I have never believed in them. I have seen them since I was small … They come with their picture and says … '- do *cokhodān*.' Then they say; '- give me a plate' and then '- I need one piece of clothing'. They ask for rice to cook. '- Give rice' '- give one chicken' … That is how they do their trade. That is their business. That is what they do. That is no big thing. Until today I do not believe in them. That is why I tell *Mihiri Tudu* [his daughter]. When I die, do not give anything to anyone ... What is the need for that when I do not believe in this … They [the *Jādopaṭiās*] pay some people a bribe, and find out that such and such a person, with such and such a name, in such village [has died]. That is his daughter, and that is his son. He has so many relatives, so many brothers. These are the things they [the *Jādopaṭiās*] ask about. How can I believe in them … They are beggars that come with their drawings of dolls ... What is the need for these pictures?" I asked *Paremisvar* about the meaning of *jādo* [i.e. the name of the *Jādopaṭiās*]. "It will mean a trickster, what else could it mean? That is what I have heard, and that is what I say."

My friend *Lipi* that was present at the time of this interview asked *Paremisvar* if the *Jādopaṭiā* had come to his house after any death of his relatives had occurred, and if so; had he given the *Jādopaṭiā* anything? *Paremisvar* answered that he had. Hearing this, *Lipi* asked him why he had given anything. "As far as I am concerned, not giving, could also have passed. But I said; '- let's give a little.' At that time you're in a 'bad' mood ... Being in that mood you give something of those things lying around [left by the dead] … Why hold on to such a small thing. That is [that kind of thing] what people give … We have to give what they demand, there is no

other way." When I mentioned that *Jādopaṭiās* say that they are the Brahmans [*purohit*] of the Santals, *Paremisvar* responded with scorn; "A proper Brahman [*purohit*] … should be able to recite [from memory] all the paternal forefathers, seven generations back … If he can not tell those, he can not be called a Brahman." This argument, put froward here by *Paremisvar*, shows a strong Hindu influence, as it uses the logic prevalent within the Hindu context[99]. It is striking to see how *Paremisvar* is countering the *Jādopaṭiā's* 'Hindu Brahman discourse' with logic drawn from that very same 'Hindu Brahman context'!

Paremisvar's wife *Mohini Tudu* was present at the time of the interview referred to above. She told us about a visit the *Jādopaṭiās* did at their house, after the death of her mother. At that time *Mohini* was newly married. She and her husband had very few possessions in their house. When the *Jādopaṭiā* came and asked *Mohini* to do *cokhodān*, she cried and told the *Jādopaṭiā* that she had nothing to give him. Thus *cokhodān* was performed without any gifts given in their house. However, the *Jādopaṭiā* got a plate, a chicken and rice in the house of *Mohini's* brother. She told us how the *Jādopaṭiā* showed her the picture of her mother and said; " '- Your mother will never ever come back again. Look at your mother.' I looked at my mother on the picture. [It] certainly appeared like [my] mother as my eyes was filled with tears. 'Yes it is [her]'. I started to cry and did not see her again ... Until this day I have not seen her again. I said [to myself]; -what is the need to see [her] again. [I] had become sad, crying all the time ... Where would [I] see [her] again? [I] would not see her again ... But [the *Jādopaṭiā*] said all the names [of the members of my family] correctly ... ". *Mohini's* account bears some resemblance to *Parvati's* descriptions above. Both accounts are coloured by an affective sentiment, and give us a description the experiential character of *cokhodān* from 'within', so to speak. However, it was evident that *Mohini* was influenced by her husband's presence at the time of the recording. Due to her husband's critical inclination to the *Jādopaṭiās* and *cokhodān*, she moderated her own description, and adopted a somewhat distanced attitude.

In spite of the rather critical disposition that *Paremisvar* and his wife held towards the *Jādopaṭiās*, they both agreed that it was proper to give some rice to the *Jādopaṭiās* when they came to show their scrolls in the Santal village. "It is their work. They have been named *jādo* since old times … It is still there. It is still going on, [they are] doing it … ". *Paremisvar* also told me how the *Jādopaṭiā* may receive gifts from the Santal after saying; " '- In the night the witches ate out of your mothers plate. They befouled it … Do not eat out of it. Your mother told me that you should give it to me.' So they will give it. If they [the *Jādopaṭiās*] say [i.e. know] the correct things [i.e.; what is

[99]It is customary that the Brahman who officiates during Hindu lifecycle rituals should be able to recite the names of the manes, of the seven generations of the paternal line, known as *sātpuruṣ* (see Fruzzetti 1982:42,66,114). However, in practice mentioning of the manes beyond the fourth generation is uncommon.

there in the house], they will be given those ... They say the right things [about the items of the dead one] and [one] will have to give them those things. If they say the wrong things, we say that they are wrong ... ". *Paremisvar* told me how the *Jādopaṭiās* trade these old things among themselves, when they can not sell them. For example, they might get some liquor in exchange for an old umbrella. One day I noticed that the group of *Jādopaṭiās*, who camped on the veranda of the Bengali shop-owner in Bolpur had a store of such potential barter. In safe custody, behind the bars of the veranda-grille, lay a jute sack full of plates, bowls and cups. These goods were also an evident proof of the frequent performance of *cokhodān* by these *Jādopaṭiās.*

Finally I like to present an example of *cokhodān* performed rather recently. It is an interesting instance of how a *Jādopaṭiā* adjusts the practice and the understanding of *cokhodān* to a contemporary context connected with urban life. During the later part of my fieldwork, the village of my Santal friend *Sona Murmu* was struck by a tragedy. A young Santal man, who was studying at a school in Bombay, died of an electrical shock, in an accident in his hostel room. Some weeks later a *Jādopaṭiā* appeared in his native village and performed *cokhodān* with this man's relatives. At the time *Sona* was present, and asked the *Jādopaṭiā* what had happened to his Santal friend. Then this *Jādopaṭiā* did not explain the cause of the young mans death by referring to a witch. Instead the *Jādopaṭiā* said that the young man had died because of his own fault. Sona explained to me; "The *Jādopaṭiā* gave a scientific explanation …He did not say much … He did not ask for much … In fear of an argument with me [an educated Santal], who might want to start a quarrel, he did not say much more. Nowadays they [the *Jādopaṭiās*] adjust their talk by looking at the people … If they meet some educated people they are more careful about what they say ...". However, *Sona* also told me that irrespective of believing in, or not believing in what the *Jādopaṭiā* says or does, even educated Santals will heed their practice as an old custom to be followed. As a matter of fact, when I discussed the *Jādopaṭiās* with a Santal man who is a lecturer at the Visva-Bharati University in Sriniketan, I perceived this sentiment. This Santal felt that it was important that the *Jādopaṭiās* continued their work, as part of the Santal cultural heritage. He was also positively inclined to my research in this context. Was this positive attitude towards the *Jādopaṭiās* due to an urbanised Santals romantic view of his traditional past? Or was it just an expression of the common inclusive attitude towards the *Jādopaṭiās* that I so often had met among the Santals?

With the examples that I have included above I have aspired to give a picture of how some Santals perceive the *Jādopaṭiā* and the work that he performs in the Santal community. In what follows I will contrast these descriptions with some descriptions of *cokhodān* given to me by the *Jādopaṭiās* themselves.

5.2 Descriptions of cokhodān by the Jādopaṭiās

The narratives presented by the *Jādopaṭiās* in the following contain descriptions of the many elements that make up *cokhodān*, as well as a number of illustrations of how the professional *Jādopaṭiā* strives to present himself as a respected member of his guild. These narratives were presented to me in Bengali, with a few exceptions. Consequently the Bengali idioms used by the narrator tend to give the narrative a Bengali conceptual bias, somewhat distanced from the Santal context where the events described actually took place. I mention this here because I have noticed how the *Jādopaṭiās* can perform two renderings of a narrative describing a certain scroll painting, depending on what language they use at the time of the show. Thus the idioms used by the *Jādopaṭiās* are tied to the language and the context where that language belongs.

After several months 'in the field', when I had become better aquatinted with *Budhesvar Citrakar*, I asked him to tell me more about *cokhodān* and how it is performed[100].

"We get the news from the people of the village. Getting it, we will go there … [The Santals say]; '- We have kept your dues [payment]' … We bring a picture. With that picture we do the work [*kāj*; i.e. *cokhodān*]. If they [the Santals] like they will give us a plate or a small bowl, if there is none they can bring one. With that we do the work. However, they should not have to buy a new one. It can be broken or torn what ever there is. … *cokhodān* we say; - in the name of the one who has died they pour [offer] water. In the plate or in the bowl, what ever they [the relatives] could manage to give, or wished to give on their own accord, [we] put *dhub* grass [101] and rice [*ātop cāl* = sun-parched rice] in that [plate or bowl]. Placing those things, making a 'mandala'[102], applying cowdung [smearing it on the ground] where they [the relatives] will present [tribute] turmeric water and make it [the dead ones spirit?] appear. At this place they [the relatives] will give some money, according to their own wish. [We] can not say that they should give five or ten rupees. We call this *ghaṭ kirin* [103]. The cost of *ghaṭ kirin´* is one rupee [!]. *Ghaṭ kirin´* means that they [The relatives] will drop the coin in the brass vessel [filled with water]. Some give a rupee, some give

[100] The data from this interview, that took place in *Lipi's* house (our mutual friend), is complemented by data from an interview, done later with *Budhesvar*, in his own village.

[101] A type of grass (*Cynodon dactylon*, Pers.) used in several ritual and social context among the Santals. When Santals marry, dhub grass is used for the blessing of the bride. *Dhub* grass is also used by Santals whilst trading things, for example cattle, as a kind of 'receipt'. According to the Santal tradition, *dhub* grass was the second plant planted, at the time of creation of the world (Bodding 1929:270f).

[102] This type of patch, usually round, is known as *khond* (lit. square, Campbell 1988:419) among the Santals. It is drawn by a priest at the time of sacrifice or worship.

[103] See earlier chapter. This is a practice prevalent among the Santals that is performed at all major life cycle rituals, such as; name giving, marriage or death rituals.

a rupee and a quarter ... This is a Santali custom … First the oldest son will give it. After that the other sons will give; one or two quarters of a rupee, happily, whatever they can give … They will all meet and pour water [one by one] ... Then [we] have to recite some invocations [*bakho*[104]] '- *śitaldān* [lit. a soothing gift], *pitaldān* [lit. a gift of brass], *cokhodān* [gift of the eye], *jībdān* [lit. a gift of life, i.e. an animal = a sacrifice], *astradān* [lit. a gift of a weapon], *bastradān* [a gift of a clothing], *rupadān* [lit. a gift of silver, a piece of jewellery][105]'. Those we recite ... They can give an umbrella or a piece of clothing. If it is not new it can be torn or with holes. We will take it and mend it. After they have presented these gifts they [the relatives and the spirit of the dead?] long for some food and such. Then they [the relatives] will give [us] a kilogram [*ser*] of rice, if they can, they give what they can, a chicken. We will not cut off the head [when we slaughter it]. At this time and place we will not cut the head. They [the Santals] will club it [santali; *kutum*]. We will follow their behaviour, and club it [the chicken]. We will club it with an axe. We sprinkle some of the blood at that place [i.e. where the cowdung has been smeared]. We cut it into pieces. With that we cook some food and everyone will meet and eat of it. It is like a feast. They like it … When we have finished the work it takes [they will have to give] one kilogram [*ser*] of rice. This is our farewell rice, according to the custom ... One kilogram will not be enough. Then they [the Santals] voluntarily give more rice. They cook it in a big casserole. They cook, divide it into shares, and everyone eats together; *Jādobābā's* prasād [food offering][106]. That is what they give." *Lipi*, who was present at the time of this interview, asked *Budhesvar* about the oil that the *Jādopaṭiā* used to carry with them on their travels. Formerly it was stored in a small container made out of a bamboo tube; "- When do they [the Santals] give that oil?" "When we have finished the work. When we are about to leave, we take out that container and they give us a little … mustard oil. Nowadays we keep it in a glass bottle. With that we smear our body at the time of taking a bath." I asked *Budhesvar* about the invocations that they recite; "- Are these invocations *mantras*?" "No, they are not *mantras*. They are a kind of speech with which we give a blessing. If we go there, and they give it [*cokhodān*], then they will feel peace and feel very good [they will say] '- Our priest [*ṭhākur*] has come.' What ever we have done gave them peace of mind ... It [our work] is done to give peace of mind ... We go to them [the Santal] after death. We will have to go. If we do not go, they will ask; '- Where is our *jādoṭhākur*. When will he come?'

[104] *Bakher* (see chapter 3).

[105] This invocation in Bengali alludes to the style of a Sanskrit invocation of a Brahman. Items such as these (i.e.; brass vessels, weapons, clothes and silver jewellery, among other things, were customary gifts, presented to the dead one before the cremation, by the Santals.

[106] This is the name that the *Jādopaṭiās* have given to this meal. *Prasād* is some food that has been offered to a deity at the time of worship in a Hindu context.

We asked Budhesvar what the Santal believe about the destiny of the soul [*āto*] after a death has occurred. "The soul [*jīb*] does not die, but the body dies. We burn the body at the cremation. It [the soul] has crossed the river *baitaranī* and gone to heaven. For it [the soul] we have given *cokhodān*, so it could get a place in heaven. Dying it became dark. By giving *cokhodān* it went to heaven ... It became dark. How can it cross the river *baitaranī* and go to heaven? That is why we do this, since earlier time, like our grandfathers and great grandfathers, did before our time. They also heeded this." I asked *Budhesvar* if there was any specific time when *cokhodān* should be performed. "Nothing is fixed. After one month, two months six months [we can do it]. There is nothing that says that we have to go there straight after the death ... Even after the final funeral ritual [*śrāddha*; i.e. *bhandan*] we can do it without any difficulties ... nothing is fixed … ".

The fact that *Budhesvar* really believes that the *Jādopaṭiā* can come to the Santal as late as he wishes, after a death has occurred, becomes clear from his statements above, as well as from his practice, described by *Cunko Besra* in the earlier part of this chapter. Nevertheless, as we shall see, *Rām Bilās Citrakar* is not as radical as *Budhesvar* in this respect. What follows are excerpts from an interview I made with *Rām Bilās* in his native village in Santal Parganas. I asked him to tell me how *cokhodān* is performed today? What is the custom?

"After the death, it is not fixed, one can go one day after the death, and one can go three days after. One can go ten days after. [I] can go fifteen days after. [I] can go one month after ... Two months after happens very seldom. If they [the Santals] have performed their final funeral feast [*bhandan*], they will not give [us][107] ... If I go after three days they will ask me to sit down at their house. Then they will give me a pitcher of water and greet me, bowing in obeisance [*pranām*][108] . This is the custom in Bihar. In West Bengal the people will pour water for you in the courtyard [to wash with] … Then they will offer you 'chewing tobacco' ... Then they will ask you '- from where have you come *jādobābā*?' [The *Jādopaṭiā* will reply] '- I have brought a picture of your mother.' [One] has to bring a picture that is called *agradānī* [see chapter 2.]. Like in Hindu religion [Hindu dharma], where the ones who do *agradānī* make the effigies out of wood. With those the Brahman do the expiation [*prāyaścitta*, see chapter 2.]. This is the *agradānī* picture that we have to make. If mother has died we have to bring a picture of a female. If father has died, we have to bring a picture of a male. Then they will ask '- what do you need' … Then the *Jādopaṭiā* will say; '- *Dhub* grass, sun parched rice, turmeric and oil. That is what I need. First [they] will bring [that] ... '- Bring some eating utensils'. '-What type shall we bring?' '- bring a rice plate.' … '- Bring a large bowl'. If there is a big bowl, they will give

[107] When the Santals have performed *bhandan*, they consider the deceased as an ancestor. Thus the need for the ritual work performed by the *Jādopaṭiā* is no longer felt.

