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Introduction. Out of Hidden India: Adivasi Histories, Stories, Visual Arts and Performances

This issue of *Anglistica AION* is dedicated to indigenous India and to some of its forms of emerging subjectivity. After having been studied by ethno-anthropologists as cultural exceptions or worse after having embodied the stereotype of the 'born offender'[1] in colonial legislation, Indian tribals are claiming a new articulated visibility and an amplified political resonance. As Rashmi Varma[2] remarks, in post-independence India, tribals are emerging as political protagonists in their own right asking, and in part obtaining, attention and recognition. Unfortunately even in the postcolonial state tribals continue to suffer from an easy mis-representation of their role and status, figuring very often as dangerous insurgents who threaten national security or as backward minorities whose survival hinders development.

Contemporary imaginings of Adivasis have been significantly influenced by the colonial discourse on tribe. As in colonial writings, so in the discourses of contemporary indigenous resistance Adivasis are represented as the 'primitive other'[3] and the image of the primitive savage tribe prone to violent resistance remains embedded in the 'mainstream' thinking in India. Indeed, most histories of Adivasis, till recently, tended to be restricted to histories of rebellions, a colonial legacy whereby attention would be focused on tribal communities only at particular moments of unrest, as a backdrop for the counter-insurgency measures of the colonial state. Nonetheless, the hitherto invisible tribal has today emerged as a subject of historical research. The essays in this special issue of Anglistica grapple with some of these concerns relating to Adivasi pasts and the present.

Approximately 8.2% of India's population are today classified as 'Scheduled Tribes'.[4] Introduced during colonial times, the term 'tribe' with its implications of backwardness, geographical isolation, simple technology and primitivism is problematic. Yet, going against global trends, the term with its evolutionist connotations persists in India, being validated and given a legal status by the Constitution. In everyday parlance, however, the word commonly used is Adivasi, which in most languages of north India indicates 'original inhabitants' of a given place. In recent years, the notions of indigeneity, and of indigenous people, are also emphasized by scholars and activists who shun the cultural baggage of 'tribe'. While such notions are often used coterminously, these have, as Karlsson and

[1] The reference is of course to the various pieces of legislation, known under the name of *Criminal Tribes Act*, enforced by the British Colonial Rule in 1871, 1876, 1911, 1924. Under the various versions of the Act, whole communities were defined "habitually criminal" and subjected to restriction of movement and other forms of police control.

[2] Rashmi Varma, "Primitive Accumulation: The Political Economy of Indigenous Art in Postcolonial India", *Third Text*, 27.6 (2013), 748-761, 750.

[3] Crispin Bates and Alpa Shah, eds., "Introduction", *Savage Attack: Tribal Insurgency in India* (Delhi: Social Science Press, 2014), 2.

[4] According to the Census of India, 2011, the population of the Scheduled Tribes totalled 84, 326, 240.

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Subba remind us, very distinct genealogies.[5] However, what is common to the varied terminology is the sense of a community distinct from that of the Hindu and Muslim mainstream in the subcontinent.

This idea of cultural distinction arises partly from the colonial categorizations of the conquered populations, whereby tribes were identified as primitive, savage and backward and, therefore, vulnerable to the depradations of 'outsiders' against whom protection was afforded by the colonial government. Such categorizations also served as part of the colonial 'legitimizing ideology' which tended to stereotype and reify diverse social groups into fixed entities and rigid identities. Some scholars have thus interpreted tribe as a 'colonial category, ahistorical and sociologically groundless',[6] a 'product of colonial theories and practices' rather than a 'continuation' of 'Indian practices'.[7] They also point out that Indian languages have no equivalent for the term tribe[8] and that in pre-colonial India ethnic communities had fuzzy boundaries which did not admit of discrete divisions.[9]

Critiquing the over-emphasis on the 'imagined' nature of caste, tribe and other identities as a 'post-colonial essentializing', other scholars have underscored the role of indigenous agency in this respect. Together with 18th and 19th century European notions of race, they argue, colonial epistemology also drew upon Brahmanical values and notions.[10] In fact 'tribes' may well be considered to be a Brahmanical construct rather than merely a colonial one, since, to be linked to the wilderness or the jungle had been considered pejorative since ancient times in India.[11] Above all, as historically determined social groups, such communities had longer histories in course of which they derived their own specific attributes.[12]

As opposed to colonial assertions of cultural distinction, anthropologists, since the early 20th century, have highlighted the fact of cultural contacts between 'caste' and 'tribe'. Ghurye, for instance, believed that the indigenous peoples of India whom he defined as 'Backward Hindus' had always been part of mainstream Hindu culture.[13] Nationalist-minded anthropologists also laid emphasis on the notion of acculturation[14] or the 'tribe-caste continuum'.[15] Similarly, Béteille questions if 'tribe' can be perceived as a distinct structural type and rejects the idea of tribe-peasant bipolarity.[16]

In contemporary academic discourse 'Adivasi' has emerged as a widely-accepted term.[17] As Hardiman notes, the term is of relatively recent coinage, appearing in Chotanagpur in 1930s and later popularized by the social worker A.V. Thakkar in the 1940s.[18] To Hardiman, Adivasis are social groups who 'have evolved a collective identity of *being* Adivasi [emphasis added]' through their common fate under colonial rule.[19] Yet, 'Adivasi' with its inherent sense of 'original settlement' does not find acceptance in a pan-Indian context. People in the 'Sixth Schedule' areas of north-east India prefer 'Scheduled Tribe'. It is in the 'Fifth Schedule'[20] areas of central India that 'Adivasi' has emerged as a politically assertive category indicating a section of the indigenous people of India, who together with the Dalit form the marginalized communities of India.

[5] Bengt G. Karlsson and Tanka B. Subba, eds., *Indigeneity in India* (London: Kegan Paul 2006), 1-9.

[6] Susana B.C. Devalle, *Discourses of Ethnicity: Culture and Protest in Jharkhand* (New Delhi: Sage, 1992), 50. Also see Virginius Xaxa, *State, Society and Tribes: Issues in Post-Colonial India* (Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2008).

[7] Ajay Skaria, "Shades of Wildness: Tribes, Caste and Gender in Western India", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 56.3, (1997) 730.

[8] Jagannath Pathy, *Anthropology of Development: Demystifications and Relevance* (New Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1987), 46.

[9] Sudipta Kaviraj, "On the Construction of Colonial Power: Structure, Discourse, Hegemony", in *The Imaginary Institution of India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010), 56; Dipesh Chakravarty, "Governmental Roots of Modern Ethnicity", in *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002), 87; Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India, 1200-1901* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1999).

[10] Vinita Damodaran, "Colonial Constructions of the 'Tribe' in India: the Case of Chotanagpur", in Biswamoy Pati, ed., *Adivasis in Colonial India: Survival, Resistance and Negotiation* (Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2011), 58; Rosalind O' Hanlon, "Cultures of Rule, Communities of Resistance: Gender Discourse and Resistance in Recent South Asian Historiographies", *Social Analysis*, Vol. 25 (1989), 99.

[11] Binay B. Chaudhuri, "*Adivasi* and *Aranyaka*: Reconsidering Some Characterizations of their Polity and Economy in Pre-colonial and Colonial India", in Binay Bhusan Chaudhuri and Arun Bandopadhyay, eds., *Tribes, Forest and Social Formation in Indian History* (Delhi: Manohar, 2004), 89-90.

[12] Sanjukta Das Gupta, *Adivasis and the Raj: Socio-economic Transition of the Hos, 1820-1932* (Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2011), 10-11.

[13] Govind S. Ghurye, *The Scheduled Tribes* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1995).

[14] See for instance, Dhirendra Nath Majumdar, *A Tribe in Transition: A Study in Culture Patterns* (Calcutta: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1937); Id., *The Affairs of a Tribe: A Study in Tribal Dynamics* (Lucknow: Universal Publishers, 1950).

[15] The tribe-caste continuum derives partly from colonial understandings of 'tribe', notably from Herbert H. Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Firma KLM 1981 [1892]). Risley highlighted the change in the tribal world through the process of emulation of Hindu cultural norms, particularly the Rajput-*kshatriya* model. Nirmal Kumar Bose, "The Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption", *Science and Culture*, Vol. 7 (1941), 188-194; Surajit Sinha, "State Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India", *Man in India*, Vol. XLII (1962).

Referring to themselves as first inhabitants, Adivasis stress their being not just 'forest dwellers' ('vanvasi')[21] but national and trans-national[22] subjects who vindicate a 'border' citizenship distinct from the majoritarian organized forms of social and cultural identities. The term *adivāsi,* is thus increasingly acquiring a series of cultural and political meanings all of which tend to discuss, and often disturb, both the logic of liberal nationalist citizenship and more recently also the Indian process of neoliberal globalization. At the crossroads of postcolonial and subaltern studies, indigenous political theory is indeed fostering new possible subject positions from which to dialogue with social and economic modernity. At the same time peculiar difficulties and aporias are there to be faced. Modernity, with its corollary of universal humanity, has traditionally posed a constitutive connection between the categories of life, ownership, and liberty, locating at the heart of the onto-epistemologies of the subject formation the link between property and civil rights. Being and having, in liberal modernity have ontologically entailed each other. As Butler and Athanasiou have efficaciously epitomized, in globally framed modernity "being is defined as having; having is constructed as an essential prerequisite of the proper human being".[23] How to theoretically relate then to a version of *alter* modernity in which life and freedom are not based on land and property ownership? How do peoples who define themselves in terms of free access to natural resources, place-based solidarities, communitarian knowledges and institutions, and religious interaction with wildlife and landscape, articulate their subjectivity in a contemporaneity by now also locally dominated by global capitalism and developmental ideas of progress?

Indeed the inescapable question of indigenous constitutive difference defy any simple attempt to politicize a demand for equal rights, a demand which is strictly intertwined with the first claim of all, the claim to dissimilarity, to not being just absorbed and incorporated, economically in corporate developmental schemes and socially, via a process of induced Hinduization, in the majoritarian caste order of Indian society.[24]

From this tension a complex series of contradictions spring usually out. As Jody A. Byrd and Michael Rothberg for example highlight: "indigenous difference is identified and recognized, but only in order to be translated into a language commensurable with the very state that is structured on the disenfranchisement of fundamental indigenous claims".[25] While the classic liberal theory would have the subaltern included within the social frame of the modern democratic state, the combination of subalternity with indigeneity challenges indeed the possibility to coherently reconcile the rights of the individual with those pursued by highly emphasized group identities. But tribal claims, albeit not easily reconcilable with the dominant models of liberal democracy, are nonetheless at the heart of a struggle not only for justice and empowerment but more often than not also for mere survival. As in post-liberalization India, traditional areas of tribal settlements are becoming key-sites of infrastructural modernization, indigeneous groups are

[16] André Béteille, *Six Essays in Comparative Sociology* (Delhi: Oxford U. P., 1974), chs. 3-4.

[17] For details see, Daniel J. Rycroft and Sangeeta Dasgupta, "Indigenous Pasts and Politics of belonging", in Daniel J. Rycroft and Sangeeta Dasgupta, eds., *The Politics of Belonging in India: Becoming Adivasi* (London and NewYork: Routledge, 2011) 1-16; Sanjukta Das Gupta and Raj Sekhar Basu, eds., "Introduction", *Narratives from the Margins: Aspects of Adivasi History in India* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2012), 1-16.

[18] David Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India* (Delhi: Oxford U. P., 1987), 13-15. Hardiman was one of the first scholars to privilege 'Adivasi' over to 'tribe', as it relates to 'a particular historical development' of the 'subjection of a wide variety of communities during the 19th century', which, before the colonial period, had remained relatively free from the control of outside states. See, David Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India* (Delhi: Oxford U. P., 1987).

[19] Ibid. 16.

[20] The Fifth [Article 244(1)] and Sixth [Articles 244(2) and 275(1)] Schedules of the Indian Constitution provide a degree of protection to Scheduled Tribes. The Fifth Schedule areas are included within the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan, while those of the Sixth Schedule include the autonomous districts in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim.

[21] The ideological project of right-wing nationalism to claim for Hindus the exclusive status of original inhabitants, functional to the idea of a homogeneous Hindu nation, implies the recasting of Adivasis as just woodland dwellers (*vanvasis*).

[22] This is particularly true in the Northeast where tribal groups inhabit cross-border areas. See on this Sanjib Baruah, *Postfrontier Blues: Toward a New Policy Framework for Northeast India* (Washington: East-West Center, 2007).

[23] Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (London: Polity, 2013), 13.

[24] While in theory tribes and castes represent divergent cultural conceptions and different modes of civil organization, in many areas of the country, social contact and cultural pressures have often induced tribal groups to transform into scheduled castes in order to obtain social and political recognition.

[25] Jody A. Byrd and Michael Rothberg, "Between Subalternity and Indigeneity", *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 13.1 (2011), 1-12, 7.

increasingly displaced to less hospitable environs or deprived of their customary access to communitarian resources and progressively dispossessed of their cultural heritage and undergoing a process of economic empoverishment and cultural destitution. This process, defined by Rob Nixon of slow violence:[26] a violence which occurs gradually and out of sight because perpetrated in remote areas without media coverage, is affecting the majority of tribal Indian communities and generating an emergential state of affairs.

[26] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge and London: Harvard U. P., 2011).

Indigenous peoples thus represent a major paradox in South Asian modernity. Their different ethos in inhabiting the planet and their place-based system of knowledges is recognized, in theory, as a preciuos kind of 'cultural capital', actualizing on a national scale the Nerhuvian legacy of unity-in-diversity and providing, in transnational movements, valuable ecological alternatives to the degradations of exploitative forced-growth. In reality the process of land grabbing and displacement, begun under the aegis of the colonial 'Land Acquisition Act' (1894), has in liberalized India esponentially increased in order to create technologically developed 'Special Economic Zones' (SEZ) in which the laws of state protection and respect of civil rights are altogether suspended.[27] Thus state discourses and legislative actions on tribal welfare and civilizational autonomy remain largely dead letter.

[27] See on this also Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6.

The aim of this current issue of Anglistica is, however tentatively, to engage the question of the role of Adivasis in Indian modernity, the possibility, and their actual efforts, to vindicate a right to existence, cultural rootedness, and geographical locatedness. It has been particularly helpful in this number to take advantage of the Journal's interdisciplary character to construe a critical platform of conversant disciplinary formations, spanning historical and social sciences, literary criticism, anthropology, media and artistic studies. Cultural forms of activism have in any case gained a privileged perspective both in terms of documented experiences and as a pervasive conceptual frame. Problematic as it is to bring together under the label Adivasi a very heterogeneous corpus of cultural and political manifestations, the editors, in assembling the materials of this issue, have aimed at accruing to the critical archive of Indian tribal condition. By means of historiographical reconstructions, cultural analyses and reflections on artistic forms of resistance, they have intended to contribute, however partially, to the mapping of an enlarged Adivasi visibility.

Divided into four main chapters of discourse, the Journal hosts a first section devoted to forms *from the field* of "cultural activism and ecocritical perspectives". In this section the first contribution is by Felix Padel, an anthropologist-activist and a strong promoter of tribal and village-community rights. Padel lives in India and has been engaged in activist struggles against mega-industrial assaults on natural ecosystems, especially those entailed by big dams. In his article "Ecocritical perspectives on Adivasi destiny. Past, present and Ancient Future?", Padel laments

the destructive impact of a 'development' which regularly means the takeover of Adivasi lands, with no real policies of replacement or rehabilitation, and the transformation of men and women into bonded and sexual labourers, while the militarization of tribal areas is transforming their life in a perennial 'state of exception'. Even at the risk of inflecting the discourse about indigeneity with forms of nativism, Padel strongly advocates the role of Adivasis as the representative of India's most ancient cultures and possible desirable future. Seeing them as the preserver of the strongest set of nature-respecting values, which can be summarized as 'deep ecology' – "an economy based on ecological principles, of living lightly on the land and minimising private property" – his hope is that the miopic injustice which sees Adivasis' habitats destroyed will start to be inverted inducing mainstream society to learn instead from ancient tribal reverence for nature's prerogatives and their techniques of long-term sustainability.

Shifting from ecocritical emphasis to a cultural-performative key, in "Beyond Cultural Aphasia" Rossella Ciocca presents a conversation with Ganesh Devy, founder, together with Laxman Gaikwad and Mahasweta Devi, of 'The Denotified and Nomadic Tribes Rights Action Group'. Devy, who can boast a longlife engagement in the field of tribal languages' and cultures' conservation, is also the initiator and director of the *Adivasi Academy* at Tejgadh (Gujarat) specifically established to create an educational environment for tribals. In his many books and campaigns he has denounced local and central responsibilities in marginalizing indigenous people through the systematic, and often illegal, alienation of their lands and livelihood in the name of progress. The conversation touches all the main issues concerning the condition of Adivasis in India today from British colonial legacy to the internal colonialism of the central state; from the threats posed by Naxalism on the one hand and the so-called process of Sanskritization, on the other; from the limits of affirmative action to the most insidious forms of economic exploitation. But Devy's emphasis is, coherently with his action, on language as an identity marker and fundamental enhancer of groups' and cultures' survival. Devy has always interpreted his commitment in defense of Adivasis as a struggle against silence and aphasia not only to preserve their traditional systems of knowledge, their cultures and worldviews but also to let their agency emerge through new articulations of their voice and stance. Pointing at the various kinds of artistic, cinematic, theatrical forms of tribal expression, Devy believes in the capacity of these to help endangered communities to articulate new empowered subjectivities and transform their predicament into creative and political energy.

In the following section, entitled "Between Rite and Art. Performing Languages of Indigeneity", the cultural activism sponsored by Devy finds a manifold range of possible enactment. Different expressive and creative languages are here analysed in their common performative articulation of tribal identity, providing different ways of answering the same need of devising a cultural strategy not only for survival but also for affirmative action. Marine Carrin, in "Performing Indigeneity

on a Sacred Hill, Logo Buru" deals with specific forms of ritualized actions serving as metaphors of identity. Indeed, in the last decades, many Adivasi groups have committed themselves to reframing and performing their festivals to enhance the visibility of their culture and to express environmental and political concerns. Arguing that some dimensions of displayed indigeneity aim at challenging marginalization by rendering the present meaningful in relation to an idealized past, Carrin interprets the participation to the *Logo Buru* pilgrimage as the possibility to re-enact principles and events deeply embedded in the formation of the tribal state of Jharkhand, created in 2000. The article shows how the performance enables Adivasis to transmute memory work into a powerful trope of political visibility, linking religious and symbolic values which operate at the very local level to the wider agenda of the regional state.

From the tribal reality of Jharkhand, Mara Matta moves to another predominantly tribal, as much as periferic, area, to explore the poetics and politics of representation of the indigenous people inhabiting the border regions of the Northeast. The tribal hills that constitute an important part of the so-called *Seven Sisters*, have lately seen an emerging output of creative forms of storytelling mostly in literary and in cinematic shapes. As Margaret Ch. Zama rightly argues "changing times and its accompanying dynamics have necessitated the various communities of this region to seek new ways to negotiate, translate and expose their world views."[28] And thus, mapping the transition from oral culture to written forms of self-expression, Matta chooses, in her article "The *Khasi New Wave*: Addressing Indigenous Issues from a Literary and Cinematic Perspective", to analyse *19/87*, a *Khasi* language film drawn by a previous short story on the same topics. Set in Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, both the film by Diengdoh and Lyngdoh and the short story by Pariat represent a new aesthetic and stylistic research to combine artistic experimentation with social commitment. Addressing sensitive identifiers such as religion, ethnicity, belonging and the alien condition of the migrant, *19/87* aims at framing a new understanding of the ethnic fabric and the interethnic economy of relationships in the region. In particular, deconstructing the artificial idea of a pure *khasiness*, where those who allegedly 'do-not-belong' are constantly placed in a critical position, the story tackles the highly politicized dichotomy at the root of recurring conflicts in Meghalaya between tribal and non-tribal groups.

[28] Margaret Ch. Zama, ed., *Emerging Literatures from Northeast India: The Dynamics of Culture*, Society and Identity (New Delhi: Sage, 2013), XII.

Tehezeeb Moitra, in "*Terra Firma* and Fluid Spaces: Warli painting from the Neolithic to the Postmodern" shifts the critical focus to another kind of tribal language at once traditional and experimental which is finding expanding attention not only in art museums and galleries, but in the world of fashion and even in merchandising. Warli painting, as Moitra explains, was eponymously linked to the Warlis, an Adivasi tribe from the Thane district of India. Traditionally connