



THE CASTE MOBILITY IN A HINDU VILLAGE IN ORISSA

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In this paper I aim to describe the process of the social mobility of a caste as it occurred in a Hindu, multicasite village in India. The situation is of a low clean caste, Potters, attempting to raise their social status within a village community. Their attempts to rise in the local caste hierarchy have not involved an organized whole caste movement, in a wide local area, to sanskritize their customs, as described in anthropological literature on the subject of a change in the status of depressed castes. The Potters' efforts were limited to the village itself, and required the cooperation of only the Potters from a few adjacent villages, who shared with them a common local caste council, even this cooperation being very limited. The factors starting the Potters upward movement limited the restriction of the movement to a small local area. Contrary to the described attempts of whole castes to sanskritize their customs and consequently raise their caste status, at the beginning of the Potters social rise there was no preconceived plan to better the ritual rank and therefore the social position of their caste. The process was started by external influences, producing internal changes within the village, giving the Potters the opportunity to rise economically. Only after their new economic position was established did a conscious effort to better the position of the Potter caste in other social fields begin. The attempts to raise their ritual rank came as the last and final touch to the achievement of a higher position in the village. I shall not describe the base of the Potters mobility as an isolated process. To understand the process, it is necessary to analyse the social rise of the Potters against the background of the social system of the whole village; to analyse the changes in the Potters social status as a part of changes which have occurred in the village since the external influences started to be felt there.

Events described in this paper took place in Bhuan, a village which lies in Puri district in Orissa, one and one half miles from Bay of Bengal, on the edge of the coastal jungle and only one half mile from the road connecting Gop and Puri. Gop and Puri are towns with busy markets; Puri also an important place of pilgrimage with its temple of Lord Jagannath. Puri is eleven miles distant from the village. The traditional social system of the village was based on the caste system. When talking of the traditional system, I refer to a time about seventy years ago, before the beginning of substantial economic, and later political changes, in the village which have gone on ever since. The seventy year time period is limited by the availability of information about the past. Even information from beginning of the period are scanty and uncomfortably general. Beyond the seventy years limit, the few pieces of information available already have the character of myths because no one living in the village remembers the time, or has a fresh memory of the information from parents and other persons. The period about the turn of the century is the starting point for the analysis of the changes. The nearer to present time the more accurate the information available, most of the information being eyewitness accounts of events. Because the social system of Bhuan has been based on the caste system and all fields of social behaviour have been determined or at least influenced by the existence of castes we must begin with a general description of the caste system, and in particular the village caste system.

I VILLAGE CASTES

A Caste and Caste System

Bhuan is a Hindu village with thirteen castes and no Muslim, Christian or tribal population: Brahman (Priests), Mahanti (Scholars), Chasa (Farmers, with two subcastes Salua and Dalua), Gauda (Herdsman), Gudia (Confectioners), Barhei (Blacksmith-Carpenters), Teli (Oilpressers), Kumbhara (Potters), Barika (Barbers), Nahaka (Astrologers), Dhoba (Washermen), Bauri (Agricultural Labourers), Chokidara watchmen). The villagers regard the caste system as the very backbone of their whole social system, and in reality the system plays an important role in all spheres of village life. Although castes exist everywhere in India, there is not one uniform caste system throughout the country. Within India there are many local caste systems which differ in terms of castes contained as well as hierarchical order. Consistent caste systems with functioning intra- and intercaste relations are regionally limited. It is only within the minimal local areas that castes exist as organized groups. In wider areas a given caste ceases to be an organized group and merely becomes a socio-cultural category.

In anthropological literature a caste is usually defined by the following common characteristics:

1. caste is endogamous
2. castes are hierarchically ranked, standing in mutual relations of super- and subordination
3. caste has its commensal rules
4. member of higher caste can be polluted by direct or indirect contact with a member of lower caste
5. caste has its traditional occupation
6. membership in caste is acquired by birth.

In this paper I shall define caste system in Rosser's terms: "I take 'caste' simply to be a form of social stratification in which the necessary statements and judgements about relative status are couched predominantly in a traditional ritual language. In a particular caste system the differing status positions of the component groups are in my view derived ultimately and basically, as in all systems of hierarchical stratification, from the distribution of political and economic power within that system. The language of ritual behaviour is used conventionally to express and validate status achieved through and based upon the operation of political and economic factors." (Rosser 1966 : 69).

The caste system and Hinduism are inseparably connected. Hindu social philosophy as well as popular village Hinduism explain and validate the existence of a hierarchically arranged caste system and the necessity for social distance between castes

of different ritual rank. Hindu social philosophy explains the existence of a caste hierarchy and the necessity of obeying caste rules by the laws of dharma and karma. The Laws of Manu give the description of a caste system with all its ramifications, stressing obedience to caste rules as a very essence of dharma. The caste system is regarded as created by God and as an ethical organization of Hindu social life. The law of karma, Hindu law of moral causation, postulates that every individual must pass through many lives. What a man is at present results from what he thought and did in his previous life and what he does and thinks at present will determine his future being. The responsibility for being born into a particular caste is then entirely a person's own because of actions and thoughts in his previous life.

At the village level popular Hinduism explains and validates caste hierarchy in terms of purity and pollution. The main stress is not laid on why a person was born to any particular caste, but on the resulting arrangement of society into castes which differ in degree of purity or pollution. Pollution is derived from body processes making certain castes occupationally polluted. A caste whose occupation is clean is regarded as ritually cleaner and therefore higher than a caste whose traditional calling is polluting; such as Leatherworkers, Washermen, and Barbers. The contact of a ritually clean person with a ritually polluted person defiles the clean person and is the reason why it is necessary to prevent contact between members of ritually unequal castes. Rules of social distance between castes serve to keep them apart. Ritual purity and pollution are the only ideologically recognized criteria for placing an individual caste on a certain level of hierarchy. In reality there exist other criteria, mainly local economic and political strength of a caste. The differences between various caste hierarchies throughout India can be explained only by the above mentioned additional factors; the criterion of ritual pollution remains everywhere the same. The ranking of castes within a caste hierarchy is expressed in the behaviour of members, the behaviour expressive of equality or inequality between persons: sharing of cooked food and drinking water, way of greeting, seating arrangements, etc.

The caste system is a type of social stratification in which social mobility theoretically does not exist; individuals cannot change castes and castes cannot shift positions within caste hierarchy. Membership in a caste is acquired by birth, each caste being strictly endogamous making it impossible for an individual to change their caste. What theoretically prevents castes from changing position within the caste hierarchy is that the measure of ritual purity or pollution of individual castes is determined mainly by the traditional occupation placing the castes definitely, and in theory, unchangeably in a certain specific position

within the caste hierarchy. The maintenance of an existing hierarchy of castes depends as Rosser states: "... not only on the maintenance of the inequalities (or status differentials) that exist between the component caste groups but also on the maintenance of a status equivalence of the individuals belonging to the same caste. It is basic convention of the system that the members of a particular caste are all ritually equal ... This ideological equality is extremely difficult to maintain in practice, even though of course it is constantly expressed verbally and in ritual behaviour (notably in the rules of endogamy and commensality) ... Ideally all members of a single caste are social equals (and it is this ideal which the ritual expresses): in practice factors of wealth, political power, education, occupational status and so forth operate *within*, as well as between, castes to produce important inequalities of status." (Rosser 1966 : 72—73) As we shall see in the following parts of this paper, the theory of the caste system and the practiced social life in a caste society actually considerably differ in this respect, the difference making social mobility possible. It allows an individual to gain or lose personal prestige in the village and allows a caste to attempt changing its position within the caste hierarchy.

The caste system does not operate separately from a system of local relations but within it. It operates within a village and the wider local area. As the village and its system of social relationships is the subject of this paper we must consider, at least generally, the relation of castes to the village. The caste system has certain characteristics which tend to keep individual village castes separate: these are endogamy, commensal rules and the existence of an internal caste organization, caste councils and specific cultural characteristics of castes. Another factor separating castes from each other is the connection of a caste with a specific occupation traditionally entrusted to a caste, no persons from other castes having the right to engage in it; agriculture being the only exception open to members of all castes excluding Brahmans yet including untouchable castes. The Laws of Manu forbid Brahmans to cultivate land because ploughing destroys living things in the earth and injures earth itself.

Within the caste system there also operate factors which help to overcome the separation of castes, which tend to unite all castes living in the village and the larger local area. Again the occupational specialization of castes is the primary factor, though in this case a uniting factor. The fact that individual occupations are executed solely by members of one caste with no one else engaging in them automatically creates a mutual economic interdependence of village castes. It creates relationships of interdependence between the landowning caste and serving and artisan castes as described by Retzlaff: "This pattern of traditional

service relationship, involving castes such as blacksmiths, carpenters, potters, washermen, barbers, etc., is generally called ... the farmer-retainer system. This system cuts vertically across the horizontal stratification of village society based upon caste. It does this on the basis of occupational considerations, and creates a pattern of relationships, still hierarchically organized, at the top of which stands the landowning farmer ... In descending order, determined by their caste status, are the various retainers who provide goods and services to that particular farmer. While farmer exercises a considerable degree of authority over retainer, he has certain generally acknowledged responsibilities toward them." (Retzlaff 1962 : 14—15) Besides farmer-retainer or patron-client relationships based on the caste division of labor, members of various castes are linked together by other types of patron-client relationships : landowner-tenant, landowner-agricultural labourer and creditor-debtor. All these economic relationships center around members of the landowning caste because land was previously the only source of wealth and therefore the only source of living for the whole village. Another factor uniting different castes within the village is the village political system with the dominant caste, and particularly the elders, at the top. The authority of the dominant caste elders extends to the whole village. They have the right and power to decide important questions concerning the whole village and authority to settle disputes among members of castes other than their own. These factors contribute to the unity of the village.

B The Village Castes and Their Occupations

Today thirteen castes live in the village, ranging from Brahmans to three untouchable castes: Brahmans, Scholars, Farmers, Herdsmen, Confectioners, Blacksmith-Carpenters, Oilpressers, Potters, Barbers, Astrologers, Washermen, Bauri (agricultural labourers) and Watchmen. At the turn of the century the caste composition of the village was different: no Brahmans, Scholars or Astrologers lived there. Today, Potters and Herdsmen are the numerically strong castes. At the turn of the century there were only two Potter families and one family of Herdsmen living in the village.

Brahmans are the priestly caste, the ritually highest caste within the caste hierarchy. Brahmans called by villagers to officiate at such ritual occasions as births, weddings and deaths traditionally come to Bhuan from a nearby village, Mahopur, while two shrines of the village deities were in care of a Brahman family living in the adjoining village of Chaitana. Members of the Chaitana family also officiated at any rites, other than rites of passage, which villagers had performed. When someone

in the village gave a feast in which people from other castes were to participate and not all guests would accept food from the caste of the organizing family, men from the Chaitana Brahman family were hired to prepare food for the feast as every caste will eat Brahman prepared food. When at the beginning of this century one Brahman family from Mahopur settled in Bhuan they took over all the duties of the Chaitana Brahman family. Today they take care of village deities, care for the private shrine of Potters, cook at feasts for more than one clean caste and officiate at festivals and ceremonies, both caste and non-caste. All Brahmans provide their services for all clean castes while untouchable castes have and use their own specialists, priests from their own castes.

From the Scholars caste there are two families in the village. The first family moved into the village in the nineteen forties and with permission of the village council started a private school there. Families from the clean castes still send their sons to this school despite the state school which now exists in the village. Attendance at the state school is compulsory but villagers from the clean castes do not like the school. They regard it as poor and are not pleased to see their children sitting together with children from the untouchable castes. Therefore several afternoons a week the more substantial clean caste families send their sons to the private school. The second Scholar family settled in the village at the beginning of the sixties when the father of the family was employed as a teacher in the village state school.

The Farmers, with the exception of the Bauri caste, are the largest caste in the village as well as in the local area. The Farmers are the only caste whose traditional occupation is agriculture and today all caste members are either landowners, farmer-tenants, or agricultural labourers. There are two subcastes of Farmers in the area, Salua and Dalua. Salua, the higher, is predominant in the area of which Bhuan is part. Originally only one Dalua family lived in the village; today there are two families there. The Dalua subcaste is regarded as lower than Salua because the Dalua women engage in seasonal fishing. The Dalua subcaste is the predominant of the two in the area south-west of Puri. Both subcastes were formerly endogamous while today marriages between members of both subcastes are, if not encouraged, at least tolerated.

At the turn of the century there was only one family of Herdsmen in Bhuan. They cared for the cattle of several of the richest Farmer families and provided special ritual services for the Farmers. Today enough Herdsmen live in the village to provide special services for all the village Farmers but formerly the local Herdsman family had to secure the help of Herdsmen from neighbouring villages. At present there are ten families of

Herdsmen in the village. The nearness of the town milk markets, sufficient grazing in the forest and the willingness of the Potter-zamindar to provide land on which to build their houses were the reasons that brought new Herdsmen to Bhuan.

Two families of Confectioners live in the village. Only one of them still engages in the traditional caste occupation: making sweets used by villagers at home rituals and as offerings to deities and gods and also used to treat the honoured guests. Blacksmiths and Carpenters, who together represent one endogamous caste, have three families living in the village. Blacksmith-carpenters serve all villagers irrespective of caste. The Oilpressers are represented by two families. Both families still engage at least in part of their traditional occupation, the production of pressed rice. The Potters in the same manner as the Blacksmith-carpenters and Oilpressers serve everyone in the village irrespective of caste because their services do not require physical contact with customers. At the turn of the century there were only two families of Potters in Bhuan providing villagers with pots and pans whenever replacements were needed. Later on more Potter families settled in Bhuan attracted mainly by the nearby town markets, sufficient fuel for their furnaces and the good quality of potter's clay found nearby. There are twenty six Potter families in the village today. The two richest families have abandoned the caste calling and are now engaged solely in agriculture. All other Potters continue to make pottery. One family of Barbers serve all the clean castes in the village. Physical contact with customers being necessary the Barber serves only those castes whose physical contact does not pollute him, the untouchable castes being excluded from his services. The Barber cuts the hair, finger and toe nails of his customers and he shaves them.

The family of Astrologers settled in Bhuan recently, in 1963. They provide their traditional services for anyone in the village requiring them. Four Washer-families live in the village. As their work means contact with their customers' soiled clothes, the untouchable castes are excluded from their services. Menstrual clothes are washed only by washerwomen because they are regarded as specially defiling. The Washermen wash only their male customers' clothes. Two Washerman families serve customers in Bhuan, the other two serve two adjoining villages. Bauri have been the numerically strongest caste in the village and live in a separate hamlet. The Bauri caste traditionally provides agricultural labourers. There was also one Bauri family attached to each patron family of Farmers giving them special services at rites of passage. Three related families of Watchmen live in the village. Only the head of one of them has been employed as a village watchman.

Most of the castes continue to engage in their traditional caste occupations. On the other hand most of the villagers need a source of supplementary income as traditional occupations do not provide enough to support a family. The only sources of additional income available to villagers are agriculture and trade. For lack of funds most of the villagers turn to agriculture and work as seasonal labourers or as stable agricultural labourers. When engaged in trade the villagers invest the profits in land. The buying and selling of land provides a means for an individual or a caste change of economic status and consequently also provides for social mobility within the system. It is still regarded as the main source of wealth and remain the symbol of wealth. By acquiring land the prestige of a family in the village automatically increases, giving impulse as well as opportunity to an individual and by extension the whole caste for a betterment of social position.

C Patrons and clients

The caste division of labour creates a mutual interdependence of castes within the village. Because land was the only source of livelihood in the village the relationships of dependence were centered around the families producing a surplus of paddy. They paid for the goods and services of the landless families with a part of yearly harvest thereby providing everyone's living. The relationships between families providing services and goods and families paying for these annually in paddy was automatically unequal, similar to a son-father relationship. It was benevolent from the patron's side and respectful from the client's side. The patron provided the client with a livelihood and in case of need with help and protection, the client giving his work, loyalty and general support in return. The caste patron-client relationship was hereditary; the bond between patron and client families handed down from generation to generation. When, for example, a joint family from the artisan caste divided into two separate families, their patron families were equally divided between both divisions. If a joint family of patrons split all the resulting individual families continued to patronize clients of the original joint family. The patron-client relationship could not be severed at will either by the patron or the client. An attempt to sever such a relationship and create a new one had to be justified by repeatedly unreliable work on the part of the client, by disrespectful behaviour towards the patron or by insufficient material support of the patron or by the patron's bad treatment of the client. The caste council of the client and often the village council had to agree to the change.

Because of the caste division of labour the responsibility for the preservation of skills required for the traditional occupations

and services rests on the individual castes. There exists a law at present India stating that no one may be forced to continue his traditional caste occupation unless he so desires. Theoretically no one can force the members of the serving and artisan castes to provide their goods and services for the landowning families, although cases of conflict in one nearby village between the Herdsmen and Farmers show that the opposite is still possible. Herdsmen in this particular village decided to discontinue serving their patrons and engage instead in the milk trade and in occasional agricultural labour. The Farmers from the village with the help of Farmers from the local area used force to break the Herdsmen's resistance. They attacked them and burnt their gardens and fields. When brought to court they provided so many respectable witnesses that the Farmers were found not guilty leaving the Herdsmen with no other choice than to resume traditional service.

The village or multivillage caste group is also responsible for the quality of goods and services of the caste members. Complaints about the quality of services or goods are brought to the caste council of the involved serving or artisan caste and the council is responsible for remedying any shortcomings. If they cannot guarantee the necessary improvement they must provide the customer with alternate source of services. The caste also guards the skills required for their traditional occupation from members of other castes; regarding their particular skills as a natural monopoly. In case someone from another caste would try to perform the occupation, the caste council would seek the intervention of the village council or, if necessary, of the area council of the dominant caste. These councils would arrange a boycott or expel the violator from the village. The village caste council also protects the interests of its members from members of the same caste from other villages. If there is not enough work in the village for all the members of the village caste group, or if there is marginal demand for their services or goods, the caste council will not grant the required permission to other caste members to settle in the village. When on the contrary there are not enough resident members of the caste to satisfy the needs of the village, the caste council would attempt drawing outside persons to settle in the village, arranging it through multivillage caste councils. In the case of certain castes, when required by the character of the work, the caste also organizes the work. For example in order for a Potter to work he cannot live alone in the village, unless his is a very large joint family with a sufficient male labour force. At certain stages of pottery making, mainly removing pots from the kiln, more labour is needed than one family can normally provide, necessitating cooperation between the potters of that village.

D Political Aspect of Caste

Each caste has, to a certain extent, its separate political existence in the form of a caste council. The numerically strong castes compose their village caste councils from caste elders and the caste assembly from all family heads of the caste in the village. Numerically smaller castes such as Oilpressers, Confectioners, or Barbers do not have a village caste council but a multivillage caste council which functions in the same manner as the village caste councils of stronger castes. The caste council administers justice to members of their own caste group and settles their disputes. The higher the status of the caste the stronger the sentiment that disputes should be settled within the caste; the lower the caste, the less effective the caste council through a diminishing of function and importance. Low castes and particularly the untouchable castes tend to seek the intervention of the elders of the Farmers rather than of elders of their own caste. If caste council fails to settle a dispute it can be referred to higher multivillage caste council representing caste groups from several villages. The Brahmins' multivillage caste council is composed of caste representatives from nine villages, the Scholars' from eight villages, the Herdsmen' from nine villages, the Confectioners' from four villages, the Blacksmith-carpenters' from five villages, the Oilpressers' from seven villages, the Potters' from six villages, the Barbers' from eight villages, the Astrologers' from eight villages, the Washermen' from four villages, the Bauri's from five villages, and the Watchmen' from six villages. The Farmers, the dominant caste, have area caste councils. The council of the Salua subcaste represents Farmers from twenty nine villages, the council of the Dalua subcaste covers fifty six villages. In case the village caste council fails to settle some dispute most villagers prefer to refer the case to the village council or to the selected elders of the dominant caste, not to the multivillage caste council, their caste elders. The lower the litigants' caste the more apt he is to make such a decision. Villagers from the untouchable castes automatically seek the intervention of the dominant caste elders. Villagers often prefer the intervention of the dominant caste elders because they are in the same time their patrons who know the litigants intimately and know the conditions in the village and in the litigants' caste group. Litigants can expect, for example in property dispute, they will take into consideration not only the bare facts but also the circumstances of the case. On the other hand the litigant often does not even personally know the leaders of his multivillage caste council and thus cannot expect understanding from them, or expect them to allow for the circumstances of the case.

The term "dominant caste" has already been used several times. We have talked about the dominant caste of the village

and the wider local area. By dominant caste I understand caste answering the definition of M. N. Srinivas: "A caste is dominant when it is numerically the strongest in the village or local area, and economically and politically exercises a preponderating influence. It need not be the highest caste in terms of traditional and conventional ranking of castes." (Srinivas 1963 : 7). The Farmers are numerically the strongest caste in the whole area and in the village itself, only the untouchable caste of Bauri is stronger. The Farmers were economically the strongest caste in the village as they owned all the land and concentrated most of the political power in their hands. Their caste rank was high enough to allow them to play the role of the dominant caste. Changes in the Farmers position, changes in the effectiveness of the caste and the village councils and changes in authority of village elders will be described in later parts of the paper.

E Caste and Ritual

In terms of rituals caste is even more important than in politics. The importance of caste is paramount in rites of passage: births, deaths and weddings including the engagement, the wedding ceremony, and the departure of the bride from her father's house to the house of bridegroom's father. The participation of a caste group in such ritual occasions is absolutely necessary. Without the participation of at least a certain number of the village caste group representatives it is impossible for anyone to perform the ritual. To be able to complete, for example, an engagement or to arrange a wedding, representatives of at least three families from the village or the local caste group must be present on both sides. Representatives of the village caste group are necessary as proof that the family arranging the wedding belongs to their claimed caste. They also provide a certain guarantee the marriage contract will be kept. The engagement and wedding create a symbolic link between the bride's and bridegroom's local caste groups. In case one party should break the contract, the other family may appeal to the caste group of the other party as they are to a certain extent responsible for the behaviour as they were present at the engagement and wedding ceremonies. In the case of birth or death in the family or in case the family plans an engagement or wedding the head of family calls a meeting of the caste council where he announces the case and it is concretely decided who from the caste group will be present and their tasks. No one can refuse such a service without good reason; refusal meaning caste boycott, the non-participation of a caste in the rites of passage in the family of an offender. The dependence of the individual and the family on the cooperation of the caste group at rites of passage gave the caste group the power to demand conformity to caste rules, also being

the reason why the highest caste punishment, caste boycott, is so effective. The family arranging the rites of passage must in return for their caste's help treat the caste to a feast. On occasions of death the caste group requires two feasts, at weddings three feasts, at engagements one feast and at departure of bride to her father-in-law's house one feast. Whether members of other castes will be invited to the wedding feasts depends on the decision of the family and also on their economic and social position. For a rich family of Farmers it was practically a duty to invite at least the representatives of other castes from the village under the threat of their losing prestige. On the contrary it was unthinkable for a family from an untouchable caste to invite clean castes to a feast. If the family could not afford the prescribed entertainment for all members of the caste group they could ask the caste council for permission to only symbolically entertain one to three representatives of the caste. If the permission was not granted the family was obliged to find the means for the prescribed entertainment under the threat of a caste boycott. As far as I was able to determine, the decision to grant the concession was not determined by the economic circumstances of the family but by number of feasts the family had given to the caste group recently. If for example someone had died in family which only recently had arranged a wedding for their son or daughter, it was very probable that permission to cut down the entertainment would be granted, if asked for, without any consideration as to whether family was in strained circumstances. I found many cases when such a concession was granted to the richest families in the village.

Not all castes in the village had, or celebrated their caste festivals. Only the Brahmans, Farmers, Herdsmen, Blacksmith-Carpenters, and Potters regularly celebrated their festivals. All Farmers and Herdsmen celebrated their caste festival but the rites were performed separately in each household. The Brahmans, Blacksmith-Carpenters and Potters performed at least some phases of their caste rituals together as a group. Formerly, the most celebrated festival was the caste festival of the Farmers, nua khai, preceding the beginning of paddy harvest. The Farmers celebrated it for three days and handed out cooked food or food-stuffs to all their clients from serving and artisan castes. Today the Farmers, who have grown poor since then, celebrate their festival only one day, also cutting back the number of people entertained. The Potters now celebrate their festival of the wheel, chakka puja, for seven days and give food not only to all their clients but to all members of untouchable castes who come to receive it. The number of holidays from the ritual calendar of the village are also connected with castes: Durga-puja, Ganesha-puja, Lakshmi-puja (Dhanu-sankranti and Mankara-sankranti),

Holi. These are not caste holidays but holidays which, although celebrated by all villagers on the same day, are not celebrated by the village together. Each caste celebrates them separately, the rites performed on such holidays varying slightly from caste to caste. In the case of worship of the village deities only the division between clean and untouchable castes is important: all clean castes worship the village deities — Salapama and the sacred script deity — together and the untouchable castes worship Mangalama, another village deity, whose shrine is situated in the Bauri hamlet.

F The Caste Hierarchy

To determine precisely the hierarchy of castes living in a village is almost an impossible task. Therefore resulting hierarchical list must be somewhat tentative. An attempt to set individual castes into a hierarchical order is, nevertheless, necessary as a caste hierarchy undisputably exists and because all the villagers are much preoccupied with the question. The difficulty begins only with the attempt to place each individual caste precisely in one place on the hierarchical list with precisely defined relations of sub- and superordination to all other castes. Commensal rules, diet composition, caste occupation, the behaviour of members of different castes in mutual contact and certain cultural characteristics of caste are indicators of caste position within the caste hierarchy.

Besides endogamy, a caste is separated from all other castes by the fact that complete commensality exists only within the caste. Commensal rules state that a person can accept cooked food and drinking water only from a person of caste status superior or equal to their own. To accept cooked food from a member of a caste inferior to one's own leads to the pollution, a polluted person has to perform purificatory ceremony to regain normal ritual status. Because of the inherent ritual equality within one caste, everyone, including women, is allowed to accept cooked food from anyone else. Commensal restrictions followed by women often differ from the restrictions applied to men. In many cases, when men will accept cooked food from a caste considered relatively equal their own, women of the same caste will not. Commensal restrictions applied to women are generally stricter.

People from all castes can, and will, accept cooked food and drinking water from Brahmans. For this reason Brahmans are hired to prepare food at feasts for several clean castes. Brahmans accept cooked food and drinking water from no caste but their own. All the other clean castes accept water from each other, none of them will accept drinking water from the untouchable castes. All castes except Farmers, and today Potters, accept

cooked food from Scholars. Scholars accept cooked food only from Brahmans. Farmers formerly did not accept cooked food from anybody but Brahmans, today some of them accept cooked food from Potters but not on such official occasions as wedding feasts. All castes except Scholars, Herdsmen and Confectioners used to accept cooked food from Farmers. Today Potters have joined the category of castes which do not accept cooked food from the Farmers. Scholars, Farmers and Confectioners did not accept cooked food from Herdsmen; recently they were joined by Potters, the same applying to the caste of Confectioners. Only Barbers and untouchable castes accept cooked food from Blacksmith-carpenters. Previously only the untouchable castes used to accept cooked food from Oilpressers and Potters. Today all castes except Brahmans and Scholars accept cooked food from Potters, but not yet on official occasions. Men, especially young single men, from the clean castes of Blacksmith-carpenters, Oilpressers, Potters and recently Farmers, Herdsmen and Confectioners eat food prepared by any clean caste member so that when a group of friends goes to a neighbourhood shrine or temple on a picnic, all may eat the food prepared there. From the Barbers only Bauri will accept cooked food; from the Astrologers no one will accept food. Members of different untouchable castes do not accept cooked food from each other.

The caste hierarchy based on commensal rules would be as follows: Brahmans, Scholars, Farmers, Herdsmen and Confectioners, Blacksmith-carpenters, Oilpressers and Potters, Barbers, Astrologers and untouchable castes. At present the Potters would belong to the category with Farmers, Herdsmen and Confectioners.

The composition of a castes' diet is another indicator of a position in the caste hierarchy even if not as precise and basic as one based on commensal rules. Differing diets are of differing prestige: a vegetarian diet is superior to a nonvegetarian diet; in a nonvegetarian diet the polluting foodstuffs are in ascending order eggs, fish, mutton, poultry, pork and beef; the consumption of alcohol is inferior to temperance. The Brahmans are the only strictly vegetarian caste in the village as they do not eat even eggs. Some villagers, mainly the Potters, accuse the local Brahmans of eating eggs, the accusation being as far as I could ascertain false. Of the nonvegetarian foods the Scholars eat only eggs. The Herdsmen were formerly a vegetarian caste with the exception of egg consumption, they did not eat fish or meat; even now, on ritual occasions of birth, wedding and death they eat only vegetarian dishes. In their daily life, though, they eat fish and sometimes surreptitiously even mutton. The Farmers officially eat only eggs and fish, but secretly in the family circle prepare mutton from time to time. Confectioners eat eggs and

fish, eating mutton rarely, when only their family is present. Officially they deny the fact as do the Herdsmen. The Blacksmith-carpenters and Oilpressers eat eggs, fish and mutton. The Potters formerly ate mutton; though of course denied by the Potters other villagers accuse them of formerly eating poultry. Today at public and ritual feasts the Potters eat eggs and fish, and those from them, who have accepted the religion of the new sect in the village, eat only vegetarian food. Surrepetitiously though, in the privacy of their own families, most of them prepare mutton from time to time, even if they use different pots for the preparation of meat from those used to prepare other food. Astrologers eat eggs and fish. The Barbers exclude from their diet only pork and beef. All the untouchable castes consume pork, but none of them eat beef. Only the Bauri drink alcoholic beverages openly but all men in the village with the exception of the Brahmans have tasted alcohol at least once.

According to a ranking based on a caste diet, local castes would be arranged in following order: Brahmans, Scholars and Herdsmen, Farmers and Confectioners and Astrologers, Blacksmiths and Oilpressers and Potters, Barbers, Washermen and Watchmen, Bauri. At present, Potters would share a place in the hierarchy with Farmers and Herdsmen and Confectioners.

Occupation as an indicator of caste position in the caste hierarchy is the same as the two previous indicators; it is based on ideas concerning pollution. Certain caste occupations are held to be clean: priesthood, scholarship and agriculture; with other occupations regarded as defiling, such as washing other people's clothes, shaving other people, or cutting their hair and nails. The calling of Herdsmen is clean as the god Rama was engaged in it. The making of sweets is held to be clean because sweets are offerings to the gods. Why some artisan castes are regarded as cleaner, and therefore higher, than other castes cannot be explained on the basis of degrees of pollution attached to caste work. The explanations for different positions in the caste hierarchy are only local and not based on a general principle of pollution. Blacksmith-carpenters are held to be the highest of artisan castes because the carpenters of the area at regular intervals make the new body of Lord Jagannath for the Jagannath Temple in Puri. Every year they also make carts for the cart festival in Puri when the gods are transported from one temple to another. The formerly lowest position of Potters among the artisan castes is locally explained by the allusion that "they cut God's head off" in the process of making pots. When beginning pots on the wheel, the potter shapes the clay, first into the form resembling the shape of Shiva linga, then cuts it with a thread. The physical work as such is regarded as degrading; even Farmers, whose calling is held to be clean, do not perform, if they

are sufficiently prosperous to afford it, the actual agricultural work themselves. The actual work is done for them by their agricultural labourers. The following would be a hierarchical list based on caste occupation: Brahmans, Scholars, Farmers and Herdsmen, Confectioners, Blacksmith-carpenters, Oilpressers, Potters, Barbers and the untouchable castes. The astrologers proved to be impossible to place.

The services provided by the Barber and Washerman can be used as auxiliary indicators of caste rank. The Barber shaves, cuts hair, toe- and fingernails for all clean castes, but his services for individual castes differ. When cutting toe-nails of the Brahmans, Scholars, Farmers, Herdsmen, Confectioners and Blacksmith-carpenters he holds their foot on his knee, while the toe-nails of Oilpressers and Potters are cut with the foot on the ground. The Brahmans and Scholars must purify themselves after being shaved by the Barber, because the Barber's touch is defiling. They must not touch the bathing vessel themselves as it would become defiled, some other member of the household must pour the water over them. The place where the Barber was sitting must be washed by a mixture of cowdung and water to purify it in the homes of Brahmans, Scholars, Farmers, Herdsmen and Confectioners. The Barber also performed another service for their Farmer patrons, he cleaned away banana leaves on which food at the feast was served. If members of another caste were present at the feast, the Barber would clear away only the banana leaves used by the Brahmans, Scholars, Farmers and Herdsmen, all other castes removing their own leaves. At present the local Barber refuses to clear away even the leaves used by Farmers and Herdsmen and it has become habitual to hire people mainly from Puri for this service.

The Brahmans, Scholars, Farmers, Herdsmen and Confectioners must not wear clothes washed by the Washermen without first purifying them. The clothes washed by Washermen are purer than soiled clothes but not pure enough; they are still defiled by the touch of unclean Washermen. Before a member of these castes can wear the clothes again he must dip them in water.

Another auxiliary indicator of caste rank is the mutual behaviour between people from different castes. Members of all castes must pay respect to their patron, formerly the Farmers. The Blacksmith-carpenters, Oilpressers, Potters, Barbers and the untouchable castes had to step aside when they met a Farmer even if they had to step into the water and mud in the fields. The Potters do not do it anymore. Previously when members of these castes passed a Farmer sitting on the veranda of his house inside the village they were obligated to bow low and pass him touching the ground with their hand. They also were not allowed to walk through the Farmers' part of the village with an open umbrella

or ride through on a bullock cart. The same restrictions applied to the untouchable castes everywhere in the village. A violation of the rules meant immediate physical punishment and could mean a fine by the village council. Herdsmen, Farmers and Confectioners paid respect to each other according to age and general social position in the village rather than according to their caste origin, the same applying to the intercourse between Blacksmith-carpenters, Oilpressers and Potters and among the untouchable castes. Barbers and Astrologers pay the respect to all clean castes in the village.

Castes differ from each other as to the freedom of movement granted to their women. The higher the caste the more restricted are their women. Women from the castes of Brahmans, Scholars and Farmers are not allowed to work in the fields and gardens at all, not even under the circumstance a family desperately needs labour and cannot afford to hire it. A violation of the rule is punished by high fine set by the village caste council. Widows of Farmers who have no relatives in the village and have no means to hire the necessary labourers for cultivation of the land must ask the caste council for permission to work the land. The caste council will give permission only when they cannot find any other solution to the problem. Women from other clean castes can work in fields and gardens, but for their own families only, never for a pay. Only the Bauri women work regularly as seasonal labourers. At present the rich Potters forbid their women to do any agricultural work. Women from Brahman and Scholar castes are not allowed to go to the forest to gather wood or cashew nuts. From Farmer caste only old women were allowed to go to the forest but even in their case it harmed the family prestige. Women from all other clean castes may go to the forest except for adolescent girls and young brides for five to seven years after the wedding. Only Bauri women go to the markets alone and do the actual shopping. Men from all the other castes do all the necessary shopping. Women from the untouchable castes and from the caste of Barbers are allowed to move freely everywhere in the village. The women from the Herdsman, Blacksmith-carpenter, Oilpresser, Potter and Astrologer castes, with the exception of adolescent girls and young brides, are also allowed to move freely everywhere in the village except in the Bauri hamlet. Today the Potters try to prevent their women from moving outside their own part of the village. Women from the Brahman, Scholar, Farmer, and Confectioner castes must not, with the exception of old women, leave their own part of the village.

The hierarchical lists based on the individual indicators of caste rank do not coincide. The resulting hierarchy cannot, therefore, be precise and must remain tentative: Brahmans, Scholars, Farmers, Confectioners and Herdsmen, Blacksmith-carpenters,

Oilpressers, Potters, Barbers and Astrologers, Washermen, Watchmen, and Bauri. The present hierarchical list differs in the position ascribed to the Potters by most villagers and indicated by most indicators of the caste rank. The Potters are now placed according to the actual behaviour among high clean castes in the category with Herdsmen and Confectioners, according to opinions of people from other castes in the first place among artisan castes as an equal or superior caste to the Blacksmith-carpenters. Potters themselves claim a position among the high clean castes.

In the village, there exists a considerable discrepancy between the caste hierarchy as it is conceptualized by the villagers and as it exists in their behaviour. The Farmers were and still are honoured in daily life more than Brahmans who are ritually a much higher caste. In the case of the Farmers, their economic strength and political power raised their caste rank, placing them in the highest position in the village with no regard to the higher ritual status of Brahmans. Recently the same thing has been happening to the Potters. Their original ritual rank, however, is so low, as compared to Farmers, that not even their new high economic and political position can completely overcome it. The prestige of their whole caste group and of any individual Potter family is much higher now than it was at the turn of the century. Yet, not even the changes in their life style, such as women labour, their diet, a new religion, or their economic and political power were enough to secure for them a high position within the local caste hierarchy. The fact the Potters have tried to better their caste position within the local caste hierarchy at the time they were already at the peak of their economic and political strength, shows that a great importance is still ascribed to castes and caste hierarchy by the villagers.

II VILLAGE ECONOMY

A Traditional Economy

Seventy years ago, as well as today, the village was predominantly agricultural, paddy being the main crop. The livelihood of all inhabitants depended entirely on local agricultural production. Land was the main means of production and therefore also the main criterion of wealth. Consequently a relation to land was a fundamental economic relationship from which ensued all main economic relationships in the village: landowner-tenant, landowner-agricultural labourer, creditor-debtor, and landowner-member of serving or artisan caste. From the last derived a mutual relationship between members of various artisan and serving castes. Landowners were in the center of all economic relationships within the community. Land they owned provided a liveli-

hood not only to themselves and their families but also to all landless villagers. The landless villagers earned their living in one of the three ways: by participating in agricultural production (tenant farmers, labourers or herdsmen), by providing goods necessary for farming and maintaining the landowners' households (Blacksmith-carpenters, potters, oilpressers and confectioners), and by providing various services to the landowners (barbers, washermen, watchmen, astrologers, priests). In exchange for their labour, products and services they received a certain share of village agricultural production from their patrons-landowners.

The land in the village was the private property of individual families. The British administration in the area easily adopted the local system of zamindarship, with only minor modifications, for tax collecting. Villagers paid house tax and land tax to their zamindar who kept the house tax and handed the land tax minus a small part, which he kept, over to the administration. Individual zamindarships of the area differed widely as to the number of villages they included. Zamindars usually but not necessarily owned the land in „their“ villages. Even if they did not own any land in a particular village or if they sold it they still held the title which gave them the right to collect taxes from the villagers. Under normal circumstances the title was handed down in male line within the family though the title could be sold.

Originally the village had a zamindar from Bengal, as Orissa and Bengal both belonged to the same province. Before the separation of Orissa from Bengal the Bengali zamindar had sold part of the village title together with some land in the village to a Brahman from Puri, and from that time till abolishment of zamindarism the village had two different zamindars.

Apart from the land owned by zamindars the rest of the land in the village was owned exclusively by families from the Farmer caste. Seven joint families from Salua subcaste owned together seventy eight acres of land, two families from Dalua subcaste were landless. Only four families from Salua subcaste owned enough land to support themselves and their agricultural labourers. Other families leased and cultivated the zamindars' land on a yearly basis. Members of other castes owned only their houses on their own or borrowed land, borrowed land belonging mostly to the zamindars. Some of them had small gardens where they grew vegetables for their own consumption. Members of artisan castes owned tools necessary for their occupation. Agricultural labourers owned only small agricultural implements. None of the non-Farmers owned any agricultural land. Rich Farmers had their own private ponds for bathing and washing and also for washing and watering of cattle. The rest of the villagers used three public village ponds. Each part of the village had a public well which

was used by all its inhabitants. Rich Farmers had private wells on their home-site.

The land and any other property (house, gardens, jewelry, money, etc.) was owned by men from the oldest living generation in the family. The ideal form of the family was the joint family, a family consisting of parents and nuclear families of sons and, rarely, of nuclear families of sons' sons, or in case of the father's death, of nuclear families of brothers. Land was registered in the names of the men of the oldest living generation in the family. Women did not and were not entitled to own land or any other but their personal property. Their personal property, if any, came from gifts from their father and relatives, mainly the mother's brother. In the case of a woman's death men had the right to dispose of her property. When the man died, his land and other property came to his own sons. If the younger generation continued to live together in one joint family even after their father's death, the whole property remained undivided and was used to support the whole joint family. The moment the brothers or cousins decided to part and establish separate households they each received a share of the property of their own father, not necessarily an equal share of the whole property used by the whole joint family. When there was no son in the nuclear family parents could adopt one, usually from relatives or in case they had daughter they could marry her off and bring their son-in-law to live in their house. The son-in-law then used and managed the property but did not own it. The property was registered in names of his sons. The property of childless man came after his death first to his brothers, then to his brother's sons, then the father's brother's sons, and finally to the father's sister's sons. If there were no living heirs, the property belonged to the state. A last will annulled all the rules of inheritance.

The zamindars of this particular village did not reside in the village and did not therefore cultivate their land themselves. All their land there was cultivated through tenant families of Farmers. The land was leased on the principle of share-cropping. The tenant cultivated the land himself or with hired labour and after the harvest kept half of the crop and handed the other half over to the owner. The size of the "half" was decided on every year anew. The zamindar's representative walked through the fields with the tenant just before the harvest and together they assessed the possible yield and so decided on the size of the "half" which the tenant was to hand over. An agreement was written and the tenant signed it. The tenant then was bound to give the owner the agreed amount regardless whether the actual yield coincided with the estimate. If he failed to meet the agreement the zamindar would refuse him next year's lease and could sue him in court for the lacking payment. The zamindars leased

their land only to the Farmers in the village. The villagers' explanation is that the Farmers were the only people at the time who had knowledge, experience and equipment necessary for proper cultivation of the land. Thus the Farmers were the only villagers who gave a guarantee to deliver the amount agreed on and a guarantee that the yield would be up to the quality of the land.

The Farmers were the only landowning caste in the village. All the other castes were landless, engaged in their traditional caste occupations, receiving their livelihood from the Farmers in exchange for their work, goods and services. The system of mutual economic dependence between the landowning patrons from the Farmer caste and members of serving and artisan castes, the clients, has been generally described in the section of this paper dealing with the castes and does not need to be repeated. This is how this system of economic relationships based on the caste division of labour has worked in the village. The relations of all castes in the village to the Farmers represented the cornerstone of the whole system of economic interdependence of castes. Other relationships within the system are derived from them.

Brahmans providing their services to villagers came formerly from Mahopur and from Chaitana. For performing the rites for individual families the Brahmans were traditionally paid in paddy, vegetables and clothes; cash becoming recently acceptable. The Brahmans are reimbursed for services to the village shrines from the yield of each shrines' endowed land. The Brahmans from Mahopur are exclusively priestly families, they are not engaged in any secular occupation. The family from Chaitana and the family of Brahmans settled in Bhuan which later took over the duties of the Chaitana family engaged in agriculture as a subsidiary occupation. As caste rules forbid Brahmans to plough the land, they personally do no ploughing but hire agricultural labourers from the Bauri caste. The Mahopur family officiating at rites of passage split about fifteen years ago into three separate families. Each new family retained one third of customers from Bhuan. When ten years ago the Bhuan Brahman family divided in two, one family took over the care of the village shrines, the other one performs all other rites required by the villagers. From both these families people hire cooks for multicaste feasts.

The Herdsmen cared for the cattle of rich Farmer-patrons, and were paid annually in paddy according to the number of cattle entrusted to their care. The Herdsmen also provided special services for the Farmers: at weddings they carried the bride or bridegroom from bride's or bridegroom's village to bridegroom's or bride's village, delivered invitations to the wedding and delivered contributions to the wedding feast from invited relatives.

For these special services they received a special payment of paddy, vegetables and clothes. Today families of Herdsmen care for the cattle of anyone who cannot or will not take care of it himself. They are still paid annually by each family in paddy according to the number of cattle in their care. All families except one are now engaged in milk trade with Puri. The milk trade represents the larger part of their total income. They buy milk in Bhuan and the adjoining villages and sell it twice a day in Puri.

Confectioners make sweets used mainly as offerings. From substantial families of Farmers, their patrons, Confectioners received a yearly payment in paddy and they supplied the families with sweets whenever requested. Other villagers paid for required sweets in foodstuffs in barter and recently in cash. Today only one Confectioner family continues to make sweets. Their son supplies an additional income for the family as a seasonal labourer. The second family of Confectioners living in the village has completely abandoned their caste calling and make their living as the agricultural labourers of Potters. The Blacksmith-carpenters received from landowning Farmers who produced a surplus of paddy a fixed quantity of paddy annually, the amount of paddy depending on number of ploughs owned by the patron family. For the annual payment the Blacksmith-carpenter repaired agricultural and other implements of the patron family. For repairing a cart or making a new plough the Blacksmith-carpenter was paid separately in paddy and vegetables. Today both the services and the payments are the same, only besides Farmer-patrons there are now also Potter-patrons. Other than patron families paid and still pay for repairs or for new goods either by barter or in cash.

Oilpressers formerly supplied patron Farmers families with pressed rice and oil for annual payment in paddy. Other families who brought their rice to Oilpressers to be made into the pressed rice paid for their work and for the oil by barter. Today all villagers pay for pressed rice immediately either in kind or in cash. Neither family presses oil from seeds anymore because the home production of oil is not competitive with the industrially produced oil available in any village store. Both families supplement their income through seasonal labour in agriculture.

Potters provided the more substantial families of Farmers with pots and pans whenever required in return for an annual payment of paddy. The amount of payment was fixed regardless of an actual amount of delivered pottery. Families which did not grow a surplus of paddy had to pay for their required pots and pans with services or foodstuffs. The Potters also provided for their patrons and other village families complete sets of household pottery on occasions of birth, death and wedding for which they received a special payment of paddy, vegetables and clo-

thes. The Potters also made pottery beds, storage bins, vessels for feeding and watering cattle and votive figures used as offerings in local shrines. Today the Potters are paid in cash for their goods, rarely in kind.

The Barber receives from his patrons, the rich landowning families of Farmers, today Farmers and Potters, a yearly payment in paddy for his services. The amount of paddy is fixed according to number of adult men in the patron family. Other families which use the Barber's services pay either with their own services or, today, in cash. The Barber also provides special services on ritual occasions such as births, deaths and weddings in return for special payment in paddy, cooked food and vegetables. The Patron Farmer families also used Barber's service when giving a feast where other castes beside their own participated. Barber's task was to clean away banana leaves on which the food was served in exchange for cooked food. The Washermen wash clothes of clean caste villagers. For annual payment of paddy from the more substantial families, fixed by number of adults in the family, the Washermen wash the patrons' clothes once a fortnight. Other families from clean castes pay for the Washer-man's services with their own services or recently in cash. Most of the poor families wash their own clothes and have only menstrual clothing washed by Washerwomen. The services of Washermen are also required by all clean castes on occasions of death, child birth and wedding. For these special services the Washermen receive payment of cooked food and paddy and are entitled to the clothes of the deceased person. The Bauri caste traditionally supplied agricultural labourers for the landowning Farmers. They worked for annual payment in paddy; the payment differing slightly from year to year according to the size of the harvest. In the transplant and harvest seasons women from the Bauri caste also worked for the Farmers and were paid daily wages, a fixed amount of paddy. Every Farmer family used services of one Bauri family during the wedding and other ceremonies when the Bauri blew the conch shell in return for meals. The head of the Watchman family was employed by the village as a village servant whose duty was to watch the village at nights. The Watchman has paid annually in paddy from the village fund. Today he is paid by state and reports to the police.

Rendering services and supplying goods to the patron families was compulsory; it could, in case of necessity, be enforced, and refusal to comply was punished. Every family of artisan and serving castes supplied their products and services for a group of patron Farmer families. The only exception was the Bauri caste. A group of Bauri families was attached to every patron Farmer family and provided the labour force for them. The tie between the artisan or serving caste family and the patron family

was hereditary and could not be discontinued without approval of the caste council of concerned castes. Because an occupation traditionally ascribed to one caste can be performed only by its members, people from the artisan and serving castes depend not only on the landowners for their living, but also on other artisan and serving castes for their products and services. Consequently there existed network of economic interdependence, relationships between individual families of the various artisan and serving castes. The families used services or products of the same families from other castes as did their respective patron families.

Despite the described system of economic ties between individual families stemming from the caste division of labour which ensured a basic living for all members of the community there were still families which sometimes found it hard to subsist with their share. In such case the family had to find a source of supplementary income. Members of the artisan castes would take their surplus products to fairs or weekly and monthly markets in the area, or would go around villages in the area trying to sell their products from house to house. The Potters could be hired to help to build houses in the neighbourhood, but their services were required only rarely as most villagers either built their houses themselves or with the help of their regular labourers. Members of the serving castes and some of the artisan castes as well, worked as needed doing agricultural seasonal work for daily wages. Another source of supplementary income, used mainly by the Bauri, the poorest caste in the village, was stealing wood from the forest which was property of British administration. Practically all villagers stole wood but most of them took only what they needed for themselves. The Bauri sold the stolen wood in villages situated too far from the forest where wood was scarce. When all these ways were not enough to feed the family, there was the possibility of borrowing rice. First the family would turn for help to their relatives, preferably to matrilinear relatives. When their relatives could not help they would try to borrow rice from their patron family as patron would lend rice to his clients without charging any interest. The debtor then paid his debt by working for a smaller than normal payment until the debt was settled. The last possibility was to borrow rice from a family with whom they were not tied by a patron-client relationship, in which case they paid back the borrowed amount at 50 % interest. If the debtor was unable to return the borrowed rice and interest he and his family had to work off the debt. Beside difficulties with securing food for the family, individual families fell into economic difficulties by unforeseen losses such as flood damage, drought or loss of bullocks and/or extraordinary expenditures on such occasions as weddings, death ceremonies, children's health and prosperity ceremonies and ritual purificatory rites.

Unforeseen economic losses and disproportionately high costs of various ceremonies, mainly rites of passage, were and still are the main causes of families getting poor and falling into debt. In most cases such expenditures were higher than the family budget could allow and it was therefore necessary to get the capital from an outside source. Relatives gave contributions in case of ceremonies, but their help was more of a symbolic nature and covered only an insignificant part of the total expenses. In case of economic loss, relatives were not obliged to help at all. Facing such a situation, the family had either to pledge or sell jewelry, borrow money, or pledge or sell their land. When jewelry was pledged, money had to be paid within a specified time together with interest which averaged about 80 %. If the owner could not clear the debt in time the jewelry became the possession of creditor regardless of the real value of the jewelry. The actual value of the jewelry was invariably much higher than the sum for which it was pledged. If family decided to sell the jewelry a buyer would be found among the goldsmiths of the area. When a larger sum was needed, jewelry was not enough. The family then borrowed money or sold their land. Selling of their land was the resource a family would turn to only in case there was no other way of obtaining the needed money. Landless villagers had no choice while those with land preferred to borrow money rather than to sell their land. The normal rate of interest on money lent was between 75 % and 150 % per year. An individual might be able to borrow money from his patron, who could lend him money without charging any interest. The debtor then paid his debt by working for the patron without reward or for a reduced reward. If money for a loan could not be obtained from the patron, a family had to turn to rich landowners either in the village or, more frequently, in surrounding villages. The loan included principle, interest, time when the loan fell due and security on the principle, land in case of a landed family, the house in case of a landless family. If the debtor failed to repay the loan in time the land became the creditor's property. Landless people could work off their debts which were invariably much smaller than loans to landed families. Only very rarely would people turn to their relatives for a loan. If they did it was only in case a small sum was needed and then it was in-laws or possibly matrilinear relatives who would be approached. A loan from relatives was without interest.

B Changing Economic Position of the Potters

Towards the end of eighteen nineties the road connecting two towns, Puri and Gop, was constructed. The road made markets in both towns available for the villagers as the road passes about half a mile from the village. The villagers could sell and

buy at the town markets which, especially the Puri market, already operated mainly on a cash basis. Puri being a town of pilgrimage had busier markets and was more attractive to the villagers. During the rainy season the section of the road to Puri was more passable than the section leading to Gop. As a result the villagers mainly used the Puri markets for all their buying and potential selling and went to Gop only during the Gop annual fair with its big market lasting a whole month where farmers and artisans from a wide area sold their surplus.

At that time two potter families only lived in the village. Both had come to Bhuan about fifteen years earlier. Both families soon started to make use of the opportunity which the road offered them: to sell their pottery at town markets. They gradually increased their production and established ties with merchants in Puri who sold their products for them. The potter was obliged to deliver the pottery as merchant was obliged to accept it. The potter received one third of the payment upon delivery and the balance when the goods were actually sold. The Potters were the only villagers who were able to make use of opportunity the road offered. They were able to produce enough good quality pottery to spread their markets beyond the village boundaries to the town markets. The technology of pottery making lent itself to the advance as increased production needed only an increase of labour invested, leaving the traditional technology unchanged. At the same time nowhere in Orissa had more modern and advanced production of pottery been developed. The traditional potters remained the only suppliers of pottery for both town and village. Then, pottery was used more widely than now, not only for cooking and preparing food, but it was also used for serving food, for processing and storing of agricultural products, for storing water and for feeding and watering cattle.

Other parts of the community used the town markets to shop for goods that were not available in the village, mostly "luxury" goods such as soap, special kinds of cloth, etc., and only rarely did they sell their surplus products there. These transactions were of the same volume and economic significance as those previously carried on at the local village markets. Even rich Farmers did not make much of the new opportunity to sell at the town markets. Most of their surplus was divided into payments to their clients so that resulting net surplus, if it existed at all, did not represent a significant part of their income. The serving castes who had nothing to sell were unaffected by the road construction.

At the beginning of this century three other Potter families moved into the village attracted by the proximity of the town markets. They were granted permission to settle in the village by both the caste and the village councils. They built their kilns and found shopkeepers in Puri who would market their goods. In

time each individual family of Potters established such a marketing relationship with several Puri shopkeepers, half the relationships have continued until the present. The two families who settled in the village before the construction of the road immediately became a part of the village caste division of labour system. After starting to sell their goods in Puri, they continued to supply the villagers with pottery for the yearly payment and special rewards. The three families who came later were also absorbed into the system of patron-client relationships. The patrons of the original two families were simply divided among the now five Potter families. In terms of the patron-client relationship Potters were one of the castes dependent on the Farmers. The Farmers within the framework of the traditional village economy controlled all the economic resources of the village. Other castes made their living through their dependent relationship toward the Farmers. By entering the village patron-client relationship system the Potters became economically dependent on the Farmers. The patron-client relationship they accepted was traditionally expressed in certain behaviour showing subordination and therefore respect to the patron in greeting, form of address and seating arrangements.

With the road constructed, a new source of income was open to the Potters, this being cash income of a markedly high purchasing power. Since that time the Potters have produced for the Puri market on a cash basis. One of the first two Potter families in the village was a joint family of seven brothers. The family had enough man power to build a second kiln and start large scale pottery production. Their profits were substantially more than the profits of other smaller Potter families. The head of the family then bought 300 acres of sand land from the British administration and as the land could not be cultivated it lay fallow until recently when the present head of the family planted there quickly growing trees to be used as fuel. The other Potter families while enjoying smaller profits still had substantially increased incomes, the payments for providing their patrons and other villagers with pottery in their case also no longer represented the bulk of their income. Potters became independent of the Farmers and the village economic system, their main source of income now being outside the village. Yet Potters did not try to isolate themselves economically from the village. Land, originally the only source of wealth, was also the only symbol and criterion of wealth which lead the Potters to invest everything they gained from Puri markets into land within the village. Despite their actual economic independence the Potters continued to fulfil their obligations stemming from their role of the Farmers' clients.

At the beginning of nineteen twenties the family of seven brothers had already accumulated considerable wealth in money and jewelry. When Orissa was separated from Bengal in 1912 becoming an independent province the Bengali zamindar was forced to sell his land and title in Orissa. The family of seven brothers bought the title covering a half of their own village as well as four other villages together with 600 acres in these villages. Other Potter families also bought some land from the zamindar, between five and fifteen acres per family. Buying the land was facilitated by a flood of the previous year which considerably depreciated the land.

Now, the Potters as landowners become, in the terms of the village, wealthy or at least well-to-do. This and the fact they produced not for the village alone but now mainly for the town markets were the first breaks in the traditional economic structure of the village where previously the only caste of landowners were Farmers and the only means of livelihood within the village. The change in the Potter's conditions soon expressed itself: they built new more spacious houses, constructed private ponds, which always had been a symbol of wealth and high social status, and dug private wells either in their back yards or in the street near their house. The family of the Potter-zamindar built the village first stone house with windows, pillars, and roof verandah. Another consequence of the Potters' increased wealth was that the Potters festivals and ceremonies became gradually more elaborate. The first thirty years of this century saw simultaneously with Potters' economic rise the economic decline of the village Farmers. Twenty one families sprang to existence by the devision of the original nine Farmer families, dividing the family property and land. Land which was traditionally leased to the Farmers with little or no land fell into the hands of new owners. The land of the Bengali zamindar in the village became the property of the Potter-zamindar though a small part of it was purchased by other Potters. At this time land owned by the zamindar from Puri had also been gradually sold: part of it to the Potters, part to two Farmer families from the village, the rest to the Farmers from surrounding villages. In addition the flood of 1911 hastened the economic demise of the Farmers as their only source of income was agriculture and they had no alternate income to reverse the losses from the flood. Another contributing factor in their decline was a general trend toward more expensive ceremonies at weddings or funerals. The trend was particularly demaging to the Farmers because they, as a dominant caste, were bound to it by fear of losing their prestige. All this created conditions which lead to a gradual loss of property for the previously wealthy Farmer families. A family of several sons became several families holding only a few acres after dividing the joint holding, to be-

come increasingly impoverished as the children of the families approached matrimonial age. Income from the land was now not enough to cover the wedding expenses, the family pledging or selling their land, each wedding or death hastening their economic decline. The process could be stopped or reversed only when in two successive generations there was only one son or one daughter as was the case with one rich Farmer family which was consequently able to retain their property intact. At the end of thirties there were nineteen Farmer families with little or no land (0—4 acres), one rich family with 32 acres and one family, at the end of the nineteenth century landless, now purchased fifteen acres from the Puri zamindar. This family had started a tea stall on the road to Puri where pilgrims stopped for refreshments and sometimes spent the night in. The profits from this stall were invested in the land.

In the thirties most of the land in the village was owned by Potters, two Farmer families and the Puri zamindar. Most of the land previously leased to the Farmers was now the property of the Potter-zamindar though a small part of it was owned by two Farmer families and other Potters. Except for the two zamindars, every landowner in the village was able to cultivate his land alone or with the help of agricultural labour. The zamindar from Puri still leased his land to the Farmers but as he owned only 33 acres, the main source of leased land was now the Potter-zamindar who was unable to cultivate all his land and therefore leased a part of it. Because of the reduction of family properties by the division of joint families the number of families employing agricultural labourers all year was considerably reduced. In the thirties there was only one rich Farmer family steadily employing several labourers from the Bauri caste and three Potter families employing together labourers from thirty five families. Other landowning families and families which cultivated leased land either did not need labourers or needed them only seasonally.

Change in property relations in the village lead to changes in the pattern of landowner-agricultural labourer relationships. Traditionally a Farmer family employed a group of Bauri families as their agricultural labourers. The tie between the Farmer family and the Bauri families continued from generation to generation. When the Farmers with the exception of one family lost most of their land they could no longer afford to employ the Bauri and to give them their living in exchange for their work. The loss of Farmers' land was paralleled by a threefold growth of the Bauris. Consequently the traditional patron families could not provide work and a living for all the families who had right to claim to be their clients. Only one Farmer family retained enough land to be able to continue to employ "their" Bauri. The second wealthiest Farmer family originally did not own any land, their acquisitions

being recent, and had no traditional ties with any Bauri families. They employed only one man from the Bauri caste throughout the year, others only seasonally. Another three families able to employ agricultural labourers were Potters: two well-to-do Potter families employed together Bauri from six families as well as two Farmers and one Confectioner. For seasonal work they hired mostly Bauri. From twenty six families providing the labour force for the Potter-zamindar only two were from the Bauri caste; the remainder were not from a caste traditionally working as agricultural labourers: twenty two families were from the Farmer caste, two from the Confectioner caste; eleven of twenty two Farmer families were from a neighbouring village which was included in the zamindarship of the Potter-zamindar. There were only few Bauri in the thirties tied to the landed families by agricultural labourer-landowner relationship. Most of the Bauri were hired only seasonally as day labourers, permanent agricultural labourers in the village now being mostly Farmers, that is from the caste of traditional patrons, landowners.

Another change resulting from the change in property relations was a change in landowner-tenant relationships. The previous zamindars were not members of the community, not living in the village and rarely coming into the contact with the villagers, the most frequent contact being through their employees. Tenants had for all practical purposes the same role and position as local landowners. Their relationship of tenants to the owner of the land was known in the village but bore no significance in terms of community social relations. It was a relationship pointing from the village to the zamindar, to whom not only tenants but all other villagers were subordinate. Similar to the actual village landowners, the tenants employed "their" Bauri families and got all the services and products from the other castes in exchange for stipends. This situation has changed as landowners changed. The zamindar from Puri continued to lease his land but his holdings decreased to only thirty three acres in the village. Most of the leasable land was now in the hands of the Potter-zamindar who followed the same policy as the previous zamindar, leasing his land to the Farmer families. Unlike the previous zamindar he was a member of the community, living in the village, and from the caste traditionally subordinate and dependent on the Farmers. The changed landowner-tenant relationships could no longer be ignored by the community as they were integral part of patron-client relationships in the village.

The Farmers' loss of property and the economic upsurge of Potters lead to another change: it were now mainly Potters to whom the villagers turned to for loans when they were needed. From the traditional Farmer patrons whom their client would approach for an interest free loan there remained only one

wealthy family. Others now had to turn to their new patrons, Potters, or ask Potters for a regular loan. The creditor-debtor relationships now pointed to the Potters who were occupying the center of economic relationships in the village.

Let us return once more to the question of the full time agricultural labourers of the Potter-zamindar. Although the Bauri caste in the village was numerically very strong the zamindar family employed only two Bauri families. The rest of their full time agricultural labourers were mostly the Farmers (twenty two families) and few were from the Confectioner caste (two families). There now exist two village explanations why the Potter-zamindar principally employed the Farmers. "Bauri are unreliable, lazy and thieves" is the Potters' explanation, though the explanation does not agree with the traditional role of Bauris, that of agricultural labourers. The Farmers, if they give any, explain that they, Farmers, forbade the Bauris, their clients, to work for the Potters. The invalidity of this explanation can be seen when we consider that the Farmers themselves, traditionally the patrons, accepted employment from the Potter-zamindar. (The Farmers' explanation seems to be a part of the argument used in a struggle for political power in fifties and sixties.) A probable explanation seems to be that the Potter-zamindar employed Farmers because of their farming experience though the main reason was that it put the Farmers as employees of the Potter-zamindar in the dependent position of clients.

In the thirties the Potters reached an economically dominant caste position: they were the wealthiest caste in the village, landowners, employers and creditors, in other words patrons. They played the roles traditionally allocated to the Farmers. In the field of these economic relations the Potters became the Farmers' equals and more, they became patrons of a number of Farmer families who depended on them, namely on the Potter-zamindar and two other wealthy families, for their living. In the field of caste division of labour Potters were still in a serving position. They continued to fulfil the obligations of the position: they provided their patrons with their products on a compulsory basis in exchange for yearly payment in agricultural products. Within the framework of the caste division of labour the Farmers remained the patrons of the Potters. Traditionally the patron had considerable authority over his client.

Wealthy Potter families consequently had two roles within the economic field: the role of a patron-landowner and the role of caste client. The role of patron-landowner put Potters into the dominant position, the role of caste client into the subordinate position. Both roles were mutually incompatible because for two roles in one social field to be compatible they must give their bearer similar positions in the terms of superordination and sub-

ordination. While other artisan and serving castes still depended for their living on the traditional yearly payment they received for their services, the Potters no longer did. The income from the land together with the income from the pottery sale was sufficient to supply them with a living. The family of the Potter-zamindar was the first to break the ties of a caste patron-client system. In the forties they discontinued supplying their patrons with pottery. They were by that time the richest family in the village, the zamindari family, and were employing a number of Farmers as agricultural labourers. Theoretically the caste council of the Potters should have intervened and failing to do so the village council should have taken measures to punish the offenders and force them to resume their duties. The Potters did not even consider to take action against their leader and the social and economic position of the zamindari family made it very difficult for the village council to intervene. The village leaders avoided the threatening conflict by dividing the patrons of the Potter-zamindar among the rest of the Potter families. At the beginning of the fifties other two families stopped providing the pottery for their patrons. In that time the village was divided by a factional struggle for political power. One faction was lead by Farmers trying to retain their dominant position in village politics, the second faction was lead by Potters struggling to gain political dominance which would correspond to their existing economic dominance. The existence and struggle of the two factions rendered the village council ineffective so that it could not take steps against this new norm violation. In addition at that time Potters were supported by the law which said no serving caste or its members could be forced to provide their traditional services. During the next year the rest of the Potters followed the example of their leaders. From then, when a family needs pots or somebody wants a votive statue they go to any Potter who has the required goods on hand and pay for it in kind or recently in currency. Four poorer families still provide "weeding pottery" for a traditional payment of cloth, vegetables and paddy, though not only to their previous patrons but to anyone who requests it. They explain in this way they get much more for the pottery than they would get if they would sell it at the market price.

Since then the Potters have only received services and goods from other artisan and serving castes and have paid for them not with their own services but in a traditionally set yearly payments and with special rewards. The Potters thus had become patrons even in the last field of the economy where until then they had remained in the dependent subordinate position of clients. The incompatibility of the two roles removed, the Potters completed their change from a dependent serving caste into the economically dominant caste.

During the fifties and the sixties the economy of the village has continued to change. The thirties and the forties were the Potters' highest prosperity. The period after second world war brought an economic stagnation and a decline of the Potters. The issuance by the Government of India of the Zamindari Abolition Act consequently led to the loss of most of the Potter-zamindar's land in other villages. The family nevertheless has remained by far the richest one in the village. In the sixties the use of pottery in towns declined as people came more and more to use tin and aluminium dishes. Wedding expenses have been increasing, helping to reduce the Potters prosperity. Except three families which are until today strong large joint families, the remainder of the families have split, a consequence of which is a diminishing of their property. In absolute terms the Potters have grown poorer, yet because it was not a case of selling but only dividing their lands, the process did not result in an enrichment of other poorer segments of the community. Two of the Farmer families have not subsidiary source of income, one family owns a tea stall at the bus top on the road to Puri, the second owns a small store in the village. The economic situation of the Farmers has not improved and even though several families from other artisan and serving castes have managed to buy small pieces of land, none of these families had enough land to be self-supporting. They still depend on yearly payments for their goods and services and/or wages for working as seasonal agricultural labourers. Potters have remained economically the strongest caste in the community. The income of all Potter families from the sale of pottery and from the farming has been sufficient to ensure their living. None of the village Potters has been dependent on a supplementary source of income, none of them has worker as a hired labourer, not even seasonally. The two richest Potter families abandoned completely the pottery making and get their living exclusively from farming. Consequently the basic economic relations in the village have not changed significantly since the forties.

III VILLAGE POLITICS

A Village and Caste Councils

At the end of the last century all political power in Bhuan was in hands of village and caste councils. The village council, the caste councils and the single purpose intercaste councils managed village affairs, and were the center of political relations in the village. By political relations I mean relations which "are concerned with the distribution of resources and power." (Bailey 1960 : 243.) Power is understood in terms of Max Weber's definition: "the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action." (Weber 1959 : 180.)

The village caste council represented members of a caste living in the village. Its task was it to conduct the caste life in the village, to settle disputes, to solve problems and to punish offences of the caste members. The authority of the council was limited to the village members of the caste and to caste affairs only; it settled only disputes between members of the same caste. It punished such offences as disrespectful behaviour towards elders of the caste, premarital and extramarital sexual relations in case they occurred within the caste, caste and religious offences such as violation of commensal rules, or the accidental killing of a cow. Punishments used by the caste council ranged from reprimand, fines, compensation, feasts for the members of the council or for all members of the caste group, to caste boycott or even expulsion from the caste. No one from the village remembers or has heard of expulsion from the caste ever being used. The caste council does not hold regular meetings, coming together only when someone calls a meeting; either members of the caste group in need of the councils' decision in their family or caste affairs, or members of the council themselves in case of a denunciation of a caste member. The village caste council was composed of heads of all the existing patrilinear kinship groups of the caste in the village whether they represented one or more joint families, several individual families or just one individual family. The caste assembly was composed of representatives from all caste families living in the village. Other men could be, and often were, present at the meetings and could join in discussion of problems, but have no right to participate in the decision making. Theoretically all members of the council had the same right to participate in decision making but within each caste there existed one or more informal caste leaders who had no officially established authority, no officially stated privileges and no official duties, but were the men who actually decided problems and disputes. Other members of the council or assembly joined in the discussions of the case but listened to the opinion of the leaders; the decision of leaders being their decision. The informal leaders were also representatives of the village caste group in the multi-village caste council. The multivillage caste councils represented caste groups from several villages and managed the caste affairs concerning the whole area. Other men from the caste could be present at the council meeting but were not allowed to take part either in discussion or decision making.

Small conflicts between members of different castes could be resolved by single purpose inter-caste councils. The councils were created only when a situation arose requiring it; they were not stable either in membership or in time. The composition of the council depended on the litigants' choice; meaning the litigant could ask for the intervention of anyone he desired. In

practice it meant the litigants asked for the intervention of their caste elder or elders, or in case their caste had no leader whose authority was recognized outside the caste, their patrons, elders of the Farmers. Anyone could be present at the deliberation, but no one was allowed to interfere with the proceedings. In case of more important conflicts between members of different castes, or serious violation of rules for inter-caste behaviour or if a single purpose council failed to find a solution, the conflict was referred to the village council.

The village council was the highest political authority within the village, the council administering justice in cases of serious criminal and civil offences (theft, assault, murder), and serious violations of rules governing inter-caste contact (physical assault, disrespectful behaviour of a low caste member toward a member of a higher caste, sexual relations between a clean caste member and a member of an untouchable caste, disputes between patrons and clients) and property disputes. The council was also in charge of communal village actions such as the construction of roads, ponds, wells and shrines and acted as a representative of the village in contact with outside authorities. Each clean caste had its representative in the village council. The untouchable castes were not represented, untouchable caste representatives called to the village council meeting only when it was necessary to inform the untouchable castes of some council decision. In cases of planned action which required the participation of the whole village, or in cases the village council failed to solve, or wanted to impose a village boycott on someone, the village assembly was convened. The village assembly was composed of heads from all clean caste families; other men from clean castes having the right to be present but not to interfere with proceedings, and everyone from the untouchable castes excluded.

When a situation arose requiring the intervention of the village council, litigants, or members of the council themselves summoned the council meeting through a village messenger. The messenger called in turn on every member of the council, explaining briefly the nature of the case requiring the council's attention and settled with them the time and place of the meeting. The council then met, heard the case, in the cases of disputes or offence interrogated witnesses, deliberated and then tried to reach agreement on the solution. In cases of dispute or offence the council decided guilt party and punishment. Litigants had to deposit certain amounts of money with the council to show they were ready to accept the ruling of the council. The money was returned to the vindicated party while the money of the guilty party came to the village fund. If the litigant or litigants refused to accept the ruling, the council could summon a meeting of the village assembly where the case was again deliberated. If the

assembly reached the same decision as the council, new punishment, usually more stringent was set. The assembly almost never disagreed with the ruling of the council. To refuse the ruling of the village assembly meant imposing a village boycott on the offender. A village boycott meant members of serving and artisan castes were not allowed to provide their services for the offender and his family (unless he left the family). The offender could not take water from public wells or bathe in public ponds, no one being allowed to give him or accept from him food or water, no one selling him anything, and in case of birth or death in his family, neither his caste group nor the village specialists from other castes were allowed to help him. Any villager who broke the boycott was judged and punished in his turn. When the offender finally acknowledged his guilt, usually in case of death or birth in his family, he had to ask for convening of the village council, apologize and ask for a new and more stringent punishment, a high fine and a feast for the council or the whole village assembly.

As in cases before caste councils and single-purpose inter-caste councils decisions of the village council had to be reached by consensus. Without the consensus of all the members, there was no decision; the same rule applying to the village assembly decisions. If village leaders could not agree, and it became obvious that no one will change his opinion, the meeting broke without reaching a decision. The council then reconvened, and repeated the process until consensus was reached. The decision by consensus, required from the village assembly, shows that the real decision making was in fact in hands of few leaders: "Decision by consensus cannot be reached in a council where active members number more than about fifteen. A unanimous decision in a council of one hundred men is, in fact, an act of acclamation, or legitimation: the actual decision has been taken elsewhere." (Bailey 1965 : 2.) Punishments at the disposal of the village council were the same as those available to caste councils: from reprimand to boycott. The authority of the village council was higher because there was no appeal against its decision except in court or to the police.

B Sources of Authority

What gave certain members of the caste and village councils more authority than other council members? When discussing the source of authority within a caste, theoretically and in normative terms, the villagers list as sources only wisdom, experience from age, ability to influence people and family size. The head of a large joint family automatically has more authority than the head of an individual family. To keep a large joint family together is regarded as proof of wisdom, ability to deal with

people, and the ability to control them. A person whose joint family has split under his leadership is not considered capable of leadership, as he is unable to settle problems within his own family, and therefore cannot be expected to solve the problems of others. The head of a joint family also has more free time to devote to the affairs of others because there is usually a sufficient labour force in a joint family. A large joint family also increases one's authority because all the male adults in the family act as a unit and support, at least in public, the opinions and actions of their head. Villagers deny that property has or has had any influence on the political position of an individual. The fact that all leaders at the turn of the century were the wealthiest members of the caste, even if poor in terms of the whole village, is passed over as incidental. On the other hand, in discussions about concrete individuals from that period, about who was and who was not the accepted caste elder, the factor of wealth is almost the only one which villagers refer to: the grand father of so and so was a highly honoured man then, he owned land, or on the contrary, he was not a leader, his family did not own anything then. It shows that property was, and is, an important factor in acquiring authority. Within the caste, sources of authority have been wealth, family size, experience and ability to deal with other people.

Factors which villagers list as sources of authority within the village council, and so in the whole village, in the past are: caste, wisdom, experience, ability to lead people and family size. The factor of caste is superior to all other factors: a member of higher caste automatically had more authority than a member of a lower caste; the higher the caste the higher authority of its members. Only within the caste, authority and power of its members differ according to the auxiliary criteria of wisdom, experience, family size and ability to deal with people. As in discussions about caste elders, in discussions about general principles of authority within the village, villagers deny an influence of property on a person's authority. When villagers talk about this question in concrete terms, about concrete persons, in concrete periods, their statements show that factors which normatively should determine the degree of a person's authority do not coincide with factors which really determine it.

All villagers who remember agree that at the turn of the century the important village leaders acknowledged and respected by the whole village were the heads of three families of Farmers from the higher subcaste: two families of Gochayats and one family of Karana. The three families were the richest families in the village; in the amount of land owned other families of Farmers did not even come near them. Besides the three village leaders, Farmers name other persons as less important village

leaders: heads of Parada Jena and Swai families, though no one but Farmers remembers them. For all other castes, the only village leaders of that time were the three main leaders. When asked about persons named by the Farmers as the less important leaders, they concede that these mentioned had a certain authority because they were Farmers, but were not the real leaders as they did not own considerable property. Present members of Pradhan family, the family of one of the contemporary village leaders, state that their grandfather was one of the village leaders at the turn of the century but his claim is denied by everyone else. The Farmers' reasons are twofold: Pradhan are from the lower subcaste of Farmers and the Pradhan family was then landless, the rest of the villagers pointing out only the landlessness of the family. No one but Farmers were considered village leaders, and not even the present members of non-Farmer castes claim any of their elders were then accepted as village leaders. Reality differs from the theory mainly in the factor of wealth. The amount of land the leaders owned played an important part in the acquisition of authority. The list of leaders demonstrates the more land a family owned the more authority the family head commanded. Because all the land in the village was in the hands of the Farmers, whether they owned it or leased it from the zamindar, only Farmers could be village elders, and from Farmers only the heads of rich families possessed real authority and power.

The theory that the higher a person's caste, the higher his authority, seemingly agrees with village reality from the turn of the century. In terms of the ritual hierarchy of castes, the Farmers were the highest caste living in the village. If though, when considering the factor of caste, other villages within the same local area (an area with an identical caste hierarchy) are taken into the consideration not even the caste theory of authority coincides with reality. In neighbouring villages there lived members of ritually higher castes than Farmers, namely the Scholars and the Brahmans. In none of the neighbouring villages did Brahmans or Scholars have any considerable influence on decision making within the village, nor were they leading members of the village councils; Farmers were the village leaders. Applied to villages in the neighbourhood, as well as to Bhuan in later periods, the theory that the higher the caste the higher the authority does not apply. Nevertheless, authority and power in the village are connected with caste. All village leaders within the wider local area were from the caste of Farmers, none from any other caste. Elders of other castes had their authority and power limited to their own caste or to their appearance in single purpose inter-caste councils. When they failed to find a solution, the cases were referred to the village council, where the decision making was in hands of the Farmers' elders. When the village council or assembly delibe-

rated questions concerning the whole village, again only Farmers, the leaders of Farmers, really made the decisions. Representatives of the other clean castes were more or less passive members of the both councils, almost all political power being in the hands of Farmers. It must be stressed again that it was not the entire caste, not all the male members of the caste, who actually had the authority and executed it. Only the heads of the richest joint families had real authority. They were the core of politically dominant group in the village. Other Farmers, whose part was to support their leaders, were on the outer edges of the group, sharing with their leaders only symbolic signs of power, not the power itself.

From other villages' examples it is clear that position in the caste hierarchy was not the source of Farmers' political authority and power. Their political power and authority had roots elsewhere. Farmer were numerically the strongest caste in the area. The only exception in Bhuan was the Bauri caste, whose untouchable status automatically excluded them from the competition for authority, as they could not even be present at the meetings of the village assembly. All land in the village (as well as land in the wider local area) was owned or rented by Farmers and land was the only source of wealth. Villagers say that no one can become a leader without having a group of followers, and to have followers one needs wealth, poor people having no way to oblige other people than through their work. Rich persons provide work and loans, are a liason with outside authorities and share their wealth at feasts. Then, Farmers were the only rich people in the village, therefore only Farmers could create and keep a following of caste clients, labourers and debtors. The caste system of division of labour ensured that only the land-owning caste, the Farmers, were able to act as a corporate political unit. All other castes being landless depended on landowning Farmers for their living. They received their living from their patrons in exchange for their work, services and goods. In the relationship of patron-client the duty of a client to support his patron is inherent. The political relationships of the members of landless castes were individual relationships of client to patron and as such cut across castes and divided them politically. The patron-client relationships made it impossible for all but land-owning castes to have a corporate political existence. Farmers in their role of patrons, due to their economic dominance, were able to dominate effectively the village in every way, even politically.

C Changing Economic Position of the Potters

From the turn of the century on considerable changes have occurred in political structure of the village, changes all the more

noticeable as they were accompanied by a series of village wide and other smaller conflicts. In describing and analysing the changes in the political field there is one serious drawback: concrete cases of political actions and conflicts from the last fifteen years are numerous; the further back the more scarce are the remembered cases. Descriptions grow more general and are presumably also less accurate. Villagers tend to remember only the important big conflicts within the village. For the beginning of the period studied, described in the previous part of this chapter, the only data I had at my disposal are general descriptions of the then existing political structure, and often only in normative terms, descriptions of political relations and actions as they existed in the village or as they should have existed. There was no other choice but to take the described situation at the turn of the century as a starting point, and to follow the development in village politics as it is documented in cases of conflicts.

We have seen in the chapter about changes in the economic structure of the village that at the beginning of this century the economic situation of Potters had started to change rapidly due to the opening of town markets to their goods. In twenties the Potters became the richest caste in the village: two families of Potters became landowning families on a scale comparable to the rich Farmers at the end of the last century. One family owned altogether nine hundred acres of land and the title of zamindar, and all other Potters owned at least some land. The dividing of families and the consequent division of family property, together with other factors, caused an economic decline of Farmers, till then the economically and politically dominant caste. Potters not only joined Farmers as landowners, but started to replace Farmers in the category of landowners, reaching the position of economic dominance in the village. During the same period, in twenties and thirties, the political structure remained unchanged, Farmers remained the politically dominant caste. The most powerful village leaders of that period were still the heads of the two Gochayat families and at this time the head of Pradhan family from the lower subcaste of Farmers appeared as a village leader. The Pradhan family bought land with the profits from their tea stall on the Puri road. The formerly rich Karana family became so poor its representative lost his place among the village leaders. As less important elders villagers name the heads of the two Karana families and the head of Parada family. No other persons were considered village leaders.

Potters, despite their economic prosperity, remained politically insignificant. They were in a position of political dependence toward the dominant caste of Farmers the same way as the rest of the serving and artisan castes. They sent their representative to the village council as all clean castes did, but he had no active

share in the decision making in the council. The situation was the same in the village assembly, the village council and assembly remained dominated by the Farmer elders. Some Potters, especially young men and women, nowadays claimed elders of Potters were then already accepted as village leaders, but their statements are obviously false, denied not only by members of other castes but by the older generation of Potters as well. Farmers say: "Only Farmers were the village elders, everyone else obeyed them, Potters obeyed the same as other castes." "Potters were very small, even the zamindar. Being zamindar did not help him, he was from a low caste and had to bow before us." Potters agree with them: "Gochayats were powerful, the most powerful people in the village. They were not very rich but had their faction, all Farmers stood behind them. They could do what they wanted in the village. They could call Farmers from other villages and so everybody had to obey."

Nevertheless the influence of Potters' changed economic position, especially of the Potter-zamindar began to show. People from the adjacent village, where the Potter-zamindar owned most of the land, his clients, tenants and labourers began to seek, however rarely, the Potter-zamindar's intervention in solving their disputes and problems. Within the village, Potters, though still politically subordinated to Farmers, and without authority, were less dependent on Farmers than other serving and artisan castes because they did not need economic help from their Farmer-patrons. They attempted to settle their disputes and problems within their caste group with the help of their caste leaders. Potter caste leaders began to settle successfully such disputes as those over family property when the joint family divided, on occasions which other castes asked the intervention of the Farmer elders. Potters gravitated toward political independence in all areas where village leaders' intervention was not necessary and compulsory.

The forties and the beginning of fifties was the period of the highest economic prosperity of Potters. Their economic dominance had stabilized, the influx of cash from the pottery sales in Puri allowing them to farm safely without fear of shocks and reversals. Another Potter family became the second richest family in the village: they opened the first store in the village before the second world war and during the war years realized not only considerable above-board profits from running the store, but large profits from black market kerosene. The family invested all the profits in land. The Farmers continued their economic decline; the tea stall of the Pradhan family ceased to be profitable and was closed, stopping their economic growth. The economic situation of other castes remained unchanged. The forties saw the beginning of Potters' attempt to gain power in the village;

their share in making decisions concerning village affairs. The division of Potters families, and their numerical growth, meant more Potter representatives in the village assembly. Potters' attempt to better their political position was the necessary result of their dominant economic position. Their role as clients in the political field was contradictory to their role as patrons in economic field. The caste elders, representatives of Potters in the village council, began to interfere in council deliberations. They stated their opinions without waiting for the opinions of the Farmer elders and they stopped agreeing automatically with their decisions. They made the work of the council difficult, and lessened its effectiveness in solving problems and settling disputes. Nevertheless, Potters still subordinated themselves to the majority decisions, meaning the decisions of Farmers' elders. Farmers retained their decisive authority within the council and so in the whole village, but Potters made their position more difficult and unpleasant: the council was often forced to meet several times before Potters gave way agreeing to a proposed solution. The Farmers' response was to attack the family of one of Potters' leaders.

One of the Farmer elders summoned a meeting of the village council and publicly accused the son of the mentioned Potter leader of sexual relations with woman from the untouchable Bauri caste. The meeting lasted for three days, the council inquiring into the circumstances of the case, and hearing witnesses. The council was unable to reach a unanimous decision because representatives of the Potters refused to agree with the guilty ruling and maintained that the accusation was false. The meeting broke up. A week later Farmer leaders summoned the village assembly where again they explained the case and witnesses were again interrogated. The Potters did not want to agree with the majority opinion and accept the verdict guilty. The meeting lasted two days, the Potters finally submitting to the verdict. The convicted Potter went to the Puri Brahman court to be ritually purified, paid the levied fine and gave a feast for the village council. The case was the first Potters refused publicly, even if unsuccessfully, to accept a decision of Farmer leaders; the first all caste members supported in public their own caste elders against the established village leaders, their patrons. It was in a sense a declaration of war on Farmers and was understood as such by both sides. Potters were acting for the first time as a corporate political unit, as a faction within the village, the whole case being part of political struggle, the facts of the case incidental, as may be seen in attitude of Potters at the meetings. They maintained that the accusation was false despite conversations among themselves, as well as with members of other castes, in which they easily confessed they had been aware of the sexual relations for over four years. In the village there exist

a number of such forbidden sexual relations and the village, though it does not approve, does not punish the relationships unless they are publicly exposed, usually by unlucky chance. Farmers state that the whole case was made public and judged because it seemed necessary to stop the rising aggressiveness of Potters.

D Village Factions

The above-mentioned case was a turning point in the political development within the village. During the case two factions, in initial form, came into existence, factions which since then fought each other for the village political power: the faction of Farmers and the faction of Potters. Faction is "... an exclusive coalition of persons (followers) recruited personally according to structurally diverse principles by or on behalf of a person in conflict with another person or persons within the same social unit over honour and/or control over resources." (Boissevain 1968 : 551) Recruiting principles from both factions were neither stable nor uniform. The followers of a faction were recruited on the basis of the same caste membership, relationships of economic dependence, patron-client relationships, kinship, or friendship. At the beginning of the existence of the factions, the core of the Farmers' faction consisted of Farmer elders who were supported by other Farmers and all the serving and artisan castes except the Potters. The Potters' elders formed the core of the Potters' faction, and at the beginning were supported only by other Potters. Since then, until recently, factions have played a decisive role in the development of village political relations. Today, only unfriendly feeling from the struggle remain between the two factions.

The development and further shaping of the factions can be traced in a number of conflicts called forth by the existence of the factions. "Conflict is basic to the existence of faction. It is the reason for its existence, for it is engaged in a hostile competition for honour and command over resources . . . factions compete against other factions for the same prizes." (Boissevain 1968 : 551) The most important conflicts stemming from the existence of the two factions, conflicts in which considerable part of the whole village participated, were: a conflict at Beleswar fair, a conflict over the village shrine, a conflict centered around village Barber and a conflict brought up by marriage between member of Farmer subcaste Salua and member of Dalua subcaste. The character of the conflicts and the way in which the villagers, members of both factions, talk about them, show that in all mentioned conflicts it was not the initial cause of the conflict which was important but the conflict as such. The stated immediate causes served only as pretexts to open a conflict in which the existence and the respective strength of the factions could be

demonstrated. The conflict presented the opportunity of harming the opposing faction in terms of economy or prestige. The attempt to harm the opposing faction was the real cause and aim of all the mentioned conflicts. The villagers themselves see that: "It was not a matter of the shrine, the shrine was not important. They wanted to show each other that they would not give in. The rich were fighting each other." Another proof of the unimportance of the immediate causes of conflict, of dispute, and solution is that descriptions of the individual conflicts do not differ according to speaker's faction. Neither of the factions attempt to prove or assign guilt. What is stressed, is the strength of factions as revealed in the course of the conflict and harm inflicted on or received from the opposing faction.

The first series of small conflicts started at the end of forties, and culminated in two consequent important conflicts: at the Beleswar fair and over the village shrine. The source of the whole series of conflicts is traced back to the early post-war years: Two boys from Potter caste were bathing in the village public pond together with the son of a Gochayat, brother of the village leader. The boys quarrelled and the two Potters beat up the young Gochayat. When the brother of boy's father, the leader of their common joint family, heard of the incident he summoned the village council and asked for punishment of the Potters because they, members of low caste, had attacked physically a member of high caste. The rest of the council, except the Potters, agreed and demanded an apology from the boys' father and the levy of a fine. The Potters in the council did not agree with the demands and fathers of the boys, who were summoned to the meeting, refused, even in the future, to pay any fine. The village council met again, all Potters being present, again the council could not reach a unanimous ruling and the meeting broke up.

Soon afterwards, one of the young Potter men stole something in the Bauri hamlet, though no one can now remember what was stolen. The young man was seen, and the Bauri family demanded to return the object stolen and to pay a compensation. They asked the Farmer elders, their patrons, to settle the case. The farmers summoned the accused young man and one of the Potter elders. The Potters refused to appear, explaining they "would not sit together with Farmers." The created single purpose council could not settle the case, and the Farmers advised the Bauri to ask the village council for an intervention. The robbed Bauri family, though, did not wait for a meeting of the village council as they felt there was little chance of getting compensation through the council. They went straight to the Potter elders and asked them to settle the case. The elders agreed, heard the case, heard witnesses, and ordered the thief to return the stolen object and for his family to pay compensation.

Not long afterwards the same two boys who caused the first described conflict, were bathing and fishing one day in the private pond of the Potter-zamindar. One of the lesser leaders of Farmers came by to settle something with the zamindar, and one of the boys began to abuse him verbally. The old man was naturally enraged, and beat both boys; the boys, however, returned his blows. Great indignation over the incident spread through the Farmers' section of the village. Not only was this behaviour inadmissible toward an older person, but also toward a leader from the higher and dominant caste. Farmers, armed with sticks, came to the edge of the Potters' section, which was not separated from their own in any way, the first house of Potter was right next to the last house of Farmer. The Farmers thrashed every Potter they managed to catch on the street, and the Potter offered no united resistance. They explain that they were few compared to the Farmers because most of them were, at that time, working in their kilns. Before the village council could be summoned to judge and settle the case, the traditional day of Beleswar fair came. Beleswar temple of Shiva is situated on the sea shore about two and half miles from Bhuan. Every year the villagers arrange a procession, in which they carry their village deity, a sacred script written on palm leaves kept in a shrine between the Farmers' and Potters' village sections. The procession, lights, ornaments and band are financed from the shrine fund. That year, the Potters decided not to join the village procession but to organize their own. They bought lights, hired a band from the next village and carried an idol of the god Ramakrishna from the private shrine of Potter-zamindar. When both processions came near the fair ground dispute broke out over which would approach first. The dispute ended in general fight between both processions. The fighting was broken up by leaders from other villages approaching the shrine with their processions, the fair continuing without any violent disturbances. On the way back, however, small fights and quarrels occurred again. After their return from the fair, the Farmers assembled in the house of their leader, Pradhan, and decided that the Potters' behaviour must not go unpunished. In the morning, the Farmers, armed with sticks and choppers, again assembled at the border of the Potters' section. Potters expecting this, turned out as well, all armed. They stood facing each other, shouting abuses. The leader of the Farmers, Gochayat, and the Potter-zamindar, prevented open fighting, and both managed to persuade their respective groups to cease and return home. The feelings of hostility remained and the case was never officially settled. The conflict continued in another form as a dispute over the village shrine dedicated to the sacred script deity which had started about a year before the described Beleswar fair.

The shrine and two acres of land belonging to it were the village property, but because all land must be registered to private persons, the land was registered in the names of several members of the village council. At the time of the dispute the land was registered in names of three Farmers and the Potter-zamindar. The land was rented to the same poor family of Farmers every year, the family working the land, keeping half of the yield and dividing the other half between the registered owners. From that half the yield they paid for the rites and offerings in the shrine, fairs and occasional repairs. That year, the roof of the shrine began to leak and needed repair. The four members of the council, who kept the shrine funds, could not agree whose turn it was to finance the repairs. The Farmers claimed it was the Potter-zamindar's turn, while he maintained that one of the Farmers should provide the funds. The dispute continued for almost a year, no agreement being reached. After the fight in Beleswar the dispute over the shrine funds reached a critical point.

Shortly after the Beleswar fair, the wedding of the oldest son of the Potter-zamindar took place. At weddings of the village clean castes, it was customary to go and worship in the shrine. On the wedding day several Farmers closed the shrine refusing to admit the wedding procession. They argued that since Potters arranged their own procession to the fair where they carried their own god, they should now go and worship in their own shrine. Potters had no other choice but to use the private shrine, because, as they said, their guests were present and so they could not fight. The daily rites in zamindar's private shrine were performed by a Brahman from Chaitana who also took care of the shrines of both village deities. Leaders of Farmers asked the Brahman to stop serving the Potter-zamindar and he did so. The Potter-zamindar responded by retaining a family of Brahmans from Mahopur and settling them on his land. The family was related to the Brahmans coming to the village to officiate at the villagers' rites of passage, so there was no cause for complaint to the caste council. From that time, the new family of Brahmans has taken care of the private shrine. The incident made any agreement about the roof repair impossible. The Potter-zamindar refused to pay or even only contribute to the repair, because he and his caste brothers were not allowed to use it. He also refused to relinquish his share of shrine funds, as the land was registered in his name. For the Farmers it was a question of honour not to give in to the Potter and they, therefore, refused to finance the repair as well. The dispute continued deadlocked for three years, when the shrine fell down. The sacred script was given into the care of the Brahman family, brought to the village by the Potter-zamindar, until the time when a new shrine would be erected. The new shrine was started in 1971. The same Brahman family was

given a lease on the shrine endowed land to finance from its yield rites and offerings for the village deities.

The care of the sacred script, and the use of the shrine land were assigned to the new Brahman family, because Potters refused to agree with other members of the village council to hand the script over to the Brahman from Chaitana; their argument being the village deity must stay in the village. Danger became present, the deity might stay without offerings and rituals, causing the Farmers to give in. Because the land on which the Potter-zamindar settled the Brahman family was adjacent to the shrine of the village goddess, the family took over the care for that shrine as well.

The described series of conflicts show that the strength of both factions was slowly equaling up. Farmers still had the support of the rest of the village, but the support was not active. To stand openly against Potters, now landowners with the two villages' richest families in their midst, was not tactical because Potters were in a position to use economic sanctions: refusal to provide work, loans or even a threat of expensive court case. A number of Farmers themselves, poor families, were economically dependent on the Potter-zamindar. They were his tenants and agricultural labourers and so could not stand up against him as openly as they would wish. The result of the dispute, entrusting both village deities and the shrine's land to the care of the local Brahmans, was the first Potter victory and a blow to the Farmers' dominant position in the village.

Another large conflict, into which a great part of the village was drawn, was the conflict centered around the village Barber. There has always lived one family of Barbers in the village providing their services to all clan castes. One of the village leaders, Gochayat, reached a progressive stage of leprosy. In similar cases the rule was that the leper's family would build a small hut in the forest, where the leper was obliged to live alone and his family brought food for him. When it became apparent that the Gochayat family intended to let the leprous leader live normally in the village, other Farmers decided to take steps to ensure their own and other villagers' safety. Their village caste council met and decided that the local Barber must not shave the leper any more. The brothers of the leper protested, but at the end agreed with the decision and the Farmer elders summoned the Barber to announce the council decision to him. The Barber agreed and stopped to shave and provide services for the leprous leader.

Three days later, the older of the brothers summoned the Barber to demand an explanation as to why the Barber did not come to shave his brother. The Barber respectfully explained that he was forbidden to do so by the Farmers' council. Both brothers shouted at him, made threats, and ordered him to resume serving

their brother. The Barber was afraid of the brothers, one having become a village leader in place of his leprous brother, and both having reputations as quarrelsome and violent people. The Barber therefore asked for a hearing before his local caste council and the council sanctioned the Barber's actions. Both brothers then called on representatives of Barber caste council and demanded a new Barber on the grounds the village Barber would not fulfill his duties. The council refused the request with a reference to the Farmer caste council ruling. The brothers then went to the representatives of the Farmer area caste council and lodged a complaint against the Barber and asked that the council force the Barber council to provide a substitute Barber for their family. The leaders of the Farmer council summoned and heard leaders of the Barber caste council, then leaders of the village Farmer council deciding the Gochayats complaint had no foundation, and therefore they had no right to the substitute Barber. Both brothers then told the village Barber that unless he started to shave their brother again he would not be allowed to serve them as well. The Barber refused.

The Brothers did not give up and went to the Potter-zamin-dar and his friend, also a Potter elder, and asked them for help with the affair. Both Potters agreed to help, summoned a meeting of a Potter caste council where they explained the situation, and the other Potters also agreed to help Gochayats. The leaders of the Potters called the Barber, accused him of neglecting his duties, demanded from him an apology to the family of the leper and a continuation of service to him. In case he should refuse he would not be allowed to serve any Potter family. Now, the loss of Potters' patronage meant considerable material loss for the Barber. He would first lose yearly and special payments, and second be in danger of making enemies of the village richest families. Still the Barber refused and tried to explain he could not meet their demands because of the order from the Farmers' council which was sanctioned by the whole area Farmer caste council. The Potters told him he ceased being their Barber. They then asked the area Farmer council for a hearing, the council representing the most powerful political authority in the area and possessing the power to intervene in the affairs of serving and artisan castes. The Potters asked that the Barber council name a new Barber for them because the local one was neglecting his duties. The Farmer area council agreed, allegedly because this time the request was from a whole caste group. Arrangements were made with the council of Barbers for sending a new Barber to the village. The new Barber did not live in the village but came every second day. He served the Potters and the Gochayats. The Gochayat brothers, meanwhile, managed to secure the support of five other Farmer families who also began to use the new

Barber's services. The new Barber also refused to shave the leper, though despite this, all the Potters and six Farmer families continued to use his services. The two Barbers, each serving one faction, remained in the village for about three years. The leper died in the second year of the conflict and with him the original cause of the conflict. About a year after his death, the local Barber asked the Potters and Gochayat brothers to forget about the dispute and to accept him again as their barber. He said he desired to serve them again, because the loss of their patronage meant that half of his income was lost. All agreed to the request and the new Barber stopped coming to the village and the local Barber began serving the whole village again.

The course of the conflict showed the mutual positions of both factions and their strength: the Barber did not submit to the pressure of the whole caste of Potters despite the loss of a considerable part of his income, and despite the fact that the special payments from Potters were regularly higher than the same payments from Farmers. It shows he regarded Farmers as the village leaders and as the most powerful caste. His stand was indubitably strengthened by the intervention of the Farmer area council, the dominant political power in the area. The local caste council of Barbers also supported his attitude because the council would not dare to disobey the orders of the Farmer area council. The conflict has an important place in the development of the village political situation. It was the beginning of a new phase in development of the factions. The faction of Potters ceased to be solely composed of Potter caste members, it acquired followers from the caste leading the opposing faction: the family of the Farmer leader, as well as five other Farmer families. The Farmer leader joined the leaders of Potter faction. The recruiting principles of Potter faction have since then been membership in the caste, friendship and economic dependence. The strength of the Potter faction grew because one of the main village leaders and three richest village families belonged to it.

The original motive of the two Gochayat brothers for instigating the leper dispute is impossible to trace. The living brother claims the motive was his feeling for the leprous brother, which does not agree with the facts, mainly, that both brothers continued to accept services of the new Barber after he refused to serve the leper. Most villagers ascribe it to the brothers' characters: a character which liked to start disputes when they could demonstrate their power and one that took offence when the caste council decided in spite of their protests. From the beginning of the quarrel they felt honour bound to avoid submission and to continue the dispute. The explanation why the brothers chose the Potters as their allies differs between the factions. The people from the Farmer faction and some, mainly women, from the

Potter faction explain the brothers' choice solely by the friendship between the brothers and the leaders of the Potters. They say it was natural for them to turn to their friends for help. Most Potters, inclusive of their leaders, give a different explanation: "They quarrelled with their caste brothers and could do nothing but to ask for help somebody else. And who could they ask? Blacksmith-carpenters? They are too few and too poor. Herdsmen? They do not mean anything here. Servants? Muduli (Potters) were the only ones who could help them — and did. We are numerous, honoured and wealthy." Actually, no other caste was in a position to help the brothers because the Potters were the only caste not economically dependent in any way on the Farmers. On the contrary a number of villagers depended on the Potters for their living. They were numerically strong and capable of corporate political action. Besides it was from the Potters only that the brothers might find a willingness to help as the Potters were fighting the Farmers for political power, and so it could be expected they would participate in an action against the Farmers. This then, is already part of the answer to the question of why Potters backed the Gochayat brothers. Potters explain it by the friendship of their leaders with the brothers: "One is honour bound to help friends in need." The explanation of the Farmers' followers from non-Farmer castes is the same. Most Farmers give as the reason for Potters' willingness to help their hatred of the Farmers, which made them welcome anything that would harm the Farmers: "They were glad for some of us to join them." "Gochayats quarrelled with us and they turned to the Muduli. Muduli helped them because they envied us." Why did the other five families of Farmers change their faction? The explanation given by members of both factions is the same: "They ate Muduli rice." All five families were dependent on Potter leaders for their living. They were the Potter-zamindar's tenants, and worked as agricultural labourers for the Potter leaders. The Gochayats provided work to one family. Members of the families explain their action through their dependence on the zamindar and their fear of the Gochayat brothers. The change of political allegiance, a change from one faction to the other was determined by the advantages offered an individual or a family.

One of the last large conflicts was the conflict started by the marriage of members of the Salua subcaste and of the Dalua subcaste. The marriage was between the deceased leper's son, Gochayat, and the daughter of another Farmer leader, Pradhan. Pradhan had been trying, for over a year, to find an acceptable husband for his daughter. He was unsuccessful because he lacked money for gifts to the bridegroom's family, and money for his daughter's "dowry", mainly jewels; his social position preventing his daughter's marriage to a poor and socially insignificant fa-

mily. The Gochayat brothers were at the same time arranging a wedding for their deceased brother's son, the engagement concluded, preparations under way, and the wedding day settled. Foodstuffs for the wedding feast were in the house, invitations had been sent out, accepted, gifts for the wedding guests purchased, band, light bearers and Brahmans hired, when bride's family rescinded their agreement to the marriage, to my knowledge, for no public reason. This was embarrassing and socially harmful situation for the Gochayats, and they decided to ask Pradhan, who they knew had been seeking a husband for his daughter, to marry his daughter to their brother's son. They called on him, apologized for former disputes, promising that in the future they would be friends and would cooperate. Pradhan agreed and both parties decided to have the wedding as previously planned, only five days off. The Pradhan, with the brothers, left for Puri to purchase everything necessary for the bride, especially the jewels, paid for mostly by the Gochayat brothers. At the quickly arranged engagement, a promise was arranged where the eldest Gochayat agreed to adopt his brother's son, the groom, and give him all his land, a part of wedding contract; the older Gochayat brother having no children of his own. The Gochayats wished to go to Puri and officially arrange the transfer of the land, but Pradhan said there was not time; that things could as well be settled after the wedding. The wedding took place and seven days later, according to the caste tradition, the bride came back to her father's house.

Both subcastes of Farmers up to that point had been endogamous. In the event of a marriage, of which none are remembered in Bhuan and the neighbouring villages, they were not punished in the way a marriage between different castes was punished, by expulsion from the caste and village, but by a heavy fine and a large feast for the entire caste group. Membership of the married couple in a subcaste was determined by the bridegroom's subcaste. The members of the bridegroom's subcaste, Salua, in the village expected the Gochayat brothers to pay the fine and give the feast without being asked. The brothers did not, and behaved as if nothing unusual happened. The village council of Salua subcaste met and ruled that Gochayats must pay the fine and give the feast. The brothers refused. The council met again and imposed a caste boycott on them. The brothers refused to submit, did not apologize, and the boycott continued. After some time, all members of the subcaste had relaxed the boycott except for the ban on sharing food and water. Situations when the Gochayat family would need ritual help from their caste group had not occurred.

According to tradition, the bridegroom's family sent for the bride after six months. Her father refused to let her return be-

cause the older Gochayat had not yet officially registered the land in the bridegroom's name. The brother explained that he had to wait and see how the young couple would treat him, whether they would obey and honour him, and said that when he was satisfied he would arrange the official transaction. Pradhan did not trust the brothers, as they had joined the Potter faction, and he did not believe the land would be transferred without pressure from his side. On the other hand, the Gochayat was afraid that Pradhan would arrange through his daughter to leave him without means and support if he should sign over his property. Pradhan announced that, under the circumstances, he would not let his daughter return to the bridegroom's house. The bride stayed in her father's house for two years before the bridegroom asked his father-in-law for the permission to live with his family. He lived in his father-in-law's house for over a year, and in the meantime, the elder Gochayat brother died and his property went to his younger brother. Relatives of the bridegroom begged Pradhan to send his daughter to bridegroom's house. He agreed under the condition that the bridegroom's father's land be officially divided between the bridegroom and his brother. The land was, until then, managed by the remaining Gochayat brother, in whose name the land was also registered. The land transferred, the bride left for her husband's house.

While the bride was living in her father's house, Pradhan had complained to the area caste councils of both subcastes about the Gochayat brothers. Both councils decided against the brothers though the older brother was already dead. Representatives of both councils came to the village and summoned the village assembly where the case was officially judged. The assembly ruled that it was necessary that Gochayat registered the land, which came to him after his brother's death, in the name of his oldest brother's son, the son-in-law of Pradhan. The Potters stood against this ruling but in vain. The Farmers threatened them with an area wide general boycott. The area boycott would considerably hurt Potters because the two councils represented fifty nine villages, including market places and villages where the village Potters found brides for their sons and where they sent their daughters to be married. Gochayat refused to comply with the verdict and the area boycott was imposed on him: there was a ban to share with him, to accept from him, or to give him food or water, ban on his using public wells and ponds, but this part of boycott did not affect Gochayat as he had a private well and pond on his property, a ban to sell to him, to buy from him, to serve him and to work for him. The boycott lasted less than a month and was then deliberately broken by all the village Potters. When nothing happened to the Potters, other serving and artisan castes followed suit. At the end of the second month, Gochayat was

boycotted again only by his own caste. The boycott in other villages of the area also did not last long.

With the dispute between Pradhan and Gochayat, the problem of Gochayat's daughter's wedding was connected. His daughter had reached marrying age but his caste group boycott, although relaxed, was not officially lifted. In order not to admit his guilt, apologize, and accept the punishment, Gochayat decided to find a husband for his daughter outside the area controlled by both councils of Farmers. He found a husband for his daughter in Cuttack, the former capital of Orissa. Still, the participation of at least three families from the village caste group was necessary at the engagement and wedding. Gochayat then turned to the same five families who came to his aid in the conflict with the village Barber. He promised them all his support possible in the future, and persuaded them they had nothing to fear from either from the village or the area caste councils. All five families agreed to participate at the wedding and helped with preparations. Some tasks usually performed by members of village caste group, such as attending to the foodstuffs and fuel, were performed by Potters. The village caste council of Farmers referred the case of the five families to the area council which found them guilty of violations of caste rules and set a fine, which was for such a case a very low one. A boycott was not imposed on them as was usual in similar cases. Four families paid the fine and re-established good relations with their caste group. One Karana family refused to pay and a caste boycott was imposed on them. The boycott has never been officially lifted, but members of the caste group now eat in their house and Karana in theirs. A situation in which the family would require the ritual help of the caste group has not occurred yet.

The described dispute, or better to say, the series of disputes show that factions could under certain circumstances replace the caste: the Potters helping with wedding preparations. It showed factions could command a stronger allegiance than a caste: the five families attending the wedding of a boycotted caste member; Salua subcaste members supported the Pradhans, members of the Salua subcaste, and opposed the Gochayat family, a member of their own subcaste but a member and leader of the opposing faction. The conflict shows that the Potters, although powerful in the village, were not strong enough to defy the decision of the Farmer area councils. The area caste councils were still strong enough to impose area boycott on those defying their rulings. Potters were forced to submit. On the other hand, the area councils were not strong enough to enforce the long-termed observation of such boycott. The growing strength of the Potters was demonstrated in their breaking the boycott after less than a month and pressure made other castes do the same. Gochayat could

ignore the verdict and risk a boycott because he was rich and economically independent, and because he could count on his faction to help him out of a difficult situation, and, where possible, to substitute for his caste group.

E Tactics Employed in the Factional Struggle

The large conflicts caused by the existence of the factions were only the most dramatic manifestation of the factional struggle. From the beginning the factions continuously struggled between themselves, though not always in such dramatic forms as in the major open conflicts. Both factions incessantly attempted to strengthen and better their own position while harming and lowering the opposing faction's position. With the exception of theories on the legitimate sources of power and authority, different in each faction, both factions followed similar tactics in their mutual struggle: "The relations between two . . . factions consisted of boycotting each other and of trying to create incidents which would cause some or all members of the other faction to lose money or property." (Nicholas 1965 : 26)

The leaders of the Farmer faction used the traditional caste theory of authority as their ideological weapon. They maintained that within a Hindu community a member of ritually low caste ought to obey and honour a member of ritually high caste, therefore the Potters, the lowest of artisan castes, should obey the high caste Farmers. When the Potters refused to obey, they violated religious as well as caste rules: "Muduli cannot be leaders of the village because it is against God's will. Not long ago they were forbidden to enter our houses." Another means, which the Farmers' faction used in their struggle, were law-suits against Potters in an attempt to ruin them financially. Law suits were and still are very expensive, especially for villagers with no law experience, often paying exorbitant fees to lawyers. Lawyers unnecessarily drag the cases in order to balloon fees from their clients and frequently demand bribes. Farmers used this tactic mainly in forties and at the beginning of fifties. They relied on their experiences in dealing with officials, on their contacts in town, on experience in court and with lawyers, all established in the years of dominant position in the village. Formerly Farmers dealt with officials, arranging and settling anything officially in their role as Farmer-patrons. Later, Farmers stopped using law suits as a weapon because they themselves could not afford it. Villagers were involved, especially since the forties, in number of law suits which had no connection with the existence of and the struggle of the two factions, but the following two examples are part of the factional struggle.

In 1948 both village zamindars became involved in a law suit over a piece of land. Between the main village and the hamlet of serving castes, there was a piece of unused land where Puri zamindar planted trees for fuel wood. After eight years, with the difficult work of caring for the young trees past, but the trees not yet large enough to be profitably cut, the Potter-zamindar challenged the Puri zamindar and his right to the land, or to grow trees on it. The Puri zamindar rejoined, claiming the land as his property. The Potter-zamindar sued at the district court in Puri and won, the land and trees assigned over to him. The zamindar from Puri appealed to two higher courts, the appeal court and the Supreme court in Cuttack upholding the original verdict. The Potter-zamindar cut the trees down in 1958 and realized a profit of 4000Rs.

Until this dispute, the zamindar from Puri was in no way involved in factional struggle within the village. When the land dispute started, the Farmers came to his support. They tried to settle the case in his favour at a meeting of the village assembly summoned specially by them, and failed because of the present Potters. They informed the Puri zamindar of all statements of the Potter-zamindar and his supporters, they informed on any intended actions of the Potter-zamindar, gave testimony for the Puri zamindar in court. For them the conflict was a way to financially weaken the leader of the opposing faction. They believed that the Puri zamindar, a known personality, from a well-known family, would win the suit because of his contacts. They were therefore willing to testify in his favour about anything, knowing all the while the land belonged to the Potter-zamindar, knowing when and from whom he actually acquired the land. The facts were unimportant, the aim was to injure the opposition. In return the zamindar from Puri gave Farmers his support and sold part of his village land to several Farmers for less than the market price.

The second example is a law suit brought by the Farmers against the Potter faction, which had started from a dispute between a member of the Bauri caste and one Potter. The Bauri borrowed Potter's bullock, without the owner's permission, and used it to plough his piece of land. The Potter when looking for the bullock, heard who had it, and ran after the Bauri threshing him so badly he had to stay at home several weeks in his family's care. The Bauri did not intend to sue the Potter. His patron, backed by other Farmers, told him that he could get a large compensation if he would sue the Potter. They persuaded him to sue, not only the Potter who threshed him, but also two other Potters quite unconnected with the fight. The Farmers assured the Bauri that the villagers would testify in his favour, and that the Farmers would help him financially with the case. The Bauri

lived in the section of the Bauri hamlet, which stood on the land of zamindar from Puri, whose inhabitants supported Farmer faction. The other part stood on the Potter-zamindar's land and the Bauri living there supported the Potter faction. The suit lasted for over a year with both sides producing witnesses testifying in their favour with no regard to the real facts of the case. The Potters won the case, allegedly through bribery. The action against the other two Potters, who were not involved in the original fight, shows that the aim of the Farmers was not to settle the dispute but to draw as many Potters as possible into an expensive law suit.

The Potter faction used similar tactics, only their ideological weapons were different. The Potters could not validate their claim to authority and power by a caste theory because as the lowest artisan caste they could not hope to reach the top of the caste hierarchy. Therefore, they had to oppose the caste theory of authority. Their theory was that personal value does not depend on caste origin but on knowledge, justness and experience. Only such factors ought to give an individual the authority to intervene in village affairs. They used teachings of Mahatma Gandhi to support their theory though naturally they did not go so far as to accord the same rights to members of the untouchable castes. The teaching of a Hinduistic sect, introduced by Potters to the village, also supported their claim.

Other means used by Potters, when fighting the opposing faction, were similar to those used by Farmer faction. Attempts to damage materially members of the opposition are exemplified in the fate of the seven Farmer families who, unlike the five families which changed their allegiance from Farmers' to Potters' faction, refused to join Potters' faction and continued to support their own faction. The seven families rented land from the Potter-zamindar previous to the rise of the factions and members of four families also worked as agricultural labourers for Potters. When, during the conflict with the Barber, they refused to desert their own faction, the Potter-zamindar refused to rent them land and stopped employing them as labourers. At the end of the fifties, and at the beginning of the sixties, all these families except one who managed to start a small store in the village and bought three acres of land from the profit, came to the late Potter-zamindar and begged him to be taken on again as his tenants and labourers, which they were. The Potters claim that the Farmers did not want to live in poverty any longer and, as their own faction could not provide them with land or stable work, they decided to transfer their allegiance to the Potter faction. Leaders of the Potters say that since the open conflicts between the factions had stopped, it was easier for the Farmers to promise support the Potter faction because there was no danger of having

to support it in an open public conflict. The Farmers say they needed to secure a good and steady living and, since the factions by that time ceased to exist, there was no reason why they should not have approached the late Potter-zamindar.

The last case of a private dispute used by the both factions to measure their strength and to do financial harm to members of an opposing faction was the 1968 property dispute between Gochayat, leader of the Potter faction, and Karana, a poor family of Farmers. In 1967 Gochayat, as well as several Potters, bought the right to use state sand land by the state forest to grow cashew nut trees. The same piece of land which Gochayat leased was being used by the Karana family. The family had no right to the land, but as it was unused they planted trees to produce income from the sale of firewood. If Gochayat leased that particular piece of land because he knew the Karana were using it, was impossible to ascertain but most villagers agree that it is more than probable. When Gochayat received the legal papers from the state, he went to the Karana and told them that the land was his to use, and also claimed trees growing on it. Karana refused to surrender the land. Gochayat then asked that the council be summoned. He asked as his representatives both leaders of Potters, while Karana chose his own caste leaders. At the meeting Gochayat presented the legal papers. In spite of the facts clearly pointing to favour Gochayat, the council was unable to reach a unanimous decision. The leaders of Farmers supported the Karana's claim, the leaders of the Potters Gochayat's claim. The meeting broke up. This case again shows that such disputes did not serve to justly settle cases but to fight the opposition. The Leaders of both factions supported their followers disregarding the case facts. To gain revenge for his failure at the council meeting, Gochayat turned for help to the late Potter-zamindar. The late zamindar sent messages to all related Karana families who worked for him as agricultural labourers dismissing them as his labourers. Gochayat now plans to sue the Karana but is waiting until trees grow more in hope of larger profits without any invested labour.

F Results of the Factional Struggle

The rise of the factions has changed the political structure of the village. Where formerly there was only one corporate political group, the caste group of Farmers, there now existed another corporate group. First it was the caste group of Potters, which later became a faction, based on various recruiting principles. The existence of the factions influenced the management of village affairs. Most cases so far described show that the factions paralysed the activity of the village council. It was rendered ineffective: disputes preceding the Beleswar conflict, the dispute

over the village shrine, the property dispute of both village zamindar and the property dispute between Gochayat and Korono. The aim of both factions was to retain or obtain political power in the village and it was therefore a question of prestige not to submit to opposing faction. To agree with the opposing faction representatives would be to demonstrate weakness, to admit to one's subordinate position. If a case in any way touching both factions was brought before the village council it was practically impossible for the council to reach unanimous decision. The solution suggested by one faction was rejected by the other faction not because the solution was wrong or unjust, but because the representatives refused to agree to anything suggested by the opposition. Villagers say: "When a dispute started between friends it was easily settled by agreement; when between enemies, agreement was impossible." "When two persons from our faction quarrelled they asked our own leaders to settle the dispute and the elders did so without any problem. When a person from our faction quarrelled with a person from the other faction, both asked their own elders to settle the dispute. The elders sat together and deliberated. When they were unable to reach an agreement, there were quarrels among them, that is how it was most of the time." The impossibility of settling disputes between members of different factions is apparent especially in cases of disputes between individual Farmers and Potters or between factional leaders. In disputes between member of other serving caste or artisan caste and a member of the Potter faction, the concerned parties did not seek the intervention of the Farmers' leaders or of the village council as formerly, but approached leaders of the Potters' faction to settle their dispute. The same rule applied to the settlement of disputes between the followers of different factions whose support was only passive. They too generally preferred the leaders of the Potter faction as arbiters of their disputes, increasing the prestige and authority of the Potter faction's leaders.

The village council was also losing its effectiveness in decision making in fields other than disputes. When called on to decide a problem concerning the whole village, the council was unable to reach a unanimous decision, still necessary if a decision was to be valid. The reasons for the failure were the same: mutual boycotting by the leaders of both factions. The case of the construction of the road which would connect the village with the Puri road is a good example. The entire village needed the road, and leaders of both factions were well aware of it. Yet, when any member of the village council suggested the construction at the meeting, the leaders of the opposing faction rejected the suggestion. At some future meeting the leader who rejected the suggestion would make the same suggestion himself and it would be

again rejected. Leaders of both factions know and admit that their inability to reach a decision to build the road, which all villagers needed and wanted, was a matter of prestige, a determination to oppose any suggestion of the opposing faction.

Since formation of the factions, meetings of the village council became a test as to the effectiveness of that institution. The villagers gradually realized the village council was not effective, could no longer help them in solving their problems, and they started to ignore the institution, seeking alternative solutions. It became customary for everyone to choose their own arbiters. Formerly people were theoretically free to seek an intervention in their disputes and problems from whoever they chose, but the villagers did not use the opportunity. The village council was previously generally reliable and efficient. In the last fifteen years new type of council for the settling of the private affairs of villagers has emerged. The council is not stable and is created when the need arises, only for that one case. The composition of the council depends solely on the wish of the litigant or litigants. The category of persons from which villagers choose their arbiters remains the same. They are representatives of both factions whose authority is acknowledged, either within one faction or within the whole village. The choice from this category is a matter of individual's choice. The old political relations having been proved ineffective are replaced by new ones: individual relations between persons seeking intervention and persons with only personal, though generally acknowledged, authority.

During the period of factional struggles, two attempts were made to unite the faction, revive the village unity, and make the village council effective again. The first attempt was made at the time of the dispute over the village shrine. The village leaders of Chaitana offered both factions in Bhuan to create, together with leaders of several nearby villages, a council, and try and solve the situation in the village. Leaders of both factions agreed and both deposited 200 rupees with the council as a pledge to accept the ruling of the council. The council met for three days, heard the case of the village shrine, disputes leading to the conflict at the Beleswar fair, interrogated witnesses, and decided that fault was with the Potters. The description of the further developments differs on factional lines. The Farmers claim the Potters accepted the ruling but when they found that the members of the council had taken the Potters' money, they became angry and stated that the ruling was unjust and refused to accept it. The Potters claim they never accepted the ruling because from the start deliberations in the council were prejudiced so that the decision could not be just: "The council was composed of only Farmers, and naturally sided with the village Farmers." The Potters also blamed the council for taking the money in spite of the Potters'

refusal to accept the ruling: "Even in case we did accept their decision, they had no right to remove any money from the village. The village could have offered it to them as a sign they were pleased with the decision, but the council was supposed to refuse it and donate it to the village fund. These people came, did not solve anything, took the money and left." An attempt at unity failed. The only result of the council intervention was a decision of the Potters' faction not to participate in the important annual fair in Chaitana in the future. Every year about sixty villages from the area bring their gods and goddesses in processions to Chaitana, Bhuan was formerly among them. The Farmers, though pleased with the ruling of the council, did not organize procession themselves because, "Muduli would have fought us." The Potters say: "They could not organize the procession because we would have attacked them, threshed them and then possibly sued them. They had not money, we had."

The second unsuccessful attempt to unite the village came from village youth. When it became apparent that the village council would never agree on the road construction, the young people, lead by young men from castes of Farmers, Potters and Herdsmen, decided to build the road connecting the village with the Puri road themselves. They organized the work well, and without asking the village for any help, built almost the whole road. When the road was almost finished, the young people asked for a hearing in front of the village assembly, and there asked for a loan of bullock carts and some small financial aid to finish the road work. At the same meeting it was decided to forget the factional disputes and again cooperate within the village under the leadership of newly elected village council. The newly elected members of the village council were again established leaders of both factions. The only new members of the council were one young Brahman, and one young Herdsman, both without any influence in the village. The "new" council met twice, but already their second meeting broke up because of disputes between the faction leaders. The council had not met since. Both attempts to unite the village failed, though the villagers cite two cases when the village, in spite of existence of the factions within it, was capable of united action: dispute of the village with the only substantial Bauri family and the election in 1967.

The Bauri family purchased some land from the salary of one of its members working as a pion in a government office. Over the land there leads a path used by the villagers to approach the cremation grounds and which villagers used to drive cattle to the forest pastures. The head of the Bauri family decided to block the path, announcing the land was his to grow paddy and so the village should make a new path somewhere else. The family then erected a road-block at the property line. When the

news spread to the village, the Farmer leader. Pradhan, contacted the late Potter-zamindar, and together they summoned the village assembly. The assembly sent its representative to the Bauri family with an order to remove the roadblock. The family refused. The assembly sent two village leaders to Puri to get a lawyer's advice on the situation, and the lawyer advised them to free the path by strength. The assembly was informed, and decided that all men from the village should arm themselves and go to remove the road-block. They summoned representatives of the Bauri caste and ordered them to join the village in the action. All Bauri, except one family closely related to the owner of the disputed land, obeyed, and joined the villagers. They say: "We could not help our caste brothers. They were alone against the whole village, against our masters who give us our living." Armed men approached the road-block, where the men from the Bauri family awaited them, and when the villagers began to dismantle the road-block, a fight started. Several people were injured, and the oldest son of the Bauri family cut the village watchman's shoulder. The villagers retreated, but the next day sued the Bauri family in the Puri court. The oldest son of the family was arrested and sentenced for causing a body injury, but the law suit over the path dragged on for two years and was finally won by the Bauris. Because the path was on his property he had right to block the path, but the Bauri family lost all their property to lawyer fees. Since then all the family members work as labourers for a living. After the law suit no one in the village would give the family work. The head of the family asked the village leaders for forgiveness, admitted his fault and paid two hundred rupees fine.

The village was represented in the law suit by two Farmer leaders and two Potter leaders. All the villagers including the Bauri contributed to the fees, as well as paying for the hospitalization of injured watchman. The situation threatened interests of the whole village since the path was used and needed by all villagers, and violated one of the basic principles of the village political structure, upheld by both factions: unconditional obedience of the untouchable castes, causing both factions to unite while the conflict lasted.

The village was also capable to act unitedly at the elections in 1967 when, however, the factional struggle had already almost completely abated. At the elections, the village acted as a unit of the wider state political system. Leaders of both factions reached agreement as to the candidates the whole village should vote for. The villagers explain the leaders' willingness to agree with each other by the danger presented by outside authority. It is necessary to present a united front to any outsider, especially officials and highly positioned persons. The rule applies to any

contact of the village with outside authority, for example officials from the Block office. On such occasion the village was and is represented by leaders from both factions.

I have not yet mentioned the state instituted council, the panchayat. Bhuan is under the jurisdiction of a panchayat composed of representatives from seven adjacent villages. The council has certain judicial authority, though its main purpose is to increase the productivity of local agriculture, to modernize agriculture, to modernize villages, to better the position of members of untouchable castes and to remove the caste discrimination. The council represents its member villages, their interests and their needs to the higher executive bodies, and hands down executive instruction to the village level. This type of the council was established in Orissa in 1955. The first elections of village representatives to the panchayat was a centre of great interest to the villagers. Nobody in the village, not even the village leaders, had any clear idea of the possibilities and jurisdiction of the panchayat and they placed great hope in it. The elections were held at the village assembly meeting not by secret ballot but by acclamation. Elected to the council were the two main village leaders, one Farmer and one Potter. Each village had to reserve one position in panchayat for an untouchable caste member. Members of the untouchable castes were not present at the meeting of the village assembly where the elections took place. Their representative to the panchayat, a member of the caste of Washermen, was selected by the village leaders. During the first four years of the panchayats existence, villagers found out they could not expect anything new from it. They could not expect either economic help or help in conducting the village affairs. Interest in the panchayat and positions in the panchayat subsided after two years. For the next four terms the village representatives from the clean castes remained the same, new elections were not organized. The village leaders twice changed the person representing the untouchable castes. At the last panchayat „elections” in 1970, two village representatives who had represented the village in the panchayat since the first elections refused to remain the panchayat members. New elections were not arranged and the village leaders decided on the names of the panchayat future representatives. The new members of the panchayat were a young Farmer and a young Herdsman, both without authority within or outside the village, and one Bauri. The new members were selected to fulfill the official obligation of the village. When the panchayat is mentioned, villagers react by making contemptuous remarks. None of the villagers, including members of the panchayat, consider the panchayat an important factor in their lives, or a significant institution in the village life.

G Village Politics Today

What is the present political situation in the village, and how does the present system of political relations operate? It has already been sufficiently proved to the villagers that the traditional village council has lost its effectiveness and the panchayat, instituted by the state, has never become an effective political institution. The councils of an immediate need are now the basic form of political decision making in the village. It has been mentioned before that their composition differs according to the wish of litigants. To the category of persons from which villagers choose their arbiters belong first the two leaders of the Farmers and two leaders of the Potters. The four are the main village representatives, village leaders accepted and acknowledged by all. They represent the village in all dealings with official visitors, usually Block officials, police, and health workers. The authority of other leaders in the village is limited either to one caste or to one hamlet or village section. Each caste in the village has its leader or leaders whose authority does not reach beyond caste borders. Each local section of the village and each hamlet has its own leader or leaders whose authority is not acknowledged beyond the borders of the section or hamlet. When the village section or the hamlet is inhabited by members of one caste only, as is the case of the Bauri hamlet, the Farmer section and the Potter section, the leader of the village section or hamlet is identical with the caste leader. Where members of more than one caste live in a village section or hamlet, the local leaders and the caste leaders are different persons.

Let us examine the regularities of the litigants' choice of arbiters in relation to caste and local origin of a litigant. In the case of Potters and Farmers, the choice of arbiters is still influenced by the former factional struggle. Potters choose as council members, to settle their disputes and problems, their former faction leaders: their two main caste leaders and Gochayat, the leader of their faction but member of the Farmer caste. Under normal circumstances they do not ask Pradhan, another leader of the Farmers, to be their arbiter. Pradhan is asked to the council only in a dispute concerning former members of both factions. The Farmers choose Pradhan and Gochayat, and one or two lesser Farmer leaders, usually another rich Gochayat whose authority is limited to his own caste and hamlet, and according to the residence of the litigant, another elder. If the case in question concerns a member or members of the opposing factions, one or both Potter leaders are also chosen as arbiters.

Herdsmen, all of whom live in their hamlet, choose as their arbiters one or both leaders of the Potters, their own caste leader and Gochayat, the leader of their hamlet. When involved in more

serious conflicts they choose all four village leaders if they are available.

The serving castes living in their hamlet choose first of all the Potter leaders and a Farmer leader from their hamlet and their own caste representative. For settlement of serious disputes with a person from other village sections, they try to get all the important village leaders as their arbiters. The same applies to members of other castes living in the hamlet, except as to the leader in the hamlet, a Farmer, whose choice of arbiters is the same as for other Farmers. The Bauri choose as their arbiters any village leaders available, with their own caste leaders usually present as well.

All the villagers, irrespective of caste, or village section, choose the four village leaders to councils designed to solve important and serious conflicts. Caste membership and residence in a village section or hamlet do not influence this decision at all. Caste and the place of residence influence a litigant's choice of arbiters in lesser disputes and conflicts. Farmers and Potters choose their own caste and faction leaders, the rest of the castes mostly choose the Potter leaders and their own caste leader and/or a leader of their village section or hamlet. The father of the present Farmer leader, Pradhan, who was a leader of the Farmer faction, is never mentioned as an arbiter in spite of his still being the head of the joint family, this situation being the result of his own decision and behaviour. When at the end of the fifties the situation in the village reached the point, when even followers of Farmer faction were forced to acknowledge the authority of Potter leaders and started to use them as their arbiters when circumstances demanded it, Pradhan refused to participate at such councils as a protest: "I will not sit together with Potters, persons from low caste." His oldest son, already a father of adolescent children, gradually took over his father's position.

One of the reasons why Farmers were forced to include the Potter leaders as arbiters in their councils was that eleven Farmer families were dependent on Potters for their living; they were clients and obliged to support their patrons politically, and were also obliged to seek their patrons' intervention in disputes. Other Farmers were also forced to include the Potter leaders in their councils when the other litigant in the case was from a serving or artisan caste who regularly choose the Potter leaders as their arbiters. The Farmers have gradually acknowledged and accepted the Potter leaders as the village leaders together with their own two caste leaders, Pradhan and Gochayat. The gradual acceptance of the Potter elders as the village leaders was aided by the unusually young Farmer leader, Pradhan. When he replaced his father as a village leader, he was young and consequently at the beginning had only limited authority. He often

consulted with the experienced Potter leaders and their friend, Gochayat. He worked from the very beginning toward the village unity and cooperation between both of the former factions. He initiated informal meetings of the four village leaders, where the leaders go over village affairs among themselves, and try to reach decision on the action which should be undertaken in every particular situation. The informal meetings make it possible for the village to engage in communal actions under the leadership of the four, as happened at the elections or at any other contact with outside authorities, construction of the new village shrine, and the construction of another road connecting the Herdsmen and Bauri hamlets with the Puri road. The meetings also help to settle disputes which are expected to be difficult to settle because of litigants' unwillingness to cooperate in seeking a compromise. The informal meetings of the four leaders who, when necessary, ask other leaders to join them has to a certain extent began to fill the place which the former village council occupied. Decisions reached at meetings are regarded as binding by all present; allowing the leaders to make their intervention in village affairs more effective, preventing disputes among themselves at public meetings and, consequently, increasing their authority and power. A typical example of political decision making and action from the present time were the Orissa legislative assembly and federal parliament elections in 1971.

Preparations for the elections were made in Bhuan under pressure from two groups. The panchayat, represented by its chairman, acted for candidates of the Utkal Congress Party. The younger brother of the village leader, Pradhan, worked as a paid agent for an independent candidate for the legislative assembly who supported the Ruling Congress Party and supported a Ruling Congress candidate for the parliament. The Utkal Congress candidates often came to the village, arranged meetings and speeches, gave money to the village, more to the point, to its leaders, and promised economic help to the village in case they were elected. The independent candidate came to the village once, the Ruling Congress candidate never. All campaigning in the village was left to their agent, Pradhan. In spite of the panchayat's support of the Utkal candidates, their campaigning in person, and the bribes received by the village leaders, the fact that agent of the opposing candidates was the brother of one of the leaders, together with general campaign of Ruling Congress, decided the leaders' choice. From the beginning, young Pradhan had the automatic support of one of the village leaders, his brother, and he immediately asked for the support of the two Potter leaders. His brother also came to the Potter leaders and asked them to use their authority to make villagers vote for the independent and Ruling Congress candidates. The Potter leaders promised to help.

Gochayat was also asked for help but could not get involved in the campaign because he was at the time arranging a wedding for his brother's daughter.

Whenever the Utkal Congress candidates, or their agents, came to the village, the village leaders promised to secure village votes for them. Even after the elections, when the Utkal candidates' agents came to ask how, according to the opinion of the village leaders, did the elections go, the leaders assured them that they undoubtedly received most of the votes from the village. This was a lie: "When one deals with highly placed people one has to lie. To tell the truth would be dangerous and in this case they could not find out the truth anyway." During the campaign, the three village leaders organized the campaign for their chosen candidates. They went to different sections of the village, talked with their leaders, and explained for whom and why the people should vote. Leaders of the sections spread their instructions among their people. From the hamlet of the serving castes and from the Bauri hamlet leaders summoned their representatives and explained to them for whom they are expected to cast their votes. They also talked with any individual villager whenever there was an opportunity and urged them to vote for the selected candidates. The three leaders met almost every evening talking and planning about the campaign. The Utkal Congress candidates paid one person from each village section and hamlet to campaign for them, but Pradhan and both Potter leaders arranged that those individuals, in spite of their being paid by the Utkal Congress, campaigned for the independent and Ruling Congress candidates. The village leaders were able to persuade most of them completely, to one Washerman and one Bauri they paid a little extra money to make sure they would follow instructions. The day before the elections they organized the service of young boys from all sections of the village and all hamlets, who went from house to house and on sample ballots explained and demonstrated how and whom to vote for. On elections day the same boys stood on all paths leading to the election room in the village state school to repeat the instructions. It is difficult to judge what the real results of the elections were. From informants' statements it would seem that the candidates chosen by the village leaders received about 90 % of the village votes.

The last elections showed that the village leaders are again capable of taking a united stand on problems and consequently to organize communal village actions. In spite of this and the cessation of the factional struggle, when allegiance to a faction is no more the determining factor in the villagers' political behaviour, the village is even now less important as a political unit than in time before the factions came into existence. To certain extent it may still be a consequence or remnant of the factional

struggle, though the main reason is that more and more political relations are oriented out of the village, which lessens political unity and the political selfsufficiency of the village. Villagers are already accustomed to using law suits and the police to solve disputes and conflicts, especially their property disputes. The more conflicts solved outside the village, the more the village disintegrates as a political unit.

The political structure of the village in a described period went through three phases. In first phase the Farmer caste was the politically dominant caste in the village. In second phase, starting with emergence of the factions, was a period of factional struggle for political power in the village. The aim of the Farmer faction was to retain the dominant political position of its leaders; the aim of the Potter faction was for its leaders to reach a dominant political position in the village. Neither faction succeeded reaching its goal to a full extent. The leaders of the Farmers remained the village leaders, but were forced to accept and acknowledge the Potter leaders as equally dominant in the village. The Potter leaders managed to become the village leaders, but were not capable of replacing the Farmer leaders, they had to share the dominant position with them. The third phase is the present phase, when most of the property disputes and some other disputes as well are solved outside the village. This is a consequence of the period, in which traditional political institutions had become paralysed, and new institutions not yet established. It is a phase of councils created only for the solving of one particular dispute or conflict, and more recently, of informal meetings of the village leaders who try, probably in vain, to strengthen the village as a political unit.

IV MAHIMA DHARMA — NEW RELIGIOUS SECT IN THE VILLAGE

A Village Hinduism and Mahima dharma

From the turn of the century till the beginning of the forties the only religion in the village was a village type of hinduism followed by all the villagers. We are not interested in this paper in religion as such but only in its social significance, its influence on social behaviour of the villagers. The significance of the village hinduism in social field has already been described in the section dealing with castes and a caste system. Now we have to examine the change in the religious field of the village life which occurred thirty years ago; an introduction of a new religion to the village, its influence on social position of its adherents, and motives for adopting it.

Thirty years ago, when the Potters were already economically dominant and the struggle for political power was in full swing,

Guru Chandra Muduli, one of the Potter leaders, introduced a new religion to the village. He adopted Mahima dharma, the religion commanding belief in one abstract god, the religion with strictly anticaste theory. Guru Chandra Muduli brought a holy man of the sect Purna Goswami to the village to preach the new religion. Another two Potters, one of them the zamindar, adopted Mahima dharma while the holy man was in the village. Soon afterwards a number of Potters became members of the sect. Nobody from other castes adopted the new religion with the exception of one leader of the Farmers, Gochayat, who at the time actively supported the faction of the Potters, and has been the best friend of both the Potter leaders. With contribution from almost every villager members of the sect got together enough funds to start building their special house of prayer. It still has not been completed but members of the sect use it for their prayers and common reading of sacred texts.

For the last thirty years there existed two religions side by side in the community: the village type of hinduism and Mahima dharma; the village hinduism is in harmony with the traditional village structure, Mahima dharma in its social theory contradicts the very foundation of the village social structure, the caste system.

The village variant of hinduism prescribes worship of the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, worship of the village goddess and other local gods and deities, observance of the Hindu feasts and ceremonies, and following the norms of rites of passage and observance of caste norms. One of the basic concepts of hinduism is the concept of ritual purity and pollution, which is also the principle behind the caste theory. Certain bodily excretions, faeces, urine, semen, cause impurity which continues until removed by prescribed libations. Menses brings impurity to women, as death and child-birth pollute the whole family for a specific period of time after which the impurity must be removed by purificatory rites. The concept of pollution being derived from body processes explains also the social distance of castes, as certain castes due to their occupations are marked off as polluted. As pollution is being transferred by bodily contact, sexual relations and interdining with persons of lower caste causes ritual impurity.

Mahima dharma, again in its village variant, sets down norms which are in most cases contrary to the norms of village hinduism. It prescribes a belief in one abstract god whose depicting is forbidden. Consequently it forbids worship of Hindu gods, or of any other gods or deities; it forbids performances of rituals and ceremonies connected with the worship of these gods as well as the observance of all Hindu feasts and festivals. The concept of ritual purity and pollution exists in mahima dharma

too, but differs significantly from that of the village hinduism. It rejects the conception that certain occupations are polluting and therefore rejects justification for the existence of castes and the caste system as presented by the village hinduism. An individual is polluted and polluting when not observing the rules of ritual purification. Mahima dharma rejects the necessity of specialists, Brahmans, Barbers, and Washermen, for performing purificatory rites. Mahima dharma sets commensal rules for its members as well: they must not accept food from such members of castes of Brahmans, Astrologers, Barbers, Washermen, and (in the context of the village irrelevant) kings, who actually perform their caste occupations. The explanation given is that these people are unproductive, get their living by performing unnecessary ritual services and thus keep people in a false faith and help to continue the caste system. As in village hinduism, mahima dharma forbids its members to accept food from people in state of ritual impurity. Mahima dharma imposes on its members long common prayers twice a day, common daily reading of sacred texts, certain restrictions in sexual life, vegetarian diet, and abstinence from food from sunset to sunrise. Followers of both religions claim that their is the pure and real hinduism.

What interests us in this paper is, as it has been already mentioned, the social side of religion: norms of behaviour which religion sets down for its members and the influence of the norms on their actual behaviour. Theological questions, questions of faith and dogma, are in that context irrelevant and will not be pursued. Leaving these aside, the main difference between both village religions are the norms of caste and inter-caste behaviour which the village hinduism prescribes while mahima dharma rejects, and norms for performing feasts, ceremonies and festivals which the village hinduism prescribes and mahima dharma forbids.

Members of mahima dharma are expected to act as if castes do not exist, and to disregard rules of caste and intercaste behaviour. Holy men of the sect severed not only their caste, but also all other ties which tied them to community and structured society as such: family, kinship and local ties. Contrary to the holy men of the sect, village members of the sect retained their family, kinship and local ties. They continue to live in the village and are therefore expected to live with the village. They have their own families and consequently wider kinship relations. Their role as members of family and kinship groups tie them with their caste: due to a caste endogamy kinship relations do not cut across the castes but exist only within a caste and a caste plays an important and necessary role in establishment of new kinship relationships through marriage. Their role as members of the village puts them into the middle of the caste system. In social situations

traditionally governed by caste norms two roles claim conformity from a member of the sect: the role as a member of the sect and the role as a caste member. The same applies to situations governed by norms of inter-caste behaviour: the role as a member of the sect and that of village member make contradictory claims on an individual's behaviour. In both cases, claim being contradictory, to conform to one means to violate the other. To remove the contradiction means to reject one from each pair of roles. To reject the role of a village member and that of a member of a family and kinship groups would mean an isolation of an individual, his exclusion from community and society at large. If an individual wants to continue his existence as a member of structured society, the only possible solution of the existing contradiction would seem to be a rejection of membership in the sect.

Well-read members of the sect who are at the same time the caste and the village leaders are aware of the existence of an essential contradiction, and they also realize the impossibility of solving it in favour of the sect norms: "We members of mahima dharma, do not believe in castes but since everybody else does, we must conform." The question then is why the members of the sect, when they are aware of the contradiction and of the impossibility of consistently conforming to the norms of the sect, continue to be members of the sect? To find an answer to this question I shall follow the words of F. G. Bailey: "... to ask continually who profited and through what social alignment he did so." (Bailey 1960 : 272.) In the analysis I use several types of data: situations in which members of the sect follow the norms of the sect, situations in which they conform to the norms of a caste and inter-caste behaviour, informations about who, when and under what circumstances adopted the new religion; and finally, opinions of non-members about the sect, and reasons which led the Potters to adopt it.

B Mahima dharma and the Castes

Mahima dharma being an anticaste religion rejects the belief that castes were created by god and therefore must exist; they believe that at birth all people are equal. When village members of the sect talk about their religion, significant part of the discussions always take up arguments against castes and the caste system. From this position they state that the caste organization of the village Potters disappeared because most of the Potters adopted the new religion. The only field in which the caste organization still operates is in organizing marriages and in death ceremonies. That is necessary as a concession to relatives from other villages who still follow traditional hinduism. Their actual behaviour shows that the caste organization of the Potters ope-

rates in other fields as well and that the caste council is still the centre of the caste life, where caste problems and caste offences are concerned. During the year 1970 the Potter caste council dealt with two offences of its members. In the first case the council imposed a caste boycott on one Potter who after a fight with another village Potter did not accept ruling of the caste council. A caste boycott means that the person is not asked to attend the caste council or assembly meetings, is not invited to participate in weddings and death ceremonies within his caste and cannot arrange wedding or death ceremonies in his own family because the presence of his caste group is necessary and the caste will not help him. The second case was the termination of a ten year old caste boycott. Ten years ago it was proved that one Potter maintained sexual relations with a woman from the caste of Washermen. He paid the fine the caste council asked him to, underwent purificatory rites, but refused to give his caste group the traditionally prescribed feast. After ten years of boycott, when his daughter reached the age when it would soon be necessary to get her married, the Potter asked for a caste council meeting, apologized, gave feast and paid the new fine set by the council. I should also mention that the leading members of the sect are in the same time the caste leaders, who have control over the council meetings. The continued existence of the caste council and the type of offences it deals with go against the rules of mahima dharma. The impossibility or difficulty of organizing marriages and death ceremonies without an effective caste organization is naturally one of the reasons. It does not explain other fields of council activity such as deciding disputes between its members and punishing caste offences. The indication of the motive for such behaviour lies in the explanation of the strength and power of the Potter caste in the community as seen by members of other castes. They see the reason in the Potters' solidarity and their ability to act consistently, which in turn stems from a strong caste organization and effective caste council. To solve disputes and problems within their own caste prevents the necessity of interference from others, particularly the Farmers, and consequently gives Potters independent political position. It also helps to uphold the image of strength (they do not need any help in solving their problems) and unity, as their disputes are not solved by a public body. The threat of caste boycott keeps members in obedience. The motive of this violation of the sect norms is again prestige and social position of the caste.

When followers of mahima dharma talk about mahima dharma in contrast to village hinduism, they reject the existence of castes as wrong, unjust and harmful. The moment the conversation touches the question which caste is higher and which is lower, or a question of position in the caste hierarchy which

various castes claim, they forget their religious anti-caste theory and participate lively in following discussion, be it among themselves or with people from other castes. They do not try to support their claim to be the highest caste among the lower clean castes, which they take for granted, but try to accumulate as many arguments and proofs as possible in their effort to prove that they are high clean caste, equal to Farmers. They try to prove their equality by lowering the position of the Farmers and raising their own. They ridicule the Farmers' claim to be Kchatria caste: "There is a saying in Oryia about that. Rich Farmer becomes overnight Karana, rich Karana becomes Kchatria." Another argument purports to be a historical one: Farmers or anybody else who claim to be Kchatria are in fact only descendants of their illegitimate children. When in the past Kchatria took beside their wives also concubines, they took them from all but untouchable castes. Those who claim to be Kchatria are in fact descendants of the concubines.

When explaining why in the past Farmers were in a superior position to all other castes in the village, the Potters make a basic difference between themselves and other village castes. They explain the inferior position of other castes in the community by their actual lower caste position. They say that members of these castes were aware of their inferiority towards the Farmers and therefore accepted Farmers' claim to dominate them. The inferior position of their own caste the Potters explain by past Farmers' economic and political dominance, Farmers' economic and political power in the community and the whole local area: "We knew we were their equals but could do nothing as Farmers were more numerous and owned all land." While the explanation concerning other castes is a caste explanation, in their case the explanation is an economic-political one.

Members of the sect, as an argument for the equality of the Farmers and the Potters, also use a sect theory that all persons are equal. That they use this argument in caste terms may be seen from the fact that while they claim their equality with high clean castes they are not willing to grant the same equality to other traditionally lower castes. The purely religious argument is one often repeated: "The Farmers take our pots, make rituals for them and eat from them, so we must be higher than they." Some members of the sect go even so far to support their equality claim that they quote the ruling of Mukti Manadapa, a special court of Brahmins attached to the Jagannath temple in Puri, to the effect that Potters are high clean caste. Whether it actually took place or not is not significant.

Towards the highest caste in the ritual caste hierarchy, Brahmins, the Potters, both members and non-members of the sect, use the same approach. They claim that Brahmins are not in

reality high caste because they are serving caste: the Brahmans perform services for other castes in exchange for their living and are dependent on them. They try to lower the position of Brahmans by pointing out their violating their caste norms as for example that they employ untouchables as their servants, engage in agriculture, keep poultry, eat eggs, and so forth, most of the accusations being false. They also question, rightly so, the local Brahmans' knowledge of Sanskrit.

The question of membership in the mahima dharma sect is another violation of the sect norms. According to the rules anyone can be member of the sect regardless of his caste origin. The village members refuse any possibility of a member of untouchable castes to be a member of mahima dharma: "Untouchables cannot be members of mahima dharma, they are untouchable." Leading members of the sect are aware of the contradiction and explain that members of untouchable castes cannot be members of the sect not because they are from the untouchable castes, but because they are unclean personally: their food, habits and lifestyle are impure. The motive for the violation of the norms of the sect in all mentioned cases is clear: an attempt to heighten the prestige and position of their own caste and in the case of the sect membership question an attempt not to lose the prestige and position by being accused of connection with the untouchable castes, an accusation which the local Farmers often use against the Potters.

C Mahima dharma and Hindu Rituals

A Hindu marriage consists of three parts: the engagement, wedding ceremonies, and departure of the bride from her father's house to the house of her father-in-law. Every caste follows this pattern, though between castes details differ. Offerings from the temple of Lord Jagannath, mahaprasad or kaivalya, are necessary to complete the engagement; the services of Brahmans, Barber and Washermen are necessary part of the wedding ceremonies; the Barber plays an important part in the preparation of the bride for her departure to the house of her father-in-law. On these occasions untouchable castes, as we have seen, use specialists from their own caste because Brahmans, Barbers and Washermen would not serve them.

Members of the sect are forbidden to perform these ceremonies as they require the use of offerings from a Hindu temple and require services provided by Brahmans, Barbers and Washermen. All families of the village sect members continue to perform these ceremonies without any change. The second marriage of the former Potter-zamindar's son was the only exception. On that occasion the bridegroom was solemnly taken to the place

of prayers and the holy man of the sect gave him his blessing. Only then, after the procession returned to the bridegroom's father's house, the normal wedding ceremonies, conducted by Brahmans, started. The engagement of the Potter-zamindar's oldest son's daughter was on the contrary concluded right in the Jagannath temple with other caste members, including members of the sect, present. An engagement in the temple of Lord Jagannath is more than even caste and Hindu rules require. For a successful engagement only the offerings brought from the Jagannath temple are necessary. All followers of Mahima dharma also perform precisely prescribed purificatory rites on the occasion of child-birth and death in the family, which require ritual services of Barber and Washermen at child-birth and Brahman, Barber and Washermen in case of death.

Adherence to the norms of the sect is somewhat stricter where purely religious ceremonies, feasts and festivals are concerned. Members of the sect do not perform such ceremonies which are traditionally performed within the family, in the house or by a single person, such as worship of dead, coinciding in the village with the festival of Lights, Divali, worship of goddess Lakshmi in her capacity of the goddess of harvest and prosperity, Dhanu-sankranti, several ceremonies performed exclusively by women and girls such as jutja-usa, purnima-usa, purna-chandra, chandra-surya-puja. Male members of the sect do not join public ceremonies for the local gods, Siva and Ramakrishna, further of the deities Salapam, Mangalama and the sacred script, but women, both members and non-members, attend the ceremonies with all the children in the family. All members of the sect attend such village and local festivals and fairs as Radha-ashtami, Beleswar-jatra, Chaitana-melena, which have predominantly an entertaining character.

The family of the former Potter-zamindar, the leading member of the sect, owns the sanctuary of Lord Ramakrishna, which was built by the father of the present head of the family. Rites are still being performed there every day by the local Brahman. Today only water and flowers are offered, while in the past there were cooked offerings every day. The same family still gives a feast every year for the village and Brahmans from the neighbourhood. The date of the feast is determined by yearly cycle of ceremonies in the sanctuary.

Traditionally Potters have been celebrating their caste festival every year, when they are worshipping the potters' wheel, chakka puja. The festival with its ceremonies is still being performed by all Potter families in the community. Unlike other castes, whose caste festivals last only one day, the Potters today hold the festival for seven days and on this occasion they give food to all serving and untouchable castes. While other castes give

food during their festivals only to the families who really perform services for them, Potters give food to anyone who comes. One Potter family, whose head did not adopt Mahima dharma, asks the Brahman from the village to perform certain rituals during the festival, while members of the sect perform these themselves.

Why do members of the sect follow traditional norms of the rites of passage? In case of marriage they explain it as the pressure from the side of the other partner: "When the bride's or bridegroom's relatives and caste brothers demand it we have to give way." On the other hand this does not explain why rich Potter families often go further than is necessary according to traditional rules: unnecessarily expensive and elaborate weddings or, as already mentioned, engagement in the temple of Lord Jagannath, which is rare because it is extremely expensive. In such cases there can be seen an effort to impress new relatives as well as the whole community. Their own comments indicate it: "We should arrange simple weddings but people here would say they are rich and yet not willing to feed people, they are niggards." To find a motive for their performing traditional Hindu rituals after child-birth or death in the family is more difficult. Comments of members of other castes and subsequent reactions of the Potters, both members and non-members of the sect, are illuminating on this point. Most villagers when speaking about the sect point out that its followers do not perform the traditionally prescribed purificatory rites after death in the family and after child-birth and consequently are impure. When Potters hear this, they deny the accusation vigorously and describe in detail the rites they perform on such occasions to prove they are clean. Again it seems to be a question of the sect and the caste status, or rather fear of losing it. The reason for members of the sect attending public ceremonies, feasts and festivals is understandable from their description: "People love these feasts and festivals. They are like toy for children." As these are the only kind of social entertainment in the area nobody wants to miss them.

What is the reason which leads the family of the former zamindar to continue employing Brahman for worship in their sanctuary and giving a yearly feast to Brahmans? Members of the family and other members of the sect explain it by pointing out that two male members of the family have not yet adopted Mahima dharma. As these two are junior members of the younger generation in the family, the more probable reason may be found in the villagers' reactions to the sanctuary, its owners and their generosity. The family is described as a rich and good family as it has a sanctuary and a Brahman, that is, a Brahman in its service, and is willing to share its wealth with others. Some villagers describe them as pious, from the same reasons. The owner-

ship of a private sanctuary, the ability to employ a Brahman every day and the ability and willingness to treat others to feasts help to increase or preserve the social status of the family and consequently of the caste. The sanctuary is often called "the Potters' shrine" and Potters often refer to it as "our shrine," and are proud of it.

As we have seen, every Potter family including the two richest families, who no longer make pottery for sale, celebrate the festival of the wheel. They celebrate it longer and on a grander scale than even tradition demands from them. The Potters as well as members of other castes evaluate it in the same way: the Potters being rich can afford not to work for seven days and to give food to everybody, other castes cannot financially afford it. The celebrating of the caste festival on such a grand scale helps the prestige of the caste.

In all situations discussed so far, the members of Mahima dharma behave as members of their caste and/or followers of village Hinduism. Let us examine situations where they comply with the norms of the sect. All members of the sect, with the exception of the Farmer member who is not regarded as a member of the sect any more, even if he still has not renounced his membership officially, keep the prayer times as prescribed by Mahima dharma rules. They pray twice a day, morning and evening, study together the sacred texts every day, eat vegetarian food, abstain from eating from sunset to sunrise, and dress in the prescribed brick colour. Sect norms to which the village members of Mahima dharma conform are the norms for purely religious behaviour, prayers, reading of sacred texts and restriction on food, and for denominating behaviour like wearing the special coloured clothing. In these fields of behaviour the caste and the Hindu rules do not make any contradictory claims. The sect members can conform to their sect norms without violating any religious or caste norms.

D Commensal Rules of the Sect

The last type of situations are those in which members of the sect conform to the norms of the sect, but explain them in traditionally religious and caste terms and/or use the norms as an argument to support their claim to be regarded as a high clean caste. These are the situations where conforming to the sect norms serves to further their caste ends. All situations governed by commensal rules belong to this group. As I have already mentioned, Mahima dharma forbids its members to accept food from those Brahmans, kings, Astrologers, Barbers, and Washermen who perform their traditional caste occupations. They provide ritual services, live from the work of others, keep people

in belief of false gods and help to continue the caste system. Most of the village sect members have a very different explanation, in fact a caste explanation. The leading members of the caste and sect, who are the only well-read members, know and state the original explanation, but use the caste argument as well.

Whether to accept food from kings or not is in the village a purely theoretical question. The question of accepting food from Brahmans is on the contrary a question of actual behaviour often tested in village social life, as Brahmans prepare food for feasts given for members of more than one caste because according to the traditional caste commensal rules all castes can eat food prepared by Brahmans. Most of the village members of the sect give part of the official sect explanation when explaining why they do not accept cooked food from the Brahmans, but they always add something which gives the whole explanation a different character: "They are a serving caste, they serve as Barbers and Washermen do," "They are our servants, they perform purificatory rites for us," or, almost as an apology, "If our Brahmans would keep properly their rules of ritual purity we would respect them and obey them but as they keep hens and eat eggs we do not want to do anything with them, they are impure." The refusal to accept the food prepared by the Brahmans is by most villagers connected with the whole caste of the Potters in the village, the sect and the caste group being almost synonyms for the village, as the Potters are the only caste from which the village members of mahima dharma are actually recruited. The Potters, both members and non-members, use this commensal rule of the sect as a proof of high position of their caste. According to traditional commensal rules only a lower caste can accept cooked food from a higher caste. Higher castes cannot accept cooked food from lower ones because they would become polluted. Equal castes do not normally eat together as each of them usually claims higher position in the caste hierarchy than the other one and to inter-dine would be admission of lower or at least equal status in the eyes of the community.

All members of the sect use the same argument for not accepting food from the Astrologers: "Not even Bauri (untouchable caste) would accept food from them, how could we?" Also in case of Barbers and Washermen the explanation is a traditional caste one based on the concept of ritual pollution. The physical purification of clean castes are the Barber and Washerman castes' occupation. They shave, cut hair, fingernails and toenails, and wash soiled and polluted clothes of the clean castes. Being thus occupationally polluted, to accept cooked food from them would bring ritual pollution to the recipient. Only well-read members of the sect are capable of giving the sect explanation and even they use as an addition the caste arguments. All men-

tioned commensal rules are applied by all sect members to the whole castes and not only to those who actually perform their caste occupations, another indication that they understand and use the norms in caste terms. All members of the sect also refuse to interdine with people from the untouchable castes, which is contrary to the rules of mahima dharma. The reason given is a caste one: "They are untouchable." The leaders of the sect explain the contradiction in the same way as in the case of membership of untouchable caste members in the sect. The reason for not interdining with them is not their caste origin but their unclean personal habits. Even the leaders, however, use as a last argument, when concrete cases of cleanliness among untouchable castes are pointed out, the argument of untouchability of the whole castes which is automatically transferred onto personally clean members: "When everybody from their castes will be clean we will eat with them." The leaders of the sect thus differ from the caste norms only in admitting the theoretical possibility of an untouchable caste becoming a clean one. Other members of the sect have the same attitude to the untouchable castes as non-members: the untouchable castes are and will be untouchable as that it is how they are born. In case of the Astrologers, Barbers and Washermen the village variant of the commensal rule of the sect coincides with the commensal rule set down by caste system. To conform to the norms of the sect means in the same time conformity to the caste norms. In the case of Brahmans, the prohibition of accepting cooked food prepared by them is used by the Potters, members and non-members alike, as a part of their effort to lighten status of their caste, contrary to the sect aims.

The only other commensal rule which the sect sets for its members is the prohibition to interdine with a person in a state of ritual impurity. The village members of the sect have modified the rule with the result that they do not interdine with anybody but members of their sect, which in the context of the village means members of their own caste. In their statements, however, they uphold the original sect norm that they will interdine with any persons who is in state of ritual purity, with the exception of the active members of the mentioned five castes. When asked why they refused to accept food on such and such occasion they explain that they could not be sure whether the person or persons who prepared the food were really ritually pure. They receive invitations to feasts and accept them but like Brahmans, who do not eat food prepared by people from any but their own caste, members of the sect do not eat food prepared by non-members, which in the terms of the community means members of other castes. They would accept the invitation, they would come, sit, accept betel, but would not eat. As half of the village leaders are among followers of mahima dharma, and as it is

necessary to invite the village leaders to every big feast, recently, when somebody gives a feast they set some uncooked foodstuffs aside for the members of the sect who then prepare the food for themselves on the spot. Another method practiced on the occasions of wedding in the families of the sect members is to arrange a special feast for the members of the sect on the next day. Food for the regular wedding feast is prepared even in those families by the Brahmans.

The rule not to accept food from anybody but members of the sect, even if not actually ever formulated (not all wives or daughters of the followers of Mahima dharma are members, and at home the wife or older daughter always prepare the food), is used as an argument for purity and high position of the sect and the Potter caste: "We (Potters) do not eat with anybody of whom we are not sure to be pure but everybody accept food from us as they know we are clean." Due to increased economic and political power of the village Potters, all castes except Brahmans and Scholars have disregarded their caste commensal rule prohibiting them to interdine with the Potters.

E Ritual Status of the Potters

We have seen that in all situations in which both norms of the sect and traditional religious and caste norms are applicable, members of the sect behave as members of the caste and the village and not as members of the sect. Why in such case do they continue their membership in the sect? The answer may be found in the preceding analysis but to get a complete answer we still have to examine the opinions of both members and non-members of the sect on reasons for introducing and the result of introducing Mahima dharma into the village. We have seen that the new religion was introduced to the village by the Potter leader and that the other two leading members of the caste adopted it immediately. People from other castes as well as leading members of the sect consider this adoption as influencing the fate of Mahima dharma in the village. Adoption of mahima dharma by caste leaders opened the door for the religion to other Potter families: "When they (caste leaders) tell them to do this everybody will obey and do it," "If Kasia Muduli (an insignificant and not very prosperous Potter) would be the first one to adopt mahima dharma nobody else would join him," "Our caste brothers have faith in us (caste leaders), they always come to us for advice and so when we became members of mahima dharma they knew it was a good religion. We explained everything to them and they adopted it."

Why did no one but the Potters adopt the new religion? Almost all villagers, with the exception of Brahmans who dis-

approve of mahima dharma, regard mahima dharma as a good religion. When the holy man of the sect came to the village for the first time all the villagers were enthusiastic and everyone contributed to the funds for the sect house of prayers. Until today whenever the holy man returns to the village people give him money and food. Later on when a majority of the Potters became members, other castes started to turn away from the sect and started to slander its local members. They insinuate that the local members of mahima dharma, the Potters, do not really fast as the sect rules prescribe. They say: "The religion is good, the people are bad," "They pretend to be holy while they are worse than we," "We know we do not have strength enough to lead a holy life, we know we tell lies so we do not adopt the religion. The Potters know they do not have strength either and they also lie, but they pretend to be holy and higher than we are." The majority of the villagers think of mahima dharma as "the Potters' religion" which they give as another reason why they cannot adopt mahima dharma, together with the sect rules prohibiting the worship of Hindu gods and eating their offerings. All the Potters, even the non-members of the sect with one exception, regard mahima dharma as their own religion. Non-members support it and plan to adopt it later. This is how the Potters explain why people from other castes in the community did not adopt mahima dharma: "Only people who understood the new religion and were strong enough to follow it adopted mahima dharma. Most people here understand it is a good religion, they give money to our holy man, but it is too difficult for them to follow" and "Brahmans hate mahima dharma as it takes away their living." Their own reason for adopting mahima dharma is, they claim, that mahima dharma is the real Hinduism as described in sacred books, and is "better and purer" than the Hinduism traditionally followed in the village. People from other castes say: "Muduli [Potters] have started mahima dharma here because they wanted to be the highest. They would not even eat our food" (Brahman), "They think all people are equal and they are the highest among them" (Farmer), "They wanted to be the highest in the village, that is why they adopted mahima dharma, they even would not accept food from the Brahmans" (Farmer). The Potters, both members and non-members of the sect, connect the rise of the social position of their caste with the newly adopted religion: "Muduli here are higher than in other villages. They study sacred books, are well-read and live correctly," "Everybody in the village respects us more than in the past. What has changed is our learning, everybody in mahima dharma must read sacred books." Actually the Potters adopted the new religion only after their position in the community was already heightened by the increase of their economic and political strength.

The traditional religious and caste system and mahima dharma preclude each other in their social theory and in a great many norms. Members of both systems live in mutual interconnected relationships as members of the sect are in the same time members of the caste and members of the village. If in the situations for which both systems have their own norms one group would not succumb to the other and would not violate its own norms, the followers of mahima dharma and the rest of the village could not continue their common social existence; separation then would become necessary. In the previous analysis we examined individual situations in order to see which set of norms the members of the sect take as a guidance for their behaviour. In purely ritual behaviour (prayers, study of sacred texts, fasts, abstaining from family and personal Hindu rituals) and in denominating behaviour (clothes of prescribed brick colour) the members of the sect follow the sect norms. Violation of the norm prescribing performance of personal and family rituals is private, nonpublic violation and therefore does not cause conflict nor does it bring sanctions. The rest of the mentioned behaviour does not violate any of the traditional religious or caste norms. Where interdining is concerned, the members of the sect conform to the norms set down by the sect, but they modify, explain, and use them in caste terms. They use conformity to the commensal rules of the sect as means in their effort to heighten or retain the position of their caste. In the field of public ritual behaviour members of mahima dharma violate the sect rules. Violation of the traditional norms for an engagement, wedding, departure of the bride to her father-in-law's house, child-birth and death would lead to the isolation of offenders on the basis of ritual impurity, would prevent them from establishing new kinship relationships and would consequently lead to the loss of status for the family and the caste. The celebration of the festival of the wheel and the keeping of the private Hindu sanctuary are also breaches of the sect norms, yet both help to keep and increase status of the individual Potter families as well as the status of the caste. By taking part in, or originating disputes about respective positions of the individual castes in the local caste hierarchy and by keeping their caste organization functioning, the members of the sect act against the rules of mahima dharma and by doing so try to increase or keep prestige of their caste.

In almost all cases motivating the sect norm violations, the prestige of the caste is either directly (disputes about positions of individual castes, festival of the wheel, etc.) or indirectly (weddings, death ceremonies, etc.) involved. In some cases the motive is an attempt to heighten the position of their caste (expensive weddings, festival of wheel, religious "proofs" of high position of the Potter caste, etc.); in other cases it is the attempt

to retain achieved position (child-birth, death ceremonies, commensal rules, question of membership in mahima dharma, etc.).

There is yet another aspect of the situations in which the members of mahima dharma conform to the norms of the sect worth noticing. Common long prayers conducted in any weather, reading of sacred texts, fasting, vegetarian diet, and clothes of brick colour, the colour of ascetics, not only does not violate and contradict any traditional Hindu norms but is actually behaviour which all Hindus associate with the life of holy men and therefore respect. The consequence, if not a conscious motive, of their carefully following the sect norms are an increase of individual prestige and indirectly that of the caste, as heads of all the Potter families except one are members of the sect and the sect itself is in the village regarded as the Potters' religion. As we have seen both sides are aware of that. The Potters ascribe the undisputed increase of their social position in the community to their "holy" life. Other villagers try to belittle this aspect of the sect members' behaviour, insinuating that the members of mahima dharma only pretend to follow these norms, only pretend to lead holy life in order to achieve higher position in the community. We have to mention again that the higher social position of the Potters was an accomplished fact, if not before, at least at the time of introduction of mahima dharma to the village.

We have analysed the situation of Potters who are expected to conform to two mutually exclusive sets of norms in the same social situations. Invariably they choose to follow the caste norms. From two possible ways of behaviour an individual chooses the one which is more rewarding, the one which furthers his ends more. In the case of the Potters the membership in the caste and the village and its social aims are more rewarding and important for them than their membership in the sect and its social aims. Consequently the membership in the sect is used as means to increase and/or preserve the position of the Potter caste in the village, the position which the Potters achieved by becoming the dominant caste in the community in the economic and political field.

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