[108] This is how I was received myself while visiting *Budhesvar Citrakar's* household in Santal Parganas, Bihar.

that one. Some [Santals] also give a glass of their own accord, as a gift in the name of their father. No force should be imposed here. It is not that it is bad if [they] do not give. It is not like that. That what is given is given voluntarily ... Then we will say '- we need to do a sacrifice [*jībdān*] so your father can cross the river *baitaranī*.' '- What does your father want? A milk cow?' [They] give a cow or a goat. If there is no goat either, they will give a chicken. When we show the fathers, or the mothers picture there is a saying from the 'Santal tradition' [*Hapram*] that we will have to say. It can be called a mantra. *Cokhodān muktiphal* ['attain salvation']. [Which] means, 'you should get salvation from the kingdom of *Yama* [i.e., the nether world] ... *cokhodān* '- you have died, with [your] eyes closed. They burn you. But, open your eyes! Attain a place in heaven!' [*sarga lābh*] … 'If there are still embers in the mouth from the cremation [an obstacle] ; let them fall out. You [the dead one], go to heaven.' We have to say this '- *Hiri biṛi Yam dar cuti, hiri biṛi khandan*[109] [In essence: '[may you be] released from your visit in fetters at the door of *Yama*']. In the nether world [*Yampurī*] everyone is punished according to the fruits of their deeds [*karmaphal*]. [They] are fettered in chains. '- Let these shackles fall of. Today the descendants of *Kāl Bhairab* have come; *jādo* priest [*purohit*]. I say; [your] son is presenting gifts [so that] you should stay in peace in heaven.' This is the mantra of *Maran Buru* and *Kāl Bhairab* … Brahma creates, Vishnu maintains, and Shiva destroys. Shiva is *Kāl Bhairab*. At the time of destruction no one except the descendants of Shiva can perform the expiation. That is why *Maran Buru* told us to utter these words for the salvation of the dead one, and so that the oldest son and the entire family will stay in peace. That is in accordance with the 'scriptures' [*śāstra*]. After this we apply a spot in the eye of the picture, with a pen. Then we put it [the picture] in oil and turmeric. Then [we] have to say one *mantra*. It says in the traditions [*hapram*, i.e. scriptures];

> '- *Kate sunum, pathe sunum, nāi gaḍa dub rakap´me. Mako lahao kana jotogi ojok´haṭing pe. Tel kupi Barni ghāṭ, gang nāi, tupo nāi. Tirio ghāṭ, murali ghāṭ, gāi ghāṭ, bida rakap´me.*' [Freely translated; Then, with loincloth and oil; come on and take a dip in the Damudar river, and ascend! Come on and anoint [yourself with oil], divide an offering in three [for *Pilchu Haram, Pilchu Buri*, and *Maran Buru*], and for all those who have passed away before you. At the landing place; of oil, of music and of jollity, come on and immerse [the bones, i.e. *jaṅ baha*] in the river [The Ganges, i.e. the Damodar]. At the landing place; of the flute and of the cow, bid your farewell and ascend.]

[109] This invocation contains a mixture of Bengali and Santali.

Thus they [the dead ones] attain liberation. After it [the picture] has been put in the turmeric and oil, the son and all the members of the family perform obeisance [*pranām*] and the work of the *Jādopaṭiā* is finished. [They] give one kilogram [*ser*] of rice and the *jādo* bids farewell."

The treatment of the picture of the dead one by *Rām Bilās* and other *Jādopaṭiā* is a good example of how the *Jādopaṭiās* utilise a prevalent practice among the Santals, and use it to imbibe their own practice with potential meaning. The picture of the dead, made by the *Jādopaṭiā*, is partly treated, as it was the *jaṅ baha*, the bones of the dead. As I have related elsewhere the bones of the dead are treated with oil and turmeric. The invocation uttered by *Rām Bilās*, cited above, is usually uttered when the bones of the dead are immersed in the river. Once when I played this tape-recorded invocation for a Santal informant, *Paremisvar Tudu*, he responded and told me that the *Jādopaṭiās* have picked up these elements from the Santal (*ādibāsi*) culture. "By hearing and seeing they have constructed their own practice out of this."

When *Rām Bilās* had finished his narrative of *cokhodān*, I told him that I had heard about another practice among *Jādopaṭiās* in other regions. These *Jādopaṭiās* say '- your father has arrived' etc … (see de Selvas account of *cokhodān* in the introduction). When I had confronted *Rām Bilās* with that statement he responded with the following apologetic discourse.

"Today the question arises why and how did this [i.e. their practice] appear. Is this [based on] blind faith (*andhabiśvās*). No [it isn't]. When the Santal perform the final funerary ritual [*bhandan*], they have a 'creation', a custom called *rum boṅga*. Mother or father has died. They call it *rum boṅga* [spirit possession], which bring them there. The one [the medium] will have to fast. They put rice in a new winnow, shaking it, [the medium] will become possessed. Then the children will say; '- father has come'. It is their custom to believe in this. A custom from 'the traditions' [*hapram*]. This is after the *Jādopaṭiā* has left when they [the Santals] perform the last funeral rituals [*bhandan*]. Then possession occurs. [The possessed one] will mention the names of all the sons and daughters. [The possessed one] will drink water in the name of him or her. Likewise, earlier, the *Jādopaṭiās* asked for water, poured by everyone. But, at the final funeral ritual he or she does not pour water, he or she [the possessed one] will not pour water. The *rum boṅga* will drink all the water. If they give it liquor [i.e. rice bear] he or she will drink that. If the oldest son will give water he/she [the possessed one] will drink that ... The one whose name has been mentioned will present water [to the possessed one] ... That is the customary practice of *rum boṅga*. Those [the *Jādopaṭiās*] of Midnapor and Purulia have done this, that matter, they have followed this. When they [the Santals] believe in this [i.e. *rum boṅga*], that a dead man [*mānuṣ*] will enter into that ones [the body of the medium] body. He/she has come. So what did they [the *Jādopaṭiās*] fabricate [out of this]. [They said to themselves]; '- Now we will go and say: I have received your father in my dream' [The Santal will reply]; '- Yes, so you received him in your dream. What did he say?' Then they will have to say; '- He said this, he

said that.' When a man dies, in his or her name possession occur ... They [the Santals] believe in him or her ... So they [those *Jādopaṭiās*] have made this up. If they say [like that] they [the Santals] will give. That also happens in some villages in West Bengal; '- What did he or she say? When did he come?' they [the Santals] will say. But this is not the custom of the 'tradition of the Santals' [*hapram*]. In 'the tradition' it does not say that he or she came in the dream and said this or that. [Instead] after death, the descendants of *Kāl Bhairab* should come and collect the gifts, as it has been done. This is the original custom … But they [those *Jādopaṭiās*] has made it up ..."

Having reached this far, I felt that if was possible to insert another somewhat controversial question about the drawing of witches that appears on the pictures of the dead. Although I had seen these drawing of witches, on pictures made by *Jādopaṭiās* from *Rām Bilās* village, it was most convenient (at this very moment) to attribute the practice of making such drawings to the discredited *Jādopaṭiās* of Midnapor and Purulia. *Rām Bilās* replied; "That is, when a man dies, then *Yama* [the god of death] appears. Without *Yama* life will not pass. So that is the king of death. It is the 'photo' of the king of death." Further, when *Rām Bilās* had told me this much, he continued to explain, via the logic of myth, how there exists witchcraft, but not witches. Thus, he explained, you have the medicine men [*ojhās*] that practice various kinds of witchcraft. As I wanted to peruse this matter further, I asked *Rām Bilās* why the Santals sometimes say "a witch has eaten him or her", after someone has died. 'What is the meaning of this?' *Rām Bilās* replied by making an analogy. "Before, man used to eat raw fish and resided in caves. Accordingly 200 years earlier they believed that there where witches, but that is not so today. They [those *Jādopaṭiās*] created this on purpose and said 'a witch has eaten him/her'… However, there exists witchcraft. They [who practice witchcraft] apply the 'evil eye' (*najar*), difficulties will arise. [But] if the *ojhā* will [treat it with] *jhāṛphuk*, it will go away. But 200 years ago … They used to say 'a witch has eaten him/her'. At that time there was no doctor. How will [would] the sick one be cured? As the days passed his condition got worse. The medicine man (*ojhā*) consulted the divination (*tel paṭ*); '- a witch has eaten him.' [The *ojhā* would ask for] a pig, a goat and a chicken [for a sacrifice] were needed. By consuming the medicine mans medicine the sick one would recover, eating a chicken, a goat or a pigeon. If he would not recover, than he [the *ojhā*] would say: '- a witch has eaten him.' Even today, some practice like this. However, in truth, there are no witches, but there is witchcraft. Witchcraft (*dākinī bhida*) is a boon from mother Kali ... [The belief in that] 'witches eat' is completely blind faith (*andhabiśvās*) [lit. dark belief; 'superstition'] ... Man does not eat man."

Through his discourse above, it is obvious that *Rām Bilās* makes a conscious effort to present his hereditary profession in a more favourable light, by distancing himself from practices that might be regarded us 'blind faith' by some people today. The denouncement of the belief that witches 'eat people' is a typical example of this tendency. However, at the same time

Rām Bilās is careful to legitimise himself and his practice among the Santals in the context of the Santal tradition, or rather, the proper Santal tradition as defined by him.

In the very end of my field work I confronted *Rājen Citrakar* with the reoccurring fact, drawn from many accounts I had from Santals about *cokhodān*, that the Santals say; '- Father has arrived', and then ask how he has died, whereupon the *Jādopaṭiā* will reply; '- a witch has eaten him'. Thus confronted, *Rājen* agreed that this is one common way that *cokhodān* can be introduced while entering a Santal household. Nevertheless, he strongly denied that he had ever said that a witch had 'eaten' any Santal in such a context[110]. The legitimate reasons that he said he presented to the Santals, as the cause of a death was that; the king of death (*Jom Rājā*) had summoned the Santal, or that a Santal god (*Sin Chando*) had terminated the life of the Santal. "Man does not eat man. If he did, there would not be many men left …". At this instance I remarked that The Santals and the *Jādopaṭiās* seemed to agree on the point that they had coexisted since the beginning of time. Hearing this *Rājen* responded with a myth of how it came about that the *Jādopaṭiās* got their professional role in the Santal community. *Rājen* started his story with the death of *Pilchu Haram*, the first Santal male[111]. This is not a surprising starting point for an exegeses of the origin of *cokhodān*. The oldest son of *Pilchu haram* addresses *Maran Buru*; " '- Now that my father has died, who will 'eat' [digest] the gifts for him? To whom will I present these gifts? … With whom should I perform the offerings [*agradānī*]? … *Maran Buru* said; '- look over there yonder. The *jādoguru, jādobābā* is sitting there. Call him and do offerings, *agradānī*, *cokhodān* with him. The *jādobābā* came up to the son of *Pilchu Haram* and asked him; '- Who are you[112]?' The oldest son thus told the *jādobābā* his name.". Further, *Rājen* related how *Kāl Bhairab* instructed the *Jādopaṭiā* make a picture of a figure (*murti*). With this picture he went to the house of the oldest son of *Pilchu Haram* and called his name. The *jādobābā* was offered a seat inside and a cow (*kapil gāi*, see chapter 2) was offered in the name of the father along with a plate, a bowl, a cup and some clothes. Then the *jādobābā* performed *cokhodān*. All the sons and daughters of *Pilchu Haram* poured water in the name of the father and gave some money (*ghaṭ kirin'*). "From that very day the Santal have a strong faith in their *jādoguru*." Thus *Rājen* concluded his narrative. On another occasion *Rājen* described to me how it is common that the Santals consult

[110] This statement is even more interesting as he, a few minutes earlier, had agreed with me that he himself had drawn a picture of a witch, next to a dead Santal, on one of the pictures of the dead that he had shown me some months earlier, at our first meeting.

[111] It is customary to begin a myth of the Santal tradition with the ancestral couple *Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Buri*. Recitation of such mythological material is known as *karam binti*.

[112] It is of interest that *Rājen*, in the conversation between *Maran Buru* and *Pilchu Haram*, uses the respectful form of the pronoun you (*āpni*), but when the *Jādopaṭiā* addresses the son of *Pilchu Haram*, he uses a derogatory form of you (*tui*), reserved for children, inferior persons, or persons with whom you have a very close relationship (obviously not the case here).

the *ojhā*, after a death has occurred, to find out when their *jādobābā* will come to console them. The *ojhā* will perform a divination via a leaf, applied with oil. From this divination the *ojhā* conclude; "'- *Jādobābā* will not come now. He will come later. *Jādobābā* has not yet got the news [of the death, from the dead]' … The *ojhā* will be paid his dues … Sure enough, within five or ten days, the *jādobābā* will get the news and arrive at the Santal household. Then the Santals will be consoled. As long as we, *jādobābā* have not gone [to them], they will not get any peace of mind.[113] *Rājen* told me how he addresses the Santals " '- If you want to fulfil your [filial] duty [and do *cokhodān*], do so. If you do not want to do it we will not pressure you into it.' [The Santals will say] '- Yes, we will have to do it, we ought to do it, and we will certainly do it.'". It is not surprising that the statements made by *Rājen* could oblige the Santals to have *Rājen* perform *cokhodān* for them.

Enough has been told, explained and stated about *cokhodān*. In the chapter that follows we will be able to compare the narratives and discourses, presented above, with some instances of what actually took place in the field.

[113] When I related this narrative to one of my educated Santal friends, he laughed and remarked that this story was an evident proof of the professional co-operation that exists between the *Jādopaṭiā* and the *ojhā*.

6 COKHODĀN "IN SITU"

Some time in the middle of July, in the midst of the monsoon, *Sivu Citrakar* told me that I could come with him to a Santal village to witness *cohokdān*. This village, he told me, was situated approximately three rupees bus fair from Bolpur bus-station (ca 10 km). The death of an old Santal woman had occurred about a month earlier. Sivu explained to me that he had not gone to perform *cokhodān* in this particular household until now, because the Santal family in question was poor, and had taken some time to collect the needed funds. I asked *Sivu* if I could bring my camera and tape-recorder to document this event. He had no objections to this documentation. Two days later, in the morning, I met *Sivu* and his friend *Jayīdev Citrakar*, next to the shop veranda, were they had stayed that night. *Jayīdev* went with us that day. The two *Jādopaṭiās* had put on their best clothes, and *Jayīdev* was wearing his wristwatch, prominently visible. 'They look like proper Brahmins', I thought to myself. I was informed that *Sivu* would perform 'the work' and *Jayīdev* was just coming along. Further, they told me that the Santal family owned a fowl, and that they might present this one so that *Sivu* could prepare a meal. They also told me that the oldest son of this Santal family died about five years ago. Thus, it was the younger son who would shoulder the family responsibilities at this occasion. " - They will perform *ghaṭ kirin´*." We walked over to the bus stand and found a proper bus for our destination within a short while. Whilst we were riding the bus it started to rain. When we got of the bus it was still drizzling. We found a shelter in a tiny schoolhouse near the Santal village. Here we waited for the rain to stop for about an hour. After some time a few Santal boys and their Bengali schoolteacher appeared. The schoolteacher asked the *Jādopaṭiās* who they where. *Jayīdev* replied "- We are the priests of the Santals. They are our disciples. Since our father's time they are our patrons [*jajmān*]". *Jayīdev* continued, and mentioned several villages, which he stated was their professional territory. As the rain had subsided we still had to wait for the younger son of the Santal household to appear. He had gone to the local bazaar to purchase something, a plate? When the sun reappeared in the sky the son returned from the market place. By now the clock had passed ten, and it was sultry. We walked over to the house were the *cokhodān* was going to be performed. This house was rather small compared to the usual size of a Santal house, and in a bad condition. As this was in the middle of monsoon, most of the inhabitants of the village had gone to work in the fields. However, the children from the schoolhouse and a number of other children crowed to see what was about to happen. The wife of the younger son, and another women were also present. The Santal hosts had arranged three seats for the *Jādopaṭiās* and me. I declined, and remained standing, ready to document the event. The younger son brought a stainless steel plate filled

with water. It is most likely that he had bought this plate in the bazaar in the morning. He collected some *dhub* grass that grew on the ground next to the house. This grass he placed in the plate with the water and a few grains of rice. The plate was then placed on an area on the ground, smeared with cowdung. The *Jādopaṭiās* were sitting on the small stools, while most of the Santals stood on the opposite side, with their backs facing towards the house. The Santal who where about to do *cokhodān* squatted next to the plate of water. The younger son had brought some coins to drop into the water. He was the first one to pour water in the name of his mother. As he dropped the coin in the vessel, the clinking sound seemed to give *Sivu* the needed signal to start his invocation. Simultaneously the son lifted the vessel with both his hands to pore some water on the consecrated space on the ground. All the children that had gathered around these men watched the spectacle with awe.

The invocations uttered by *Sivu* on this occasion consisted of Santali mixed with some Bengali words here and there. Below I will present a somewhat lose translation of these invocation, that will allow a more poetic rendering in English. The first invocation was phrased as if the son was addressing his mother, via the mediation of the *Jādopaṭiā*. I will include some of the words that serve as some kind of '*mantra* of a Brahmin' in their original form.

> *Jot ma*[114] *haribal nimiśti* [*namaste*, i.e. a greeting] *gāiaṅgā* [an abbreviation of Gaya and Ganges[115]] *sargabās* [reside in heaven] *anadān* [a gift of food] *jat ma cokhodān jībdān* [a gift of life] *bhūmidān* [a gift of earth]. To your mother that had kept you coiled up in the womb for ten months and ten days[116]. She has left you. Come on mother, now we are giving you in plenty. *Jat ma haribal gāiaṅgā sargabās*. We are giving you. Come mother, today you have gone to heaven. From today you are in heaven. Today we are offering to you. Come on mother, go now you are exhausted. Come oh mother, we are offering you with both hands, as at the time of the festival of spring and the festival of the harvest …

[114] The day after I had recorded this invocation I asked Sivu about the meaning of *jat ma*. He replied; "It means 'your own mother'".

[115] In the Hindu context, it is at Gaya, on the banks of the Ganges, that some of the final funerary rituals are performed. It is at this moment that the Hindus immerse the ashes of the dead in the Ganges, and perform the Gaya *śrāddha* in honour of the manes (Vidyarthi 1961:33-34). In the Santal context, Gaya Ganga stands for; "To perform the last rites for the dead." (Campbell 1988:244). As I have mentioned earlier in the text, the Santals used to immerse the bones of their dead ones in the river Damodar.

[116] In the Hindu context one conceives the period of gestation as spanning over approximately ten lunar months.

After this invocation had been completed the wife of the younger son dropped a coin in the water. Having done so, she squatted on the ground, held the steel vessel with both hands, and poured some water on the space smeared with cowdung. In the following invocation Sivu included a section phrased in first person, where he spoke as if he was the dead one.

> *Jat ma haribal nimiśti gāiaṅgā sargabās … anadān jat ma cokdān jībdān bastradān* [a gift of clothing] *jat ma nimiśti gāiaṅgā sargabās*. Come mother, today at the place of worship, you receive what we give you in plenty. Come mother, receive with both hands what we offer you with both hands. Come mother, '- I am exhausted and I have gone to heaven where I will remain in happiness'.

At this point *Sivu* asked the grandchild to enter to pour water for the grandmother. His father told him to go and call the grandmother. He replied; "- Should I go and call her?". The father replied "- Yes, call her". As the grandchild held the plate, Sivu uttered the following words.

> … At the place of worship, come on grandmother, you are exhausted and you should go. Come grandmother, I have kept peace and happiness for you. Come grandmother, we offer you in plenty. Come grandmother, snakes, scorpions, winds and whirlwinds, all these you will be able to see. The hill 'spirits' and the ancestors have kept peace and happiness in the middle of the room[117]…

In quick succession a granddaughter followed suit and Sivu continued his invocations.

> *Jat ma haribal nimiśti gāiaṅgā sargabās*. Come on now, your grandchild [namesake] have picked up the water at the place of worship. Come grandmother, we are giving you in plenty. Receive this with both hands and be satisfied. You should leave us today. You are exhausted. *Jat ma cokhodān bhūmidān gāiaṅgā sargabās nimiśti gāiaṅgā sargabās*. Receive with both hands and remain in happiness.

[117] 'The middle of the room' (*tala orak'*) refers to the *bhitar*, the place inside a Santal house were the household/ sub-clan deities and ancestors are worshiped.

When the turn came to one of the younger grandchildren things came to a halt. The little girl was to frightened to proceed, pick up the vessel and pour the water for her grandmother. The grownups that were present tried to encourage her. Her father said; "Come on, do it. Give the money". *Sivu* told her; "Come on, 'sit down', pick up the vessel. This is nothing to be afraid of. Your brother has poured [water]. Your sister has poured." *Jayīdev Citrakar* also tried to coax her on; "Pour the water for your grandmother." Her mother threatened her; "Your father will slap you!" Hearing this *Sivu* picked up on this theme; " … Do it, otherwise this 'non-Santal' [*diku*; i.e. the anthropologist] will beat you. [With a laugh] Look, he has a camera and will take your photograph [photo]". The father finally squatted behind the little girl and helped her to hold on to the vessel where she had dropped a coin a last (plate 11). Sivu made this invocation a short one.

> Come on now, the grandchild [namesake] is giving you water, *Jat ma haribal nimiśti gāiaṅgā sargabās*. Come on grandmother, go and leave peace and happiness behind. *Jat ma haribal nimiśti gāiaṅgā sargabās anadān jat ma cokhodān*.

When the turn came to the youngest grandchild there where no difficulties. The father just told her to pour the water on the ground and she did accordingly.

> Come on and receive the offering of your youngest grandchild [namesake] with both your hands. Grandmother, remain in peace and happiness. Grandmother, do not cry, go away. Grandmother, you are exhausted and you should go away. *Jat ma nimiśti gāiaṅgā sargabās … anadān jat ma cokhodān.*

At this moment *Sivu* asks the younger son if the widow of the oldest son had come. As she had not come, *Sivu* instructs the younger son to pour the water offering in her place.

> Come on, offering to you here at this place, the water and these things in plenty. Come on, the oldest son's wife is offering. Go now and leave us in happiness and peace. *Jat ma nimiśti gāiaṅgā sargabās chokhodān jībdān jat ma …*

Sivu continues his invocation a little longer at an almost inaudible level. However, one of the few things that could be distinguished was "Come on

… today". At this point *Sivu* unfolded the little picture [*mṛtu paṭ*] of the grandmother that he had held rolled up in his folded hands all through the session, and displayed it openly for all to see (plate 12). At the same moment he utters; "Come on, look at you mother/grandmother ... The *jādobābā* went alone somewhere to a solitary place for your need. In whatever condition she had here [she] has risen (*enka gey*[e] *rakap´ ena entet´*). [She] remained suffering for many days". Most of the surrounding Santals watched the picture of the old women without a word. When *Sivu* had said these things, he held the picture on display for about twenty seconds. Then he broke the silence and said; "Then [she] flowed away [i.e., an euphemism (?); she floated away like water. She passed away.]"[118]. At some time during the session I noticed how *Sivu* placed the pupil in the empty eyes of the representation of the dead Santal woman, with his pen. I also noticed that he had scribbled something at the back of the picture and on his own hand. It is possible that these scribbles had been performed to induce the flow of the ink from the pen. In this rendering of *cokhodān* the act of placing the iris in the eye was never referred to explicitly with any rational for the need of this gesture. On the whole, the impression that I got was that the gift of the eye seemed to play a smaller role in the performance of the entire event than I had expected. The exhibition of the picture of the dead one was followed by a short verbal exchange about the payment. The poor Santal family could not offer *Sivu* any 'farewell rice', and agreed to pay this debt at some other occasion. After this *Sivu* addressed me and said; "Our work is finished". Thus, *Sivu* took the steel plate, poured out the water, and picked up the money (a few rupees worth). Then he dried off the cowdung from the back of the plate on some grass on the ground, and stuck it into his shoulder bag. Later I remarked that they had smeared cowdung on the ground below the plate. *Sivu* explained; "It is placed there in a circle, to establish the sanctum [*dharma*], it has become a place of worship [*dharma thān*]". *Jayīdev* and *Sivu* also explained to me that the Santal family was unable to pay them anything now, as they had not yet saved enough through their work. However, they would pay the debt [*poana*] later. The younger son confirmed this statement. This debt included the rice as well as a chicken. Afterwards *Jayīdev* and *Sivu* joined the younger son for a round of rice-beer at the local shop. They told me; "He will treat us in the name of the mother".

The following day I asked *Sivu* if I could have another a look at the picture of the old Santal women. "That is impossible", he responded. The reason for this was that the younger son of the old Santal woman had requested that this picture should be immersed in the canal nearby the village. This immersion had been executed after the drinking session, the same day as *cokhodān* had been performed. *Sivu* told me that whenever a

[118] The Santali word *bohao*, used here by *Sivu*, is also used while referring to an immersion of the bones of the dead. This immersion is performed by dipping entirely under the water. At this moment one releases the bones afloat in the water (Campbell 1988:96, Bodding 1930:319, Vol I).

Santal wants to have this immersion done, the *Jādopaṭiā* gives the picture of the dead to the Santals for that purpose. Sometimes the *Jādopaṭiās* will assist the Santals on this occasion, and at other times the *Jādopaṭiās* will perform this immersion for them. According to *Sivu*, the invocations that are uttered at the time of the immersion, are the same ones that are uttered at *cokhodān*.

The two other instances of *cokhodān* that I have witnessed were performed and elaborated by *Rājen Citrakar*, in a Santal village. These instances of *cokhodān* were both performed during the very same day. It was not until the end of my fieldwork that I got some rapport with *Rājen*. As we spent more time together, he himself volunteered to take me along to show me how he performed *cokhodān* in a Santal household. One afternoon in the later part of the month of June, as I sat in the shade and chatted with *Rājen*, he told me that he had some 'work' (i.e. *cokhodān*) to do the following day. He had got the news about this 'work' five days earlier, but he had not mentioned anything about it to me. One Santal women had died about twenty days ago, he told me. Without much further ado, we agreed to meet the following morning at Bolpur train station, to board a train to Gushkara, were we would catch a bus that could take us to a road junction, from which we could walk to the Santal village in question. When I met *Rājen* at the station the following morning, I was struck by his smart appearance. He was dressed in a narrow striped short sleeved shirt and a stylish *dhuti* (a loin cloth for men) with a finely decorated border. With him he carried a black umbrella, that added to the smart impression. When I asked *Rājen* from where he had procured these clothes, and the umbrella, he responded: "Those I have got as a gift [i.e., at the time of performing *cokhodān*]." Later on that morning, as we reached the road junction, we walked a few km along a very muddy road. At the end of this road we reached a canal that we had to cross to reach our destination. When we arrived at the house were the *cokhodān* was to be performed, we found it empty. A Santal woman appeared and informed us that the son of the woman who had died had gone to the local market. *Rājen* and I went to a house nearby, where *Rājen* asked for tobacco, received tobacco, and a seat. As we sat and waited, *Rājen* talked to a Santal woman, and found out that one more death had occurred in the village recently. Hearing this he told me; "My astrological readings have worked [!]. I had understood that someone had died here, and it was correct." I asked him how it all worked; " … In the middle of the night I saw a dead body in my dream … This was when I was in my own village … At that time [not in a dream] a Santal [informer] told me that someone had died in a village nearby, and that I should go there. But that is *Budhesvar's jajmān* [territory[119]] … A Santal [an informer] from this village [i.e. the one we where in at the moment of the narrative] told me that someone had died, and that I should go and perform *cokhodān*. This was about ten days ago. I did

[119] *Budhesvar* and *Rājen* are competitors on the Santal funeral market, and do not operate on the same territory.

not dream this. However, sometimes I dream about these things. Once I dreamed that I got married twice [he laughs]. You can't be sure about dreams [!]." This narrative is interesting, as *Rājen* seems to slip in and out of several contextual understandings concerning *cokhodān*, dealing with the pragmatic aspects of the practice, concerning himself, and with other conceptions of the practice, as conceived by Santals or Bengalis.

As we sat and waited for the brother of the Santal woman who had died, *Rājen* spent his time talking to some Santal boys. These boys, as well as other inhabitants of the village, treated *Rājen* with respect. When the brother of the dead Santal woman finally arrived, he asked us to enter the courtyard in front of his house. There they offered both of us a stool. Then the brother and his friend greeted us, one at the time, with the customary Santal greeting (*Johar*)[120]. We reciprocated this greeting by greeting them back accordingly. However, *Rājen* used the Bengali type of greeting, with hands folded in front of the chest, and in front of the face (*nāmāskār*). After these greetings we took our seats. The brother went to collect a handful of *dhub* grass. Then he collected three leaves from a *Bherenda* tree in the courtyard. On these leaves he later placed the offerings applied in the worship of *Maran Buru, Pilchu Haram, Pilchu Buri*, and the ancestors. This worship occurred before the *cokhodān* took place. As strangers have no access to the inner room of a Santal house, I have not seen this worship myself. Nevertheless, *Rājen* told me that the brother had put these leaves, in a fan-type fashion, on the altar in the middle of the room. On these leaves he applied rice, oil, turmeric, and *dhub* grass. As I have mentioned earlier on in this thesis, this type of worship is usually performed at the time of the final funerary rites, as a purification ritual. Meanwhile, a woman applied some cow-dung in a circle on the ground, were the *cokhodān* would be performed. *Rājen* displayed and recited one of his scrolls[121] to the Santal audience that had gathered in the courtyard. This audience consisted of several children, a few women and a number of men. When *Rājen* had finished the recitation of the scroll he instructed the brother of the dead Santal woman how to perform *cokhodān*. "Come on [and do] *ghaṭ kirin´*. Give some money at the place of worship. Whatever you wish [to give] in the bowl … ". As the brother had dropped a coin in the brass bowl placed on the consecrated ground, *Rājen* told him to hold the vessel [with his hands]. At this point *Rājen* cleared his throat, and started his invocations with a load and clear voice.

[120] This greeting is performed by holding the left forearm in front of ones diaphragm, touching beneath the right elbow with ones clasped hand. The right forearm is held vertical, and the clasped right hand is touching ones forehead. The greeting is performed via a forward bow. The depth of this bow depends ones status in relation to the person one is greeting. The other person reciprocates the greeting immediately in the same manner.

[121] This scroll contained various pictures of gods and Santals in various traditional Santal settings.

> Come your gift of food and of clothes [*anadān bastradān*] … Come and take your residence in heaven, in the heaven of Vishnu [*baikuṇṭabās, sargabās*] … Come now, be released. Come your gift for atonement [*agradān*], gift of earth [*bhūmidān*], gift of brass [*kāsādān, piṭaldān*]. Come, perform the last rites … Go to heaven today. Come your gift of the eye [*cokhodān*]. Come your gift of a bowl, of clothes … Come your gift of money … Come on and offer water … Come on, go to heaven and reside there today … Be relieved, the glowing embers will vanish. [We] perform the last rites. Take [your] residence in heaven. Come on and go to heaven today …

The invocations that *Rājen* uttered, at this occasion consisted more or less of the elements I have included in my free translation above. However, at times I have not been able to hear what he says (on my tape-recording of the invocations), due to his unclear pronunciation, or faint speech. The invocations consist of a mixture of Bengali and Santali languages. As *Rājen* included the elements of the invocation several times, in various combinations, I have chosen to abbreviate, rather than taxing the translation with unnecessary repetitions. When *Rājen* had completed his first round of invocation for the dead Santal women, he told the brother to call his wife. As she was not present, *Rājen* told the brother to remain seated, and pour the water in her place. At this moment it was obvious that the brother was not too keen to continue, as he knew that a lengthier elaboration of the whole event would increase the *Jādopaṭiā's* demands considerably. This sentiment was completely ignored by *Rājen*. On the contrary, *Rājen* told the brother to remain seated. The tone of this imperative was rather harsh. Thus, *Rājen* started his second round of invocations. This time the invocations were sung in the manner of a chanting Brahman or priest. As the elements of this invocation are the same as the first invocation, translated above, I will not include them here. After the second round of invocations, *Rājen* made a brief pause and unrolled the picture of the dead Santal women that he had held hidden in his hand. He started his singing again, now with a greater intensity. He held the picture in front of his closed eyes for some time, and then, he slowly stretched out his arms towards the brass bowl on the ground, and opened his eyes. Thus the picture of the dead Santal women, now with eyes, was visible to the entire Santal audience. *Rājen* kept the picture in full view for some time. For a little while everyone was quiet. Then *Rājen* rounded of this part of the session with a few more invocations. Below I will include a free translation of the invocation that *Rājen* sung as he displayed the picture of the dead woman.

> *Agradān bhūmidān*. Come and take your residence in the heaven of Vishnu [*baikuṇṭabās*]. Come the gifts for your atonement. Come the gift of your eyes. Be relieved, the glowing embers will vanish. Come on sister at the time of birth, you have taken your birth. Your eyes have remained closed in a world of darkness. You cry, as the time of your departure from this world has come. The two facial covers will unfold, in the dark world today. You have gone. Fly and become an ancestral spirit [*hapṛamko boṅga*]. *Jai* [victory, triumph] to your *agradān bhūmidān*. Come now and reside in heaven.

After the short silence, *Rājen* made a roll of the picture, and placed it next to his scroll. This picture was later given to the brother for an immersion at some other occasion, that I was unable to witness. *Rājen* told me that the immersion would take place near a house of some relatives, on the other side of the village, and that we would go there. However, we never went to that house. The reason for this was probably that *Rājen* performed a second *cokhodān* in the Santal village that day. Due to this performance we had no time to visit the house of the relatives for an immersion. We had to return to Bolpur that afternoon, as we did not intend to spend the night in the Santal village. After the first *cokhodān*, I asked *Rājen* if he could show me the picture of the dead Santal woman, as I had not been able to have a closer look at it from the point were I stood and took photographs of the event. As he showed me the picture I could see that he had filled in the eyes with a dot pen. In fact, he had forgotten his own pen and borrowed mine. I asked him when he did that. *Rājen's* reply is intriguing; "The eyes on the picture appeared by themselves from your pen [!]. In a while you will dip your pen in the water." When I relate what took place at the second *cokhodān*, performed by *Rājen*, it will be clear what he meant with his somewhat enigmatic statement. Except for the drawing of the dead women, the picture also contained an illustration of some vessels and a fowl.

When *Rājen* had rounded up his invocations at the first *cokhodān*, he told the brother of the dead Santal women that the price of the *ghaṭ kirin´* just performed was thirty-one rupees (!)[122]. This statement naturally disconcerted the brother. However, *Rājen* spoke sweet words to him to make him comply. "Isn't this a trifle, a tiny amount to pay for the deliverance of your sister from her sufferings …". They finally agreed about the price of the whole performance. This price also included the picture of the dead. The brother also agreed to supply *Rājen* with a fowl that would be offered to the ancestors. *Rājen* later cooked this fowl, and rice beer was served with it. When the brother politely offered *Rājen* boiled rice along with this feast, he

[122] At another later occasion I asked *Rājen* why he said that the price of the *ghaṭ kirin´* was thirty-one rupees. He simply replied that this was his price for the service rendered.

declined the offer. *Rājen* explained to me later on; "How can I accept any food from their hands? I am their priest. I do not eat any food cooked by them. But we [the *Jādopaṭiās*] drink the water and the rice-beer that they offer us."[123]. While we waited for the brother to arrange for a fowl for the sacrifice, *Rājen* and I paid a visit to a Santal in a household nearby. We were offered a seat at the veranda. A middle-aged Santal appeared and greeted us. *Rājen* received tobacco from this man who seemed to be on very familiar terms with him. I immediately got the feeling that he was an informer. I asked this Santal if he ever visited Bolpur? He told me that he went there every now and then, as he had relatives who lived in that area. The man also confirmed that he had known *Rājen* for a long time. A fowl had finally been caught, and we returned to the courtyard of the house where the *cokhodān* had just been performed. *Rājen* quickly assumed his position as the leader of the event once more. He asked for an axe [*ṭaṅga*] with which he could club the fowl to death. The axe was brought. *Rājen* held the fowl with both his hands, adopting a kneeling position, customary at the time of a sacrifice. Kneeling thus, he held the head of the fowl over the area smeared with cow dung. As he did this he bowed his head down over the head of the fowl, and whispered some invocations that were impossible to hear from where I was situated. It all sounded more like a hiss than a prayer. After this short invocation *Rājen* held the fowl down on the ground with his left hand, and gave it a blow on the head with the but of the axe with his right. This strike killed the bird instantaneously. *Rājen* held the dead fowl over the circle of cow dung, and allowed some drops of blood to fall on this space (plate 9,10). Finally he took the brass bowl with the water, utilised at the *cokhodān* earlier on, and poured some water on the place smeared with cow dung. With this gesture *Rājen* concluded this part of his performance, and started to prepare the fowl to be cooked. He did this task himself, but the younger brother of the dead Santal women helped him with the preparation of the seasoning, consisting of onions, garlic, ginger and spices that where ground together into a paste. The younger brother also prepared the rice beer. As he assisted the *Jādopaṭiā* with this work he looked troubled. Observing this, I inferred that he would rather have liked to be without all these expenses if he could have avoided them. When *Rājen* had completed the cooking he washed his hands thoroughly, squatting in the empty courtyard. Now he was alone. At this moment he seized the brass bowl, made three small gestures towards his head with it, and emptied the remaining water on the area smeared with cow dung. Having done so, he performed a salutation with his right hand towards his brow. After these gestures of reverence had been completed, he put the money and the brass bowl in his shoulder bag. These items, where part of his

[123] This argument, posed by *Rājen*, fits nicely into his 'Brahmanical discourse'. However, Singh states that; "Water and boiled food are traditionally accepted from the Santal, Brahman, Kayastha and other communities, but not from Dom, Bauri and Mochi (Singh 1998:1324). Many Santals I spoke to gave me a view like Singh's.

payment.[124] Somewhat later when the stew was ready, it was distributed in small shares for everyone, served on leaf-plates. Then the rice beer was brought. At this moment the younger brother had thawed considerably. He smiled and insisted that I should have my share of rice beer as well. *Rājen* and I did as the others, poured some of the beer on the ground in the name of *Maran Buru* and the ancestors, before we drank of it. By now the day was well on its way and it was hot outside. Thus, we sat inside a shed and ate of the sacrificial feast. Shares of the feast were taken to some other houses as well. In the shed we were five adults and a child. Except for the younger brother, *Rājen* and me, another Santal friend of *Rājen,* and a young Santal man had joined us. The son of this young Santal had died recently at an age of approximately four years. The news of this death had reached *Rājen* via his Santal friend (another informer), who had brought the young father along to have some food with us. The purpose of this hospitality was obviously to get an opportunity to influence him to have *Rājen* perform *cokhodān* in the name of the dead boy. At first the young Santal father was unhappy about the whole idea, and sat sulkily without touching his food. As *Rājen* and his companion gradually persuaded him, he conceded, became more animated, and ate his food. They told him that he ought to do what was his duty, without worrying about the expenses involved. It would surely give him and his family peace of mind. The young Santal father had never performed *cokhodān* before. Therefore *Rājen* and his friend told him a few things about the way *cokhodān* should be performed. Later on when *cokhodān* was executed at the young father's house, *Rājen* had plenty of scope to improvise and elaborate the whole event, due to the young father's inexperience.

6.1 Cokhodān "in situ" elaborated

In the afternoon things had been arranged for another performance of *cokhodān* outside the house of the young Santal father. A stool had been brought for *Rājen*. A brass bowl with *dhub* grass and water had been placed on a circular space of cow dung on the ground. This time the audience consisted of a number of children and a few men. One of these men was the Santal who helped *Rājen* to persuade the young father to perform the mortuary work. *Rājen* took his seat, unrolled his scroll, and begun to recite a narrative about the Santal tradition, (a 'mini *Karam binti*'[125]), Santal gods,

[124] When *Rājen* left this household he was also given the 'farewell rice', which consisted of about a kilogram of rice. This rice was measured in the traditional brass measure, and poured into *Rājen's* handbag.

[125] Archer describes how a *Mora Karam* 'a Karam for the dead' is recited in connection with the last funerary rites. This narrative includes the story of the Santals from their place of origin in *Hihiri Pipiri* down to the founding of the village. The 'Karam guru' discourses on *Madho Singh* and relates the part played by *Maran Buru* in the wanderings of the Santals

and customs (plate 3). In the beginning of this narrative he included a line about the Santal boy and his closed eyes in the dark world. This was an elaboration that was absent in the rendering of the very same scroll at the other Santal household, earlier that day. When the recitation was completed *Rājen* requested the parents of the dead boy to sit down near the brass bowl. With the parents squatting thus, *Rājen* improvised a small introduction to what followed. He told the parents that the 'father' (*bābā*), the sun (*Sin´ boṅga*, 'the creator') is the one who gives life, as well as the one that restrains it. At this time, he said, to rinse of the sin (*pāp*), you should do your duty, as prescribed in the scriptures of the tradition, according to the custom, and perform *cokhodān*. Then *Rājen* asked for a piece of clothing that had belonged to the boy. The father brought one of the boy's shirts from their house. This one, *Rājen* placed in his lap, as a shelter around the picture of the dead boy, hidden inside his hands. Sitting thus, *Rājen* told the parents to do *ghaṭ kirin´*, in the name of the boy. The Santal informer instructed the father of the boy to drop the coin in the brass bowl and remain sitting. Below I will include some of the invocations that *Rājen* uttered at this moment.

> Come on, your gift for atonement, your gift of earth, your gift of a bowl, your gift of cloths, your gift of a pen [!][126]. Come on, your gift of money, … your gift of the eye. … Come and take your residence in the heaven of Vishnu. Come on, the gift of the eyes, release you from your shackles. Be relieved, the glowing embers will vanish, as the last rites are performed. … Come on boy, we are offering. Come on and fly. [At this point the mother of the boy dropped a coin in the vessel] … Come on, your release [*khalas*] from [behind] the door of *Yama* [the king of hell]. … [We] are offering you water from this bowl. … [Instructed by *Rājen*, the father dropped another coin in the vessel, held on to the bowl with both hands, and poured water on the cow dung besmeared ground. *Rājen* continued his invocations with a loud voice] Come quickly, come the giver of your life … put an end to your difficulties … give you a safe crossing …

A number of rounds with invocations and pouring of water were continuously performed, in the manner described above (plate 4). As these procedures came to a halt. *Rājen* gave some more instructions. He told the parents that the price of *ghaṭ kirin´* was thirty-one rupees, and that it was

(compare chapter 2 of my thesis). "After that he branches of and describes the life of the dead man, how he fell ill and at last died." (Archer 1974:338).

[126] This is an interesting elaboration, addressed to the anthropologist, the owner of the pen that the *Jādopaṭiā* was using at the time.

their duty to present a fowl to be offered. However, when he asked them if they agreed to this, the father only agreed to pay the money, but refused to take on the expense of the fowl. *Rājen* responded with calm temperance, and told them that everything was in order without this offering being done. He continued saying that the child had suffered. At this point he took out the picture of the dead boy, and held it in front of his closed eyes, moving his head slightly back and forth (plate 5). At the same time he sung the following invocation.

> Your two eyes have remained closed in a world of darkness. Oh giver of life, the two eyes remain closed. Mother and father, may your boy be eternal [*sanātan*], the two eyes are closed today in this world.

As *Rājen* finished this invocation he lowered the picture towards the brass bowl, standing on the ground, but he did not display if for all to see. Holding it thus, he told the parents that there were still some hindrances to be removed. Then he asked the parents; "Has he [the son] eaten the boiled rice? … You have kept some boiled rice, haven't you?" They answered that he had not eaten the rice[127]. After a short pause, *Rājen* told them that their imprisoned orphan would be freed[128]. Having said so, he instructed the father to pour some more water from the brass bowl. As the father did so, *Rājen* held the pen in the stream of water. Then *Rājen* told the father to hold the pen. The father held the pen close to the picture of the dead boy, concealed behind *Rājen's* hands (plate 7). Simultaneously *Rājen* invoked; "Come on and release [him] and take of the chains. [We are] offering … Come on, [we] perform the last rites. Take your abode in heaven … ". After these gestures, *Rājen* offered the parents the picture of the dead, for an immersion in the canal nearby. As they wanted this, *Rājen* asked for a clean piece of cloth, oil and turmeric. These items where brought by the father. The oil and the turmeric were mixed together in a small steel bowl. *Rājen* soaked the picture of the dead boy with the oil and turmeric. He rolled it between his two hands. Finally, he wrapped the clean cloth around the picture, and tied it at the two ends. Having completed this task, *Rājen* told the father to hold on to this little parcel together with him. Thus, the two of them squatted,

[127] Among the Santals it is customary to keep some food (boiled rice etc), neatly served on a plate, for the deceased. This plate of food is placed on a space, smeared with cow dung, in the middle of the inner room (*bhitar*). This is done for about a five to seven days (sometimes longer), starting from the day of the cremation. Every morning the relatives will check if the dead one has eaten anything. If the deceased has not touched the food, it is a sure sign that he/she is held back by a witch or by king *Yama* himself. Thus the Santal waits for the *Jādopaṭiā* to come and do his work, and release the dead one from the clutches of hell.

[128] Notice that the invocation uttered whilst the picture was revealed to the audience, did not contain any verbal hints of the eyes opening, or a release. This enables a further elaboration, that demands further ritual gestures.

opposing each other, holding on to the parcel with both hands, in an act of reciprocal greeting (plate 8). Nothing was said as this was done. The father completed the immersion of the picture at some later occasion. I asked the Santals present at this time about this practice. They responded that this is known as *jaṅ baha* (the flower and the bone), and that it is an old custom of the Santals to immerse them into the river Damodar. Before we left the village I gave these Santal men some money for a session of rice beer in the name of the dead boy. *Rājen* received the brass bowl, the money (ca thirty rupees), and about a kilogram of rice. This final transaction terminated the whole event, and we took our leave.

6.2 Summing up

The material presented above gives us some examples of how the ritual phenomenon *cokhodān* appears as an adhesive focal ground for a variety of culturally imbibed concepts that give it meaning for the Santals. Thus, *cokhodān*, performed and orchestrated by the *Jādopaṭiās*, can create a resonance in the Santals, as well as catalyse a number of responsive actions from them. In some of the earlier chapters I have described a number of cultural contexts that supply the doings and the reasoning of the *Jādopaṭiās* with ample meaning. In chapter four I have also included the different voices of my informants, to illuminate the practice of *cokhodān* further by their verbal conceptualisation. In the final part of my thesis I will return to some of the questions asked in the introduction, and discuss the validity of the various views and interpretations of the phenomenon *cokhodān*.

7 TAKING STOCK

7.1 Why do the Santals comply?

Time has come to take stock and ponder over the various perspectives of the *Jādopaṭiās* and *cokhodān* presented in the text above. In order to do so we shall return to one of the major questions posed in the initial part of my dissertation. Why do the Santals comply with the demands of the *Jādopaṭiās* at the time of the performance of the mortuary ritual event known as *cokhodān*?

To cast some further light on this issue I would like to expose some comparable data from an anthropological study of funeral priests operating in a Hindu context at Gaya on the Ganges. In one of the chapters in the ethnography 'The Sacred Complex In Hindu Gaya' (Vidyarthi 1961) the author analyses the motives given by his informants for having the last rites performed by the rapacious funeral priest at Gaya. Vidyarthi comments that in most cases the sacrificers had several objectives. The most common purpose given for the observance was to heed religious and social duties, such as that of the son towards his father, and the duties towards the ancestors. One of the major motivating forces for observance was thus a feeling of filial piety, sentiments of love and attachment, and above all, the consciousness of the social and religious duty to one's father and progenitors (ibid.:43). The second set of objectives presented by Vidyarthi can be understood as motivated by fear. The belief in spirits and the dread for the potentially malignant ghosts of the dead, motivated sacrificers to undertake the rituals, and to be generous towards the funeral priests. Finally, related to the other motives above, Vidyarthi states that the sacrificers believe that the welfare and the prosperity of the family partly depend upon the blessing of the manes. Thus the sacrifice to the manes is of great importance (ibid.:43-45). Complex ideas and rituals from diverse levels of various traditions are invoked and resonated in the ritual complex at Gaya. The motivations involved in the context described above are strikingly reminiscent of the kind of motivations that may influence the Santals to comply with the *Jādopaṭiā's* demands at the time of *cokhodān*. Furthermore, in the same chapter in the book of Vidyarthi, referred to above, he describes a type of possession that was widespread in the villages of Bihar.

> On the eleventh day of the death ritual, a Kantaha (sometimes known as a lower form of Brahman), who is invited to represent the dead, is said to be possessed by the spirit of the dead. The statements that he makes are believed to be coming from the dead. (ibid.:47)

The practice by the funeral priests occurring in a Hindu context, described by Vidyarthi in the citation above is similar to some of the mediumistic actions performed by the *Jādopaṭiās* at the time of *cokhodān*[129].

In is not difficult to see how the funeral priests, as well as the *Jādopaṭiās*, have created a favourable vantage point from which they have various ways of orchestrating their ritual play in their own favour. As my Santal friend Sona told me; "They [the *Jādopaṭiās*] have entered into the very psychology [sic] of the Santal mind". It is thus partly through their empathetic skill and their extensive knowledge of the Santal world view that the *Jādopaṭiās* are able to make the Santals comply. However, although it is obvious that the Santals are manipulated by the *Jādopaṭiās*, it is also true that the Santals comply of their own accord[130].

Having reached this far in our analyses we will have a second look at J. B. Faivre's question in the introduction of this thesis, concerning the utilisation of readily accessible imagery by the *Jādopaṭiās* at the time of *cokhodān*.

> This would allow one to judge if this is only a confusion caused by the jadupatuas to achieve their aims, that is to impose themselves even more on the Santals, or if the Santal beliefs really have remained unknown to the chitrakars, only [being utilised] as easily exploitable material. Hence, to try to find out if this game of associations, which they have invented, is without consequence for them. (ibid.:120)

I think it is fair to say that the *Jādopaṭiās* utilise 'cultural' material from the Santal context to impose themselves on the Santals. However, that is not all there is to it. I shall present a concrete example to illuminate clearly how the *Jādopaṭiās* have designed a clever **container** for their own profit out of a Santal custom. The Santal term for the practice I shall describe is *ghāṭ kirin´*. The reader will remember the context where this custom belongs in the Santal context from my earlier description of the ritual practice of the Santals (confer chapter 3.). However, I will recapitulate the essence of the custom once more and illuminate it further here. *Ghāṭ kirin´* can loosely be translated to mean; 'the buying of the right to ascend at the landing-place', from which to fetch water, or to buy the access to the water to perform ritual act of various kinds. As I have described earlier on in my thesis, this custom occurs at major life-cycle rites, such as birth, marriage, or funerals. *Ghāṭ*

[129] It is important to note that among the Santals or the Soras this type of possession is a common occurrence (Elwin 1955, Carrin-Bouez 1986, Vitebsky 1993). In contrast in the Hindu context described by Vidyarthi, where it is less known, it nevertheless do occur (Vidyarthi 1961:47). Confer my chapter 'Funeral priests'.

[130] I have also heard of rare instances of non-compliance. In these cases young Santal men might make fun of a visiting *Jādopaṭiā*, or scare him away with the threat of a thrashing.

kirin´ is performed by the newly married bride as she fetches water for the first time, in her husband's village. The custom is also applied when the relatives of the deceased bring the bones of the dead to the river for an immersion. When the Santals went to the river Damodar they would buy the permission to pass from the *ghāṭdar*, the toll-keeper. The Santals used to bring cowry shells, money or clothes to remunerate the toll-keeper (Bodding 1934:523-4). Several Santals told me how it is still customary that *ghāṭ kirin´* is performed at the cremation-ground, the same day as the cremation. A small hole is dug into the ground and filled with water. At this spot all the relatives of the dead undertake *ghāṭ kirin´*. Every member of the family drops a small coin into the hole filled with water. Later on the money is collected and used for some communal purpose. *Cunko Besra* told me that it is common that the money gained through *ghāṭ kirin´* is spent on tobacco for the old people in the village.

As we have already seen in the previous chapter, the *Jādopaṭiā* has created his own version of *ghāṭ kirin´* from the cultural content of the contexts related above. It is not farfetched that the *Jādopaṭiā* can take on the role as the toll-keeper for the river crossing to the world of the ancestors. Thus he expects his due payment. However, he does not dig a hole in the ground, but asks for a brass vessel filled with water, in which the relatives pay the toll. When the ritual is over the *Jādopaṭiā* take the money, as well as the vessel, his rightfully earned reward for the service rendered. As I have described elsewhere, a brass vessel was one of the items that used to be given to the dead one at the time of cremation. Afterwards it was sold at half price, the money received being spent on beer or food for the workers who assisted at the time of the cremation (Bodding 1934:523). Thus the Santals may not feel that it is completely out of place to present the *Jādopaṭiā* with a brass plate at the time when he performs *ghāṭ kirin´*.

In the previous chapter we saw how *Rājen Citrakar* elaborated *ghāṭ kirin´* further, and added new potential meaning to the practice. I have described how *Rājen* treated the picture of the dead Santal boy as if it was the *jaṅ baha*, the bones of the dead. As we have seen, this is a common practice performed by the *Jādopaṭiās*. The picture was thus prepared accordingly for the immersion by *Rājen*, and given to the Santal father. It is not a surprising elaboration after 'the toll has been paid' to *Rājen*, who acts as a kind of the toll-keeper, and is paid via the *ghāṭ kirin´*. More astonishing though, is the fact that *Rājen* has put his own exorbitant fixed price tag on the *ghāṭ kirin´*. As we have seen earlier in my text, *Rājen* is not the only *Jādopaṭiā* who has put a fixed price on *ghāṭ kirin´*. However, *Budhesvar's* price of one rupee is rather modest compared to *Rājen's* thirty-one rupees. When it comes to the observance of Santal custom *ghāṭ kirin´* we see that the professional *Jādopaṭiā's* general goal is to line their own pocket, whereas the Santal observance of this custom cater for the welfare of their community.

Having scrutinised an instance of the *Jādopaṭiā's* ingenuity, we can see that it is obvious enough that they utilise the Santal custom, belief, and

practice as easily exploitable material for their own benefit. Thus, in reply to Faivre's query above, I think it fair to say that the *Jādopaṭiās* are playing on the ritual material as pragmatic professionals for their own benefit. That is, they enter into a world of meaning that is not theirs. The *Jādopaṭiās* mimic many elements of Santal cultural. As a consequence of being somewhat marginal in relation to the Santals, they have a detached attitude to the abundance of material available for them to play with in the mortuary ritual context. Visualising the *Jādopaṭiās* thus we come closer to a more cynical understanding of them as manipulating undertakers, gleefully grasping every opportunity to exploit their prey as much as they can. But does this give us a fair picture of how the *Jādopaṭiās* are perceived by the Santals? To get a better understanding of the relationship between the *Jādopaṭiās* and the Santals we have to pursue our discussion further. Is this relationship a parasitic one, rather than one of symbiosis? On the one hand we have the rosy discourses delivered by the *Jādopaṭiās*, which give favourable presentation of the Santal attitude towards *Jādopaṭiās*. On the other hand, as we have seen from the Santal's descriptions of the *Jādopaṭiās*, their attitudes towards the *Jādopaṭiās* vary a great deal. The descriptions of the relationship between ādivāsīs and *Jādopaṭiās* or paṭkars that I have presented in this thesis are far from unanimous. However, it seems that many of the Santals I have met reluctantly accept the *Jādopaṭiās*.

To summarise so far; I like to underline that the material I have presented in this thesis exposes several different incentives that operate together as potential forces utilised by the *Jādopaṭiās* to influence the Santal to comply with their demands. Following Bloch and Parry (1982:6) in their approach to mortuary rituals, I see it fit to conceive the various incentives, operating at the time of *cokhodān* through a sociological analysis as well as a symbolical one. In other words; it is possible to perceive the *Jādopaṭiā* as a pragmatic professional operating within a world of potentially meaningful symbolic material, where practical considerations must be understood in relation to potential cultural imperatives.

7.2 The Jādopaṭiā as a magician

What is it that the *Jādopaṭiā* does that makes him a magician? At this point I would like to take a closer look at some of the reasons that have been given by various authors to qualify the *Jādopaṭiā* as a magician. To be able to scrutinise these reasons, we have to retrace our steps and take a closer look at the act of 'the gift of the eye' that seems to be at the heart of it all. It is true that Campbell wrote, "deal in enchantment" about the *Jādopaṭiās* in a general sense, as early as 1899, when the first edition of his Santali-English dictionary was published (Campbell 1899:249). However, in that instance Campbell did not refer to the act of 'the gift of the eye' explicitly. As far as

I know the act of 'the gift of the eye', was first described in print by Gurusaday Dutt in 1932. "He then puts the finishing touch to the picture by performing the act of *chakshudān*" (Dutt 1990:80). By actually writing *jādu* (magic) in front of *paṭuā* (scroll painter) in his text, and by stating that it was perhaps from this semi-magical practice that these painters had got their name, Dutt laid the foundation for a trend that has been perpetuated by many authors and ethnographers that followed in his trail (ibid.:80). These authors and ethnographers have made the point about the magic more or less explicit. However, all of them have followed the practice of Dutt in writing '*Jadu-Patua*' in one or another form. S. K. Ray wrote '*Jādu-Patuās*' in his presentation of these scroll painters in "The Tribes And Castes Of West Bengal". In this text Ray describes how the *Jādopaṭiā* fabricates a story about an evil spirit that causes death in the Santal house. Ray's formulation is somewhat cryptic; "In this story we find the exploitation of a primitive belief by magic" (Ray 1953:304). Ray does not attribute the magic properties of the *Jādopaṭiā* solely to the act of 'the gift of the eye'. Instead, Ray refers to the mortuary rites in their entire form as 'semi-magical' (Ray 1961:54). It is through a famous work 'Popular Indian Painting …' by Mildred Archer (1977), who followed Dutt's example with some variation, that the trend of attributing the magic qualifications of the *Jādopaṭiā* to the act of 'the gift of the eye' became well established. "It was this magical act of bestowing sight which had led the Santals to call the painters jadu-patuas" (ibid.:16). This formulation by M. Archer is bolder and more uncompromising than the one cited by Dutt above. Gone is the prefix 'semi-' added to magical, and there are no reservations included like the 'perhaps' in the case of Dutt. Many authors prefer to connect the magical qualities of the *Jādopaṭiās* with the act of 'the gift of the eye', thus placing this act and the picture of the dead in a pivotal position in the *Jādopaṭiā's* set-up. "This painted eye cannot fail to impress, if one thinks of the age of that gesture and it's magical value." (Faivre 1980:120). According to my own field-data, the term *cokhodān*, originally the term for the act of 'the gift of the eye', now also functions as the 'emic 'label for the entire ritual event performed by the *Jādopaṭiās*. In her article about *Jādopaṭiās*, Rosita de Selva follows Faivre and strives to establish the magical qualities of the *Jādopaṭiā* to the his act of placing the pupil in the eye.

> Placing the pupil in the eye of the representation has no special name and is generally not emphasised. However, if it is referred to, the *paṭuā* is said to do some *jādo* [used as having the same meaning as the Bengali word *jādu*; magic, in de Selvas article], a word that refers to both the whole procedure and the person. (de Selva 1994:50)

The logic involved in the citation above hinges on someone who **refers** to the act of the placing of the pupil on the representation. Who is this, or those persons? De Selva does not make this explicit in her article. However, her description of the entire practice (i.e. *cokhodān*) performed by the *Jādopaṭiā* is related to her and us via the mouth of the so called '*paṭuā* from the plains'.

This narrator is not a *Jādopaṭiā*, but a Bengali scroll painter who belongs to a professional group that shows scrolls. This group of scroll painters does not perform *cokhodān*[131]. The narrative by this *paṭuā*, the main basis for de Selvas analysis of the *Jādopaṭiā's* actions at the time of *cokhodān*, is treated as 'un véritable texte' by de Selva (ibid.:67). The narrative is originally presented and recorded in Bengali, and parts of it occurs transcribed and translated in de Selvas article (se appendix I). When the Bengali narrator relates how the *Jādopaṭiā* is showing a little 'false, imaginary' (coll. corruption; *michāmichi* "-adv. … untrue, false; imaginary" (Samsad 1985:756-7)), de Selva mistakenly interprets these words as unintelligible onomatopoetic utterances that she recognises as magic, and which she claims is commonly called '*tuk-tak*'[132] by Bengalis (ibid:79). The association of unintelligible onomatopoetic utterances with magic stems from the idea that such incantations or spells, consisting of 'meaningless' rigmarole or a conglomerate of ill-assorted hotchpotch accompany magical acts. Magical utterances are supposed to differ from ordinary speech by their "coefficient of weirdness". This latter characteristic was coined by Malinowski in his work "The Language Of Magic And Gardening" (Malinowski 1935, vol. II:218). However, in this illuminating work Malinowski also explain how 'the magical word' is intelligible, understood in its own context (ibid.).

Initially I do agree with de Selva when she underlines that the placing of the pupil in the eye of the representation generally is not emphasised. However, when it comes to the name applied to this act my data differ from hers. All my *Jādopaṭiā* informants called this act *cokhodān*, and the Santals also recognised this designation. Further, I was rather astonished when I finally managed to witness the *Jādopaṭiā* performance of *cokhodān* in the field. Due to my preconditioning through the reading of the ethnographic descriptions of *cokhodān* cited above, I had expected to find unintelligible onomatopoetic incantations where I found meaningful poetic invocations. I also witnessed how the *Jādopaṭiās* placed the pupil in the eye of the representation of the dead with a pen as they chanted their invocations. While they actually performed this act of 'the gift of the eye', in a literal sense, no attention was drawn to this act (see plate 11). However, somewhat later, when they displayed the picture to the Santals present, everyone could see that the eye had been 'given' so to speak.

[131] I am aware of the fact that it is possible that there are exceptions to this general rule. These two groups of scroll painters conceive of each other as different groups. They do not intermarry (confer my introduction).

[132] *Tuk-tāk* – "n. occult methods and incantations of enchantment." (Samsad 1985:403).

The reason why I take the trouble to scrutinise these details is that I would like to underline that we are constantly in danger of dictating the interpretations of our data when we write our ethnographies (often unconsciously). We are also in danger of reifying our notions and conceptions, as we perceive data in the field. The process of collecting data is naturally depending on the cognitive process of re-cognising, intimately tied up with meaning construction, and the cognitive process of remembering (Shore 1996).

At this point I would like to stop for a little while and consider a few preconceived conceptions that anthropologists may have about the term magic, and look at these ideas in relation to the act of 'the gift of the eye'. However, first a few caustic words of caution from a senior member of the guild.

> As for magic, which readers of Frazer's *The Golden Bough* might suppose to lie at the very centre of the anthropologist's interests, I can only say that, after almost a lifetime's career as a professional anthropologist, I have almost reached the conclusion that the word has no meaning whatever. (Leach 1982:133)

My ambition is not to enter into the vast quagmire of discussions about the approaches or theories concerning magic. However, I will attempt to make a small detour and venture into this area of anthropological theories to be able to illuminate my epistemological point above, and in order to bring my trail of thought further. I will also attempt to expose some further ground that may clarify why some of the authors and ethnologists cited above have called the *Jādopaṭiā* a magician.

7.3 'The gift of the eye' as an act of magic

> A mistaken association of similar ideas produces homoeopathic or imitative magic: a mistaken association of contiguous ideas produces contagious magic. The principles of association are excellent in themselves, and indeed absolutely essential to the working of the human mind. Legitimately applied they yield science; illegitimately applied they yield magic, the bastard sister of science. (Frazer 1929, vol I:49-50)

These famous controversial lines by Frazer contain his seminal ideas about human thought, in relation to magic, as well as the argument that he uses in his evolutionist scheme, were primitive false magic is the forerunner to civilised true science. Edmund Leach remarks that;

> In so far as Frazer was wrong he was wrong in an interesting way. In the first place he assumed that the magician's mistake is to confuse expressive acts with technical acts, whereas the general consensus of most recent anthropologists is that what a magician usually does is to interpret an index as a signal, after the fashion of Pavlov's dog … (Leach 1995:29, First published in 1976)

Further, Leach suggests that; "Frazer's distinction between homoeopathic and contagious magic is essentially the same as that between metaphoric and metonymic association. Frazer's bastard scientist-magician plays around with iconic symbols (which depend on metaphor) and signs (which depend on metonymy) (ibid.:29-30) (confer Jakobsen and Halle 1956:80-1). Leach suggests that these principles of association are characteristic of all modes of human communication. (ibid.:29). In a later publication Leach makes the following remarks that clarify his argument further.

> Few contemporary social anthropologists would confidently assert that they can distinguish a magical from a non-magical act. Virtually all kinds of purposive actions contain elements which are not strictly 'necessary' from a mechanistic point of view but which have 'symbolic' value for the actor. The performances which are described as 'magic' in ethnographic literature are ones in which this symbolic component is very pronounced but they do not form a distinct class of actions. (Leach 1982:235)

So far I have attempted to place the idea of magic in a theoretical context well known to contemporary anthropologists. At this point I shall look at the act of 'the gift of the eye' through some of these theoretical ideas. Then, what does the act of 'the gift of the eye' represent? As we have seen this act can represent 'the gift of life'. A blind 'soul' is obstructed on its journey to the land of the ancestors. The dead Santal is obstructed in his attainment of the status of an ancestor. The act of 'the gift of the eye' then, is a potential metaphor of a regenerating process that is part of the continuous alternation between the complementary poles of life and death (confer chapter 3.). In this context the eye serves as a metonym for the entire body, and the bestowing of the faculty of eyesight serves as a metaphor for the bestowing

of life to an entire being. Further, as I have explained earlier on in my text, the pictorial representation of the dead serves as a 'life index' for the dead person in the same way as the bones of the dead do. These bones can be conceived as a metonym for the deceased Santal. If we continue this exegetic exercise we may grind the act of 'the gift of the eye' through another analytical gristmill familiar to social anthropologists. It is possible to conceive the act of 'the gift of the eye' as a "performative act" as conceived by Tambiah (1968). This analytical approach develops Austin's concepts of "performative" and "illocutionary" acts, where the uttering of a sentence or a word cannot merely be understood as saying something, but is a part of an action. (Tambiah 1973:220). As I have described earlier in my text the act of 'the gift of the eye' is accompanied by a number of invocations uttered by the *Jādopaṭiā*. Among them is "come your gift of the eye", along with many other statements of this kind that could be understood to effectuate an "imperative transfer" by being uttered and performed at the time of the ritual (ibid.:219). Tambiah underlines that if we conceive "magical" acts thus; "the semantics of a magical rite are not necessarily to be judged in terms of such 'true/false' criteria of science but on different standards and objectives." (ibid.:219). When *Rājen Citrakar* was about to expose the picture of the dead to the Santal audience he first held it in front of his own closed eyes. A little later, as he chanted his invocations, he lowered the picture towards the brass vessel on the ground, opening his own eyes at the same time. These actions can be understood as simultaneous performative procedures that unite action, word and deed. We could continue our exegesis of the acts performed by the *Jādopaṭiā* further by applying other terms like *shamanism*, and theories connected with this term. However, we may ask ourselves how far we should go with the application of terms like these on events recorded in the field?

In an article called "The Look Of Magic" Gilbert Lewis (1986) starts by scrutinising Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and his view of magic. As far as magic is concerned, Lewis calls for caution when it comes to the imputation of any thinking that may lay behind a phenomenon observed in the field. "Whether the anthropologist will identify some people's actions and beliefs as magical may depend critically on how they are presented (or misrepresented) to him. Are they isolated or put in context?" (Lewis 1986:418). Lewis also underlines that anthropologists have an advantage over historians in being able to ask people to explain their actions and discuss them with them (ibid.:415). In his article Lewis also discusses anthropologists disagreement over whether it is proper to interpret some forms of beliefs and rituals in terms of literal belief or symbolic meaning. Lewis suggests that the intentions and interpretations of the actors themselves often contain a mixture of the two (ibid.:415,431). Lewis ends his article on the following note.

> Fieldwork brings us the opportunity to observe people and to ask them questions. For discussions of meaning, aims and reasons, we rely on the actor. We may speculate, *faute de mieux,* on the evidence we have, as Frazer did, but our license to do so is limited. (ibid.:432)

7.4 The primitive tribal and the magic scroll painter

> As part of an attempt to raise themselves in the social scale, a number of jadupatuas had recently discarded this name and had taken to calling themselves chitrakar (painter). (Archer 1977:16)

This quote by Mildred Archer describes a phenomenon observed in the field. However, the fact that the *Jādopaṭiās* have discarded their name and adopted the name *citrakar* is related to; - how scroll-painters have been classified in Sanskrit texts, - Hinduisation due to conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, - how they have been classified by collectors and art-historians like the Gurusaday Dutt and the Archers themselves. Dutt's revivalist nationalist project, where 'folk-art' and 'folklore' played central parts also created an impetus for the use of the term *citrakar*[133]. As I have mentioned in the introduction, the artisan denomination *citrakar* is associated with the nine artisan caste groups (*naba sāyaka*) mentioned in Sanskrit treaties. Thus, the scroll-painters gain status, via what Srinivas coined as 'Sanskritization' (Srinivas 1952:30), by calling themselves *citrakars*. During the 1942 to 1946, W.G. Archer collected most of the scrolls that are mentioned in M. Archer's publication cited above. In this publication the majority of the *Jādopaṭiās* that have been mentioned by their 'proper' name in connection with a scroll or otherwise are included as *citrakars*. This is in accordance with what M. Archers describes in the quote above. However, there are several exceptions such as; "By Girish Jadupatua, village Baramashia …" (ibid.:31). I presume that this *Jādopaṭiā* presented himself as 'Girish Jadopatia', but the Archers have followed the practice of attributing him as a 'magic painter' calling him a **jadu**patua. When the Archers refer to a scroll painted by an 'unknown' *Jādopaṭiā* they write; "By a Jadupatua of village …" (ibid.:30). Below I will include a quote that reveals some ambiguity when it comes to denomination of the scroll painters in question by the Archers.

[133] For a more thorough discussion of this issue in the light of 'postcolonial' criticism confer my essay 'De Bengaliska Bildrullarnas Liv' ('The Life of The Bengali Scrolls' Hadders, 1998).

> NOTE: Interpretations by Laku Chitrakar, brother of the artist. On the general conditions of **chitrakars**, Laku stated that he paid five rupees a year as a rent for a piece of land and earned a pound or two of rice a day from his work as a jadupatua. (ibid.:59, Emphasis added)

The example above is an interesting deviation from the general trend of the Archers of calling the *Jādopaṭiās* jadupatuas. The issue of the designation of scroll-painters as either 'chitrakars' or 'jadupatuas' is a complicated matter. Nevertheless, when it comes to this issue I would like to make a few comments. When Ray writes about the scroll painters in "The Tribes And Castes Of West Bengal" he makes a point of distinguishing the 'patuās' or the 'chitrakars' from the 'Jādu-Patuās' (Ray 1953:307). Now, the reader might respond that this ought to be a proper distinction, as it mirrors the views of the *Jādopaṭiās* themselves, as I have presented them in my introduction above. I agree with this objection. However, what I would like to expose is the reasons given by Ray for his distinction between the two groups of scroll painters. Ray presents the 'recognised' 'Chitrakars or Patuās' of West Bengal in opposition to the 'Jādu-Patuās' (ibid.:307). Thus, Ray makes a distinction between the 'recognised' scroll-painters of the nine caste groups (i.e. 'chitrakars or patuās') intimately attached to the so-called Bengali population, versus the tribal group of artisan (i.e. the *Jādopaṭiās*) living among the tribes; "… the Santals, the Bhumijs and other backward classes …" (ibid.:302). Further, the *Jādopaṭiās* are typically associated with primitive techniques of making art, the primitive tribals and their belief in magic. On the other hand the so-called 'recognised' 'chitrakars or patuās' are associated with advanced techniques of making art, the 'advanced social' Bengali population and 'proper' Hinduism (ibid.:302-9). It is noteworthy that Ray's somewhat 'evolutionistic' discourse was printed and published while the *Jādopaṭiās* out in the field where busy attributing themselves as *citrakars* in accordance with the kind of discourse presented by Ray.

Irrespective of the reasons given above for the distinction made between the paṭuās and the *Jādopaṭiās* we may ask ourselves if there are any conclusive reasons for the close association made between the *Jādopaṭiās* and the Santals (or the *paṭkars* with the *kheroals*). Many of the Santals I talked to claimed that the *Jādopaṭiās* had been with them from 'the beginning of time'. The myths delivered by the *Jādopaṭiās* of how the first *Jādopaṭiā* got his role as a painter-priest among the Santals also places the beginning of this relationship in primordial time. To be enable a better understanding of why the Santals accept the *Jādopaṭiās* and their work we have to take another look at the character of their relationship. Is it a relationship made of exploitation and parasitism, or is one of friendly coexistence and symbiosis?

7.5 'Horo-Mitan' the friend of man

> The discursive reifications of caste [and tribes], intimately tied at their genesis to the politics of colonial rule, later became the foundation of much anthropological and historical writing on Indian society. (Raheja 1996:508)

Advocating the concept '*Horo-Mitan*' (lit. 'Man-Friend') P. P. Mahato, research officer at the Anthropological Survey of India, has made an attempt to give us a concept with which we can describe the friendly and symbiotic relationship that exist among the 'indigenous tribal' (the *kheroals* or *Hor*) and the peasants and 'folk-artisan' groups of Jharkhand[134] (Rycroft 1996:96). The '*Horo-Mitan*' society is visualised as rooted in the pre-colonial condition, and the effort to write or rewrite its history is associated with the project of the so called Subaltern Studies, undertaken and advocated by Ranajit Guha (1982) and others[135]. Thus, one can say that Mahato's project is part of the 'decolonisation' of cultural identities in Jharkhand. Since the 1930s a political strife for autonomy, known as the "Jharkhand Movement", has united several tribes under the common name *ādivāsī*, "aboriginals" (Andersen 1999:41). Without going into any detail about this political movement I like to underline that the non-tribal groups, designated as *mitan* above, have united with the *ādivāsī* in the struggle against the oppression from the 'outsiders'. Who are these enemies conceived as 'outsiders'?

In opposition to the dyad '*Horo-Mitan*' stands the dyad '*Hor-Diku*'. In his Santal Dictionary Bodding writes; "*deko*, n. A Hindu or Bengali (of the better class, not low-caste Hindus as e.g., *Doms, Bauris, Haḍis* …" (Bodding 1934:69). The term *diku* is a term with a derogatory slant. With its pejorative associations, *diku* has been applied by the Santals to groups of oppressors such as moneylenders, rajas, landowners and landlord's servants (Guha 1992:281-2). The strong derogatory associations of this term also has its history in the tribal peasant insurgency (*hul*) against the British Colonialist rule in eastern India in the year 1855, and its aftermath's (ibid.:111,281). However, the term *diku* is also used in a more neutral general sense to designate any non-autochthon such as Hindu, Muslim, European or any foreigner (ibid.281). The dichotomy of *diku*, an oppressor verses *mitan*, an ally or a friend, is not absolute. Relationships between the Santals and other

[134] Jharkhand exists as a political entity recently recognised by the Indian government. Geographically Jharkhand region is situated mainly in the Chotanagpur plateau, with an extension into Santal Parganas (Kelkar and Nathan 1992:21). The name Jharkhand, which means "forested area" is an old Mogul name of this region that covered the bordering area of the present states of West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh (Andersen 1999:42).

[135] In the light of an '*Orientalist*' type of critique, the Subaltern Studies, is an example of how the colonised speak back in a postcolonial situation (confer Inden 1986, 1990). Guha follows a Gramscian line of theory, and utilises the term 'subaltern', coined by Gramsci, as a heading for the strife to write the histories of the 'subalterns', the 'proletariat'.

groups should rather be conceptualised as placed along an axis stretched between relationships of close affinity characterised by symbiosis, and relationships of distance characterised by parasitism. As far as the *Jādopaṭiās* are concerned, in this context, they can be included in the '*Horo-Mitan*' type of society. Statements made by informants, show that this inclusion is supported by their own mutual acceptance of each other. As I have mentioned earlier in my text, Gautam describes the relationship between the *Jādopaṭiās* and the Santals as friendly (Gautam 1977:38). He categorises *Jādopaṭiās* along with other scheduled caste[136] such as *Paharia, Māhli, Mal, Pāl, Tūri, Dom, Tānti* and others. Gautam calls these groups 'Santal cognates' in opposition to high caste Hindus, which he simply designates as Hindus. The latter are characterised by the Santals as *dikus* (ibid.:38-9). This type of conceptualisation, made by Gautam, is comparable with Mahato's '*Horo-Mitan*' versus '*Hor-diku*'. Concerning the Santal attitudes to the 'Santal cognates' Gautam includes this statement by a Santal teacher.

> These groups, except the Paharia, immigrated to the Santal Parganas with us. They were brought in by the Santal for their help. Since then along with us they have also suffered the ups and downs of life. (ibid.:38)

Further, Gautam relates how the friendly relations described above are based on mutual respect and rendering of mutual socio-economic assistance. In opposition to this the relationships with the *dikus*, or the high caste Hindus, the 'outsiders', are based more on economic transactions and not on a sense of common welfare (ibid.:38). Gautam also notes that there are intermediary groups that fall in between these two categories mentioned above. These intermediary groups try to be as neutral as possible (ibid.:38). Kelkar and Nathan (1991) also describe a symbiotic relationship existing between '*ādivāsīs*' and the artisan and service castes. These authors make some interesting comments that apply to the *Jādopaṭiās*.

> For the past few hundred years the adivasis of this area [i.e. Jharkhand] have lived in a symbiotic relationship with various artisan and service castes, referred to as *sadans* [non-tribal castes], who now constitute upto 50 per cent of

[136] Scheduled (listed) castes is an official designation used by the Indian government, parallel to the designation scheduled tribes. In a move of 'protective discrimination' the groups labelled thus are considered 'backward classes' and are given safeguards in various areas for their "social welfare" (Devalle 1980:22). *Rājen Citrakar* told me that he was entitled to such subsidies because of his status as a member of a scheduled caste. However, as far as I know, the *Jādopaṭiās* are not listed as a schedule caste by the Anthropological Survey of India (confer K. S. Singh 1995). Nevertheless, in practice it is quite possible that the *Jādopaṭiās* get such subsidies all the same.

> the population. In many revolts in the area, the *sadans* too participated in large numbers. Though these *sadans* are often of the same castes as are found in the adjoining plains, yet there are little contact between Jharkhandi castes and their corresponding castes outside. Marriage, which is a very good indicator of the existence of social relations, is, even for these castes, confined to Jharkhandi circles. (ibid.:21)

In my introduction I have noted that the *pāṭuas* and the *Jādopaṭiās* do not intermarry, and that they recognise each other as different groups. However, I have also hinted at the possible common heritage that these groups might share in the past. The comments made by Kelkar and Nathan in the quote above concerning the *sadans* point in a similar direction. Rather than conceptualising *pāṭuas* and *Jādopaṭiās* as completely different groups of different origin as Ray and Dutt does, one could visualise the scroll painters as belonging to a larger professional group that has developed different professional niches over time[137].

The concepts, '*Horo-Mitan*' and 'Santal cognates' are definitely helpful when it comes to establishing a more fluid conception of the social realities that we meet in the field. In the introduction I included Andersen's advise of discarding the term 'tribal' in favour of the term 'ethnic'. At this point the reader may think that I want to go even further, and do away with the category 'ethnic' as well, following the fashionable 'postmodernist' tendency among some contemporary scholars. However, I do not in any way propose that we should get rid of the term ethnic in this context. Nevertheless, we ought to be careful about the attributions we make, and the designations that we give to phenomena and groups encountered in the field. One way of securing a solid ground for attributions and designations is to connect them to their respective fields. This can be achieved by adhering to the contextual attributions made by our informants, as well as by placing the various attributions and designations in their proper contexts.

Once when I recorded an interview with *Rām Bilās Citrakar* in his village in Santal Parganas, he requested me to turn on the tape-recorder once more, so that he could include a final message. When I did so *Rām Bilās* explained

[137] Since the 19th century, we have a number of examples of these types of professional niches. For example the so called Kalighat pāṭuas of Calcutta, and the 'ethno-art' producing scroll painters of today The latter group are partly patronised by the Crafts Council of West Bengal and provide scrolls for an elite and the growing tourist market (Hadders 1998).

why the name of this forested area was Jharkhand. Finally he included his passionate support for the cause of the “Jharkhand movement”.

8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

8.1 The Jādopaṭiā seen in the context of 'an Indian sociology'

> Throughout, as will be seen, I am at pains to show that the assumption which underlies virtually every analysis of caste is a matter of doctrine, not of sociology. If one begins with this assumption – that 'Brahmins are the highest caste' – one will never understand how caste system work. (Quigley 1993:20)

In his book 'The Interpretation Of Caste' (1993), Declan Quigley makes an extensive analysis of caste; "… the institution which is often said to be the predominant feature of Hindu social organization." (ibid.:1). According to Quigley, the most influential contribution to the study of caste since the end of the II World War is *Homo Hierarchicus* by Louis Dumont (1966). Irrespective of what view any social scientist may have of Dumont's theories, few will contest the major impact that Dumont's contribution has had on the research about India. The key to an understanding of *Homo Hierarchicus* lies in Dumont's conceptualisation of hierarchy (Tambs-Lyche 1994:363).

> It is generally agreed that the opposition [between pure and impure] is manifested in some macroscopic form in the contrast between the two extreme categories: Brahmans and Untouchables. The Brahmans, being in principle priests, occupy the supreme rank with respect to the whole set of castes. (Dumont 1970:46f)

Underpinning Dumont's theory of hierarchy is a notion of a holistic society. This notion of holism has its roots in an understanding of the Indian society as constituted by an ideology of caste. The rationale for the caste 'system' is an overall encompassing framework of ordering all social relations in terms of the opposition between pure and impure. Quigley states that Dumont's ideas in this respect can be interpreted as a restatement of Durkheim's *conscience collective*. "This is a universal necessity of human society, an *a priori* sociological truth." (Quigley 1993:31). The vision of Indian society espoused by Dumont stands in contrast to his vision of our own society, where the ideology of individualism prevails.

Throughout his intellectual development Dumont has shown a remarkable epistemological consistency (ibid.:21). Dumont claims that; "The structure of the caste system is to be found in the relations between the elements, not in the 'substantialist' nature of the elements themselves (ibid.:32). The empiricism advocated by Bailey and other researchers, who have made parallel attempts to explain caste in India, have been met with strong criticism by Dumont (ibid.:33ff).

With this brief background of 'an Indian sociology' in mind I would like to take a final look at the 'Brahmanistic discourse' put fourth by the *Jādopaṭiās*. How can we understand the fact that the *Jādopaṭiās* utilise the category Brahman when they talk about themselves? To cast some light on this issue I will give a few examples that shows that the homology made between the *Jādopaṭiā* and the Brahman is far from a unique phenomenon. Dubois gives one of the earlier examples of how a group of untouchables have been called Brahmans.

> There is one class amongst the Pariahs [untouchables] which rules all the rest of the caste. These are the *Valluvas*, who are called the *Brahmins of the Pariahs* in mockery. They keep themselves quite distinct from the others, and only intermarry in their own class. They consider themselves as the gurus, or spiritual advisers, of the rest. (Dubois 1996:68, quoted from the fourth impression)

Moffatt's study (1979) of the position of untouchables within the Indian caste system provides us with another example of a homology made between the Brahman and a group of 'scheduled castes' in south India.

> The highest-ranking Untouchable caste in Endavur is the *VaLLuvar PaNDaram* caste, defined both in *uur* and the Colony as the 'Brahmins for the Harijans." … the Valluvar *purohit* conducts the auspicious life-cycle rituals of the Harijans and the Harijan Vannas. These rituals include marriage, where the *purohit* conducts the focal ceremonies, … *karumadi*, the ceremony that marks the end of the mourning period sixteen days after a death … ; and the name-giving ceremony for the child of three or four. (Moffatt 1979:102,105)

Moffatt claims that the untouchables, who are excluded from the institution of the caste system, recreate among themselves the institutions and ranked relations from which they have been excluded by the higher castes (ibid.:5). In the case of the examples presented above it is possible to

characterise the comparisons made between the Brahman and the various groups as homologies, analogies or replication.

As I have underlined in my initial chapter I believe that we have to conceptualise the statements made by the *Jādopaṭiās* as discourses made about themselves and their professional guild. Thus I believe that it is due to an existence of a powerful Brahmanical doctrine in the Indian context that Dumont, Srinivas and the *Jādopaṭiās* are able to present their various 'Brahmanical discourses' with some success. At this point I like to recapitulate the major argument posed by the *Jādopaṭiās* in their discourse about themselves and place this argument in relation to some theoretical approaches to the category Brahman.

8.2 The pure Brahman and the impure funeral priest

As we have seen in chapter 2 the *Jādopaṭiās* utilises various elements tied to an idea of some kind of Brahman, when they try to legitimate their status as some kind of priest. They refer to the work that they perform in connection with mortuary rituals, with reference to expiation and the gifts they receive for rendering this service. The Brahman evoked by the *Jādopaṭiās* in this context is far from a pure Brahman. Even if we grant that this funeral Brahman holds some prestige in certain respects, it can become problematic to argue that this type of Brahman stands at the top of the caste hierarchy. This is a point put forward by several authors when they discuss the theory of Dumont in the relation to various funerary priests in the Indian context (Van Der Veer 1988:196, Raheja 1988, Quigley 1993:54ff, Parry 1994). This critique posed by these 'empiricists' can be countered by Dumont's advice against the 'substantialisation' of caste in general. Dumont argues that the structure of the caste system should be sought in the relations between the elements, and not in the 'substantialist' nature of the elements themselves. Quigley makes this comment to Dumont's approach; "My own view is that this structuralist approach to caste is as uniquely penetrating as it is poorly understood ... Dumont does not fully understand its consequences himself …" (Quigley 1993:32). Veena Das also criticises Dumont's supposition about the pure Brahman (Das 1982:136). In her seminal work 'Structure and Cognition', Das attempts to bridge the gulf between Indology and Sociology with a structuralist approach (Das 1982). Das makes this comment of the understanding she advocates in relation to the category Brahman.

> It would be obvious that to attribute fixed meanings to the categories of Brahman, king and *sanyasi* is to misinterpret the whole spirit of this exercise. Rather, one has to examine the semantic field in which a term appears and also to

> appreciate that the very contradictions in each term give it the dynamism of its own. For example, the Brahman as expressing ideals of renunciation, as a receiver of gifts and as a specialist in funeral rites – these are all shown to be meanings contained in the category Brahman, which are given expression in different local and historical contexts. (Das 1982:150)

Dumont's impressive attempt to establish an Indian sociology has left us with a legacy that will last for a long time still. A similar attempt has been launched by McKim Marriott in his programmatic project, which is exposed in the form of a publication called 'India through Hindu Categories' (ed. Marriott 1990). Marriott's article in this book is called 'Constructing an Indian ethnosociology'. Marriott admits that his model carries an ideological slant.

> The model … is undoubtedly biassed in the direction of its sources, which is mostly Hindu, more north Indian than southern, more learned than popular, more of *sāṃkhya-yoga* than other *darśana*, more *āyurvedic* than astrological, more orthodox than devotional, more high caste than low, and more male than female. (Marriott 1990:32)

The anthropologist Jeanne Openshaw has pointed out that although Marriott's model has some strength due to its allowance of varied perspectives; "the possibility that there may not be a niche for every eventuality does not appear to be contemplated." (Openshaw 1993:284). Openshaw also remarks that; "In the final analysis, creativity is denied South Asians and instead vested in the master-designer, the ethnosociologist. …Grand schemes such as ethnosociology are notoriously unconvincing at the periphery." (ibid.:284).

8.3 The Jādopaṭiā, a liminal figure

In my thesis I have tried to paint a broad picture of the *Jādopaṭiās*, and the niche that they have created for themselves as a professional group, working among the Santals. I have illustrated how the creative *Jādopaṭiās* improvise with the many cultural elements available to them, as possible ingredients, in a ritual event known as *cokhodān*. Many authors who have described the *Jādopaṭiās* have characterised them as charlatans or exploiters of the Santals. Why have the *Jādopaṭiās* been described in such unfavourable terms? As we

have seen there are plenty of other funerary priests in India that could be labelled with similarly derogatory designations as 'manipulating magicians' or 'funerary vultures' who prey on the bereaved relatives. The undertakers of our own society may also qualify for a characterisation in equally unflattering terms. In America critics have shown how funeral directors have exploited their position in order to make profit (Metcalf & Huntington 1991:198). It is easy to understand that the line between empathetic advice and calculated exploitation is precariously thin in the professional life of the undertaker. It is also obvious that a composed and experienced undertaker holds an advantageous position of power in relation to a relative suddenly struck by grief, due to an unexpected loss of kin. However, I believe that it is important to view the work of any funerary priest of undertaker with a number of wide angled lenses.

How can we characterise the professional space inhabited by the *Jādopaṭiā*? What does the *Jādopaṭiā* represent in this context? As a mediator between a number of different domains and spheres he may well be understood as a somewhat ambiguous figure functioning in liminal situations. The *Jādopaṭiā* functions in a space where various domains meet and sometimes blur into each other. He has created a professional niche in the space between the Hindu society and the Santal society. The *Jādopaṭiā* appears when death has struck a household. He makes little fuss about himself. Suddenly he stands at your doorstep. Most of the time he comes unannounced, just like death itself. He is a respected *guru* of death, as well as a feared person. The work he does takes place during a transitional phase, characterised by fluidity, when the dead one gradually attains the status of an ancestor. As we have seen, death among the Santals and the Hindus is fraught with danger and pollution. Anyone who deals with death is treated with some caution. The *Jādopaṭiā* who paints the pictures of the dead, does not mind to include himself in his scrolls, in the guise of *Yama*, the king of the dead. Thus he may well be called a liminal figure, always on the lookout for the news of the occurrence of another death.

9 GLOSSARY: BENGALI/SANSKRIT

Ādibāsī	Lit. original settler. A term used in the place of *Hor* or Santal.
Agradān	The gift received for the performance of expiation.
Agradānī	A priest or funerary specialist who performs expiation.
Andhabiśvās	Lit. dark belief; 'superstition'.
Bābā	Father.
Baitaranī	The horrid river that one has to cross to come to heaven according to Hindu eschatology.
Bāman	A Brahman priest.
Bhūt	Ghost.
Bhūt chāṛāy	The exorcism of ghosts.
Biṣarjan	A ritual immersion in water.
Cakṣudān	The gift of the eye (Sanskrit).
Citra	Picture.
Citrakar	Painter.
Cokhodān	The gift of the eye (colloquial).
Dān	Gift.
Dharma	Moral or religious duty.
Dhokra	Brass worker.
Dom	Funeral-attendant.
Doṣ	Fault.
Durgā	A Hindu goddess of the *Śākti* cult.
Gaṅgā	The river Ganges.
Ghāṭ	A passage or stairs leading down to a river.
Ghar	A house or a room.
Guru	A spiritual guide or teacher.
Haribol	Call out the name of god (i.e. Vishnu or his avatar Krishna).
Jādo	Short for *Jādopaṭiā*.
Jādobābā	Another name for the *Jādopaṭiās*.
Jādopaṭiā	Scroll painter and funeral priest.
Jādu	Magic.
Jāt	A kind, sort or class. A caste. The word *Jāt* also means born.
Jāti	Birth, origin, genus, species or community (derived from the word above). A caste.
Jabāi	Ritual slaughter by a bloodletting via a cut in the throat.
Jajmān	A client or a patron of a ritual specialist or an artisan.
Jhāṛphuk	Exorcise or heal.
Jīb	"n. an animal, a creature, an organism; life; a corporal soul or embodied soul ; … the soul of a living or dead being …" (Samsad 1985:352).
Jībdān	The 'gift of life' through a sacrifice of an animal.
Kāj	Work.
Kāl Bhairab	A 'terrible' manifestation of the Hindu god Shiva.

Kālī	The spouse of the god mentioned above. A goddess of the *Śākti* cult.
Kāṇṭā	'Thorn'. A derogatory name given to a kind of degraded Brahmin.
Kapil gāi	Lit. a brown or tawny coloured cow. A wish fulfilling cow.
Karma	An action or a deed. The law of cause and effect.
Manasā	A Hindu goddess, also known as the 'one-eyed' goddess.
Mānhjī	The Santal village headman.
Marār dān	The gift of the dead. In the context referred to here; expiation.
Mṛtyu paṭ	The picture of the dead.
Mokṣa	Liberation.
Nāpit	Barber.
Nayanamilan	The act of giving the eye to a representation of a Hindu deity, at the time of the 'installation' of this deity by a Brahman priest.
Nilgāi	Lit. blue cow. *Boselaphus tragocamelus*, the largest of the Asiatic antelopes.
Ojhā	Medicine man.
Pāp	Sin.
Pātra	Vessel.
Pūjā	Worship.
Paṭa, Paṭ	Picture.
Paṭuā	Bengali scroll painter.
Paṅji	A calendar or an ephemeris.
Paitā	Brahman.
Paona	Due, owed as a dept.
Paṭkar	Scroll painter.
Piśāca	Malignant spirit.
Pitṛ	Ancestor.
Prasād	Food offering.
Prāyaścitta	Expiation.
Pratiṣṭhā karā	'Installation' of a Hindu deity by a Brahman priest.
Pret	Ghost.
Purohit	Brahman priest.
Sal	*Shorea robusta*, one of the major timber trees of India.
Samsāra	The bondage of life, death and rebirth.
Sasān	The funeral ground.
Śāstra	Scriptures.
Śrāddha	Mortuary ritual.
Śilpī	Artisan.
Sipāhi	Soldier or messenger.
Sthāpan	Installation (of a deity or consecration of a place of worship).
Thākur	A god or an idol. A lord or a master. A Brahman priest.
Yama	The king and ruler of the dead.
Yampuri	Hell or the nether world.

10 GLOSSARY: SANTALI

Abge boŋgas	Sub-clan ‘spirit’.
Babre	The priest, derived from the Hindu word Brahmin.
Baha	Flower.
Baha porob	The spring festival.
Bakher	Invocation.
Bhandan	The final mortuary ritual feast.
Bherenda	*Jatropha curcas* L., a small tree. Oil extracted from the seeds is used both in lamps and as a laxative (Bodding 1986:456).
Bhitar	Private family shrine.
Bhitri nutum	An ‘inner’, private name.
Binti	‘A recitation of the traditions.’
Bitol Murmu	A sub-clan of the Murmu clan.
Boŋga	‘Spirit’.
Bulau	Fowl sacrifice by means of a twig of a mahua tree passed through its eyes
Caco chatiar	Ritual purification of young children. The initiation to the Santal society.
Cae Campa	Two countries mentioned in the traditions.
Cetan nutum	‘Upper’ or ‘Outer’, public name.
Curin	A ghost of a woman who died pregnant.
Dan	Witch.
Doroson	Pictures, or a show of pictures.
Ghāṭ kirin´	The buying; of the place from which to fetch water, or the place where the bones of the dead is immersed.
Gorom	Grand, as in grandmother, grandchild or namesake.
Hanapuri	The after-world.
Handia	Rice beer.
Hapram	Ancestor.
Hapram phuti	A written account of the traditions.
Hasdak´	A Santal clan
Hembrom	A Santal clan
Hor	Man or a Santal.
Hurin ji	‘The little breath’, a soul substance that dwells in the stomach.
Jaṅ baha	Lit. ‘bone flower’, the bones of the dead that are collected and stored.
Jaher Era	‘Lady of the grove’.
Jaher	Sacred grove
Janam chatiar	Purification ritual after birth.
Ji	Life
Jomraja	The King of the dead.
Karam binti	The history of the world from the creation and through the ages (according to the 'Santal traditions').
Karam guru	A person well versed with the Santal traditions.

Kheroal	Same as Kherwar, the old name of the Santal's ancestors. Also used as a common name for the northern Mundas.
Khudni	Female tattoo.
Khût	Sub-clan.
Kisku	A Santal clan.
Kutam	A blow or a stroke. To kill an animal by a blow on the neck.
Kutam dangra	The sacrifice of an ox (by the method mentioned above).
Landa sagai	'Joking relationship'.
Lita	*Maran Buru* in the guise in which he appeared to the first Santals.
Luṛka	Brass workers. Also a kind of ear-ring, and those bore holes in the ear for those rings.
Madho Sin	The name of an important person in the history of the Santals.
Mahua	*Bassia latifolia*. A tree that provides food, oil and spirit.
Maran Buru	'Great Mountain', the major boṅga of the Santals.
Maran ji	'The big breath', a soul substance which dwell in the bones of the cranium.
Mayam	Blood.
Moreko-Turuiko	'The Five-Six', a leading *boṅga*.
Murmu	A Santal clan.
Naeke	The village priest.
Nij	Onself, own or original.
Nim dak´-Mandi	A rite of purification conducted during the birth ritual.
Norok´disom	The underworld.
Obor Murmu	A Santal sub-clan.
Ojha	'Medicine-man'.
Orak´boṅgas	The household deities.
Pilchu buri	The first woman.
Pilchu Haram	The first man.
Roa	The 'soft soul', or a rice seedling.
Sada Murmu	A Santal sub-clan.
Sarjom	*Shorea robusta*, the Sal tree. One of the major timber trees of India
Sika	A mark burnt on the left forearm of Santal men.
Soren	A Santal clan.
Sosam	A female Nilgai antelope.
Tejo	Crawling insects or worms.
Tel nahan	A purification rite performed five days after death.
Tudu	A Santal clan.
Umul	Shadow, shelter or reflection.

11 APPENDIX

Rosita de Selva's Bengali transcript of the *paṭuā's* narrative of *cokhodān*.

> *Jal niyāy, jal niyāy, āmi tor bābā esechi. Jādov paṭuā oder ekṭā paṭe uṭhiyeche. Tor bāp āsche āsche/āschi. Nā visvās karis, haldi jal niyāy dekhābo. Haldi jal niye hala. Tui ektā chota bāti kare rākh. Nā ei habeni. Okhāne bara kānsār thālā āche, sei ektā kare niye āy. Tomār bābā boleche: sei thālā ektā kare niye eso. Sei kare dekhāno habe. Āmār holde murgi āche ? Tor bāla holde murgi dite boleche. Tomār bābā boleche: ektā thālā, ektā murgi bhāla kare de. Sei kānsār thālā ār ektu halud jal niye hala. Ene ektu mecameci/michāmichi dekhiye diye balla: dekh tor bābā ār pānctā tākā de, pānc ser cāl de ār ektā thālā de, ār tor bāper yā pāp chila sab kame yābe... Bura cās kare rekhece, kābeni ? Kosto kare cās karla, mare giyece. Dekh… ār… de. Amār guru āche. Tomār bābār janye kāj kare debo. Thālā, bāti, ya cāibe, sei debe…* (de Selva 1994:71-82)

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Plates

Plate 1 *Budhesvar Citrakar* showing his scroll of the punishments in hell to a Santal household.

Plate 2 *Mṛtyu paṭ*, pictures of the dead.

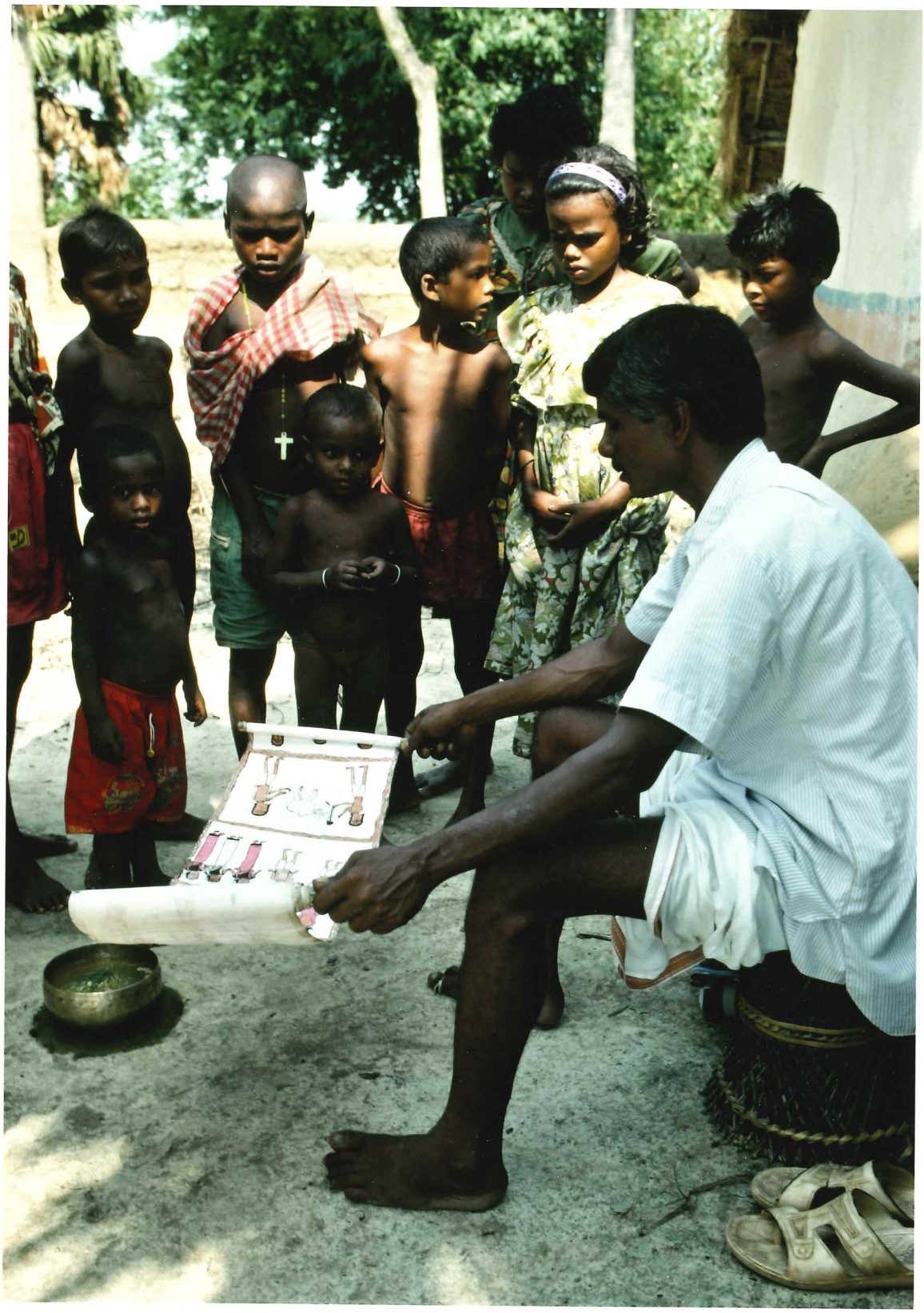

Plate 3 *Rājen Citrakar* shows a scroll before his performance of *cokhodān.* Notice the illustration of the man who holds on to the cows tail. The other man in the illustrated scene is about to sacrifice this cow by clubbing it to death. The child wearing a cross comes from one of the few Santal families converted to Christianity in the area where the photograph was taken.

Plate 4 Water is offered in the name of the dead Santal boy. Notice that *Rājen* is applying the eye to the picture of the dead boy, concealed by the shirt who belonged to the boy.

Plate 5 At the time of *cokhodān, Rājen Citrakar* is 'illustrating' the state of the blind Santal boy by holding the picture of the dead one in front of his closed eyes. Notice the three *sika* marks on his forearm.

Plate 6 *Rājen Citrakar* lowering the picture of the dead Santal boy towards the brass vessel, exposing it to the spectators. Whilst he is about to expose the picture of the boy, now with eyes, he 'illustrates' the 'gift of the eye' by opening his own eyes.

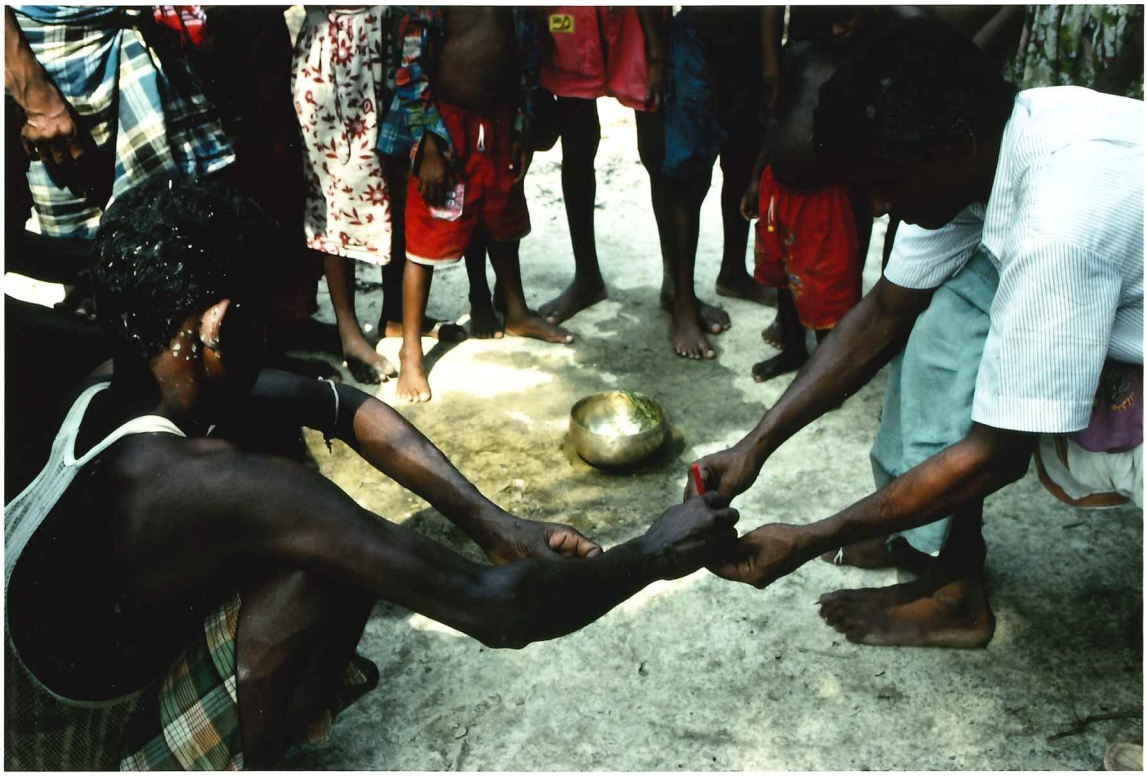

Plate 7 As the father holds on to the pen touching the picture of his dead son, concealed by *Rājen's* hands. *Rājen* effectuates the release of the boy from the fetters in hell.

Plate 8 *Rājen Citrakar* and the father of the dead Santal boy exchanging a mutual greeting. The father is holding the picture of his son between his folded hands. This picture, soaked in oil and turmeric, and rolled up into a piece of cloth, has been treated as if it was the bones of the dead one. Later it will be immersed in a canal near the village.

Plate 9 *Rājen Citrakar* sacrifices a fowl for the ancestors at the time of *cokhodān.*

Plate 10 Blood from the sacrificed fowl is sprinkled on the spot where the water has been offered to the dead Santal woman. Her brother is squatting on the right side of *Rājen.*

Plate 11 The son of the dead Santal woman is assisting his frightened daughter at the time of *cokhodān.* Notice that *Sivu Citrakar* is applying the eyes on the picture concealed in his hands, whilst he is uttering invocations to the grandmother from the grandchild.

Plate 12 *Sivu Citrakar* displays the picture of the dead Santal woman.

Plate 13 Santal farmer ploughing a rice-field.

Plate 14 Rice-fields in Santal Parganas, Bihar.

Plate 15 Santal family.

Plate 16 Santal girl.

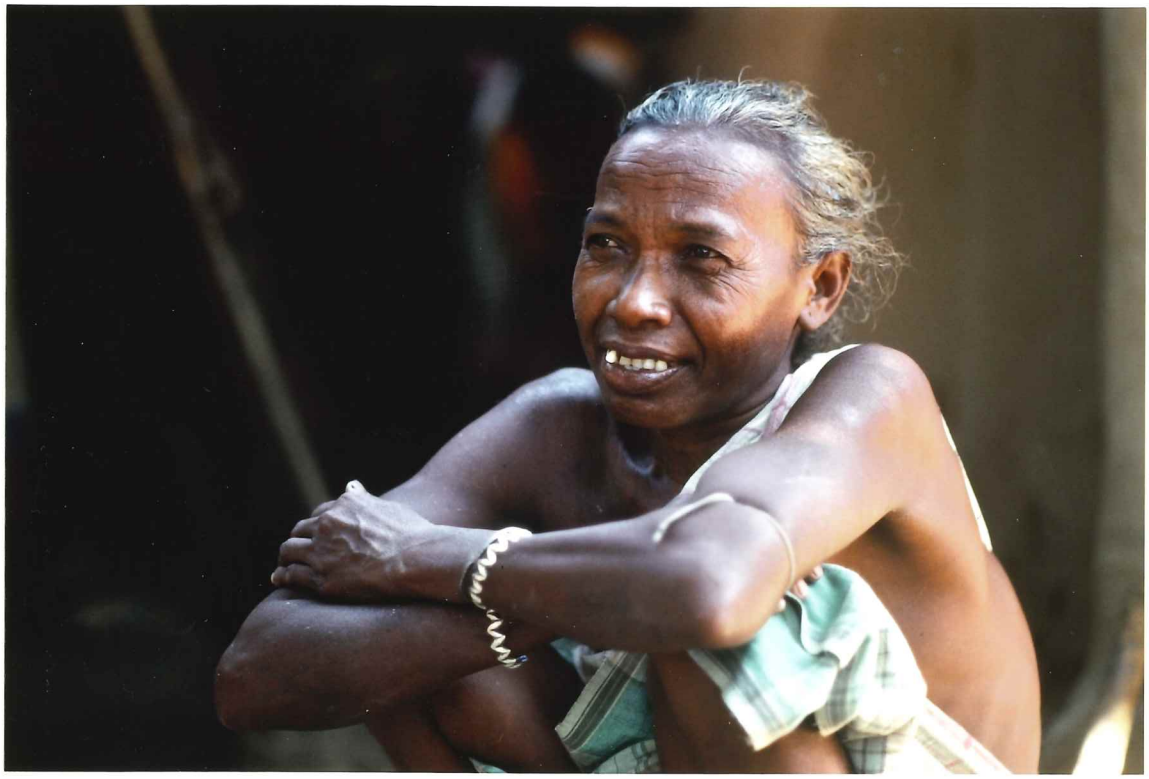

Plate 17 Santal woman.

Plate 18 Santal girl playing a drum.

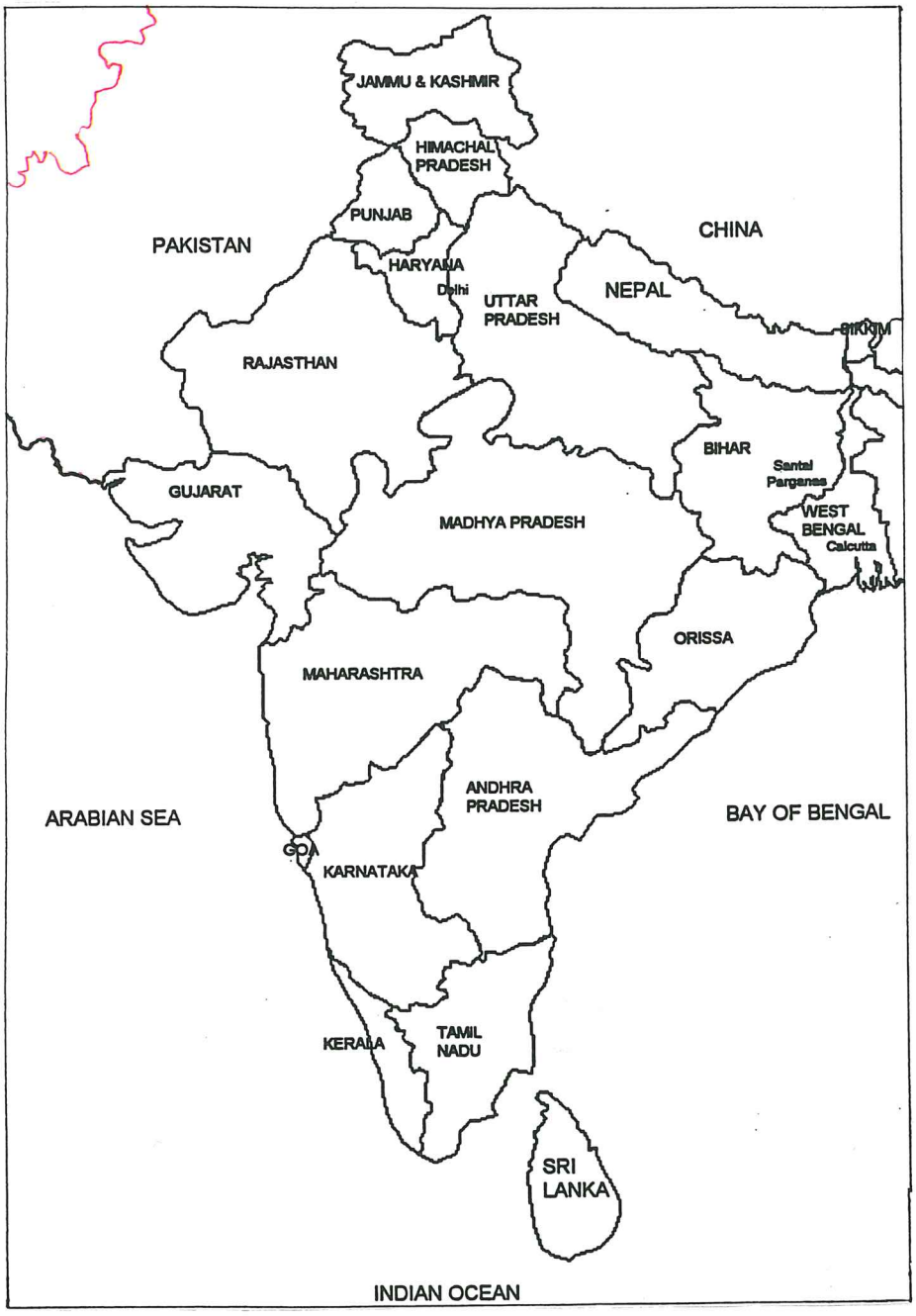

Plate 19 Location of Santal Parganas.

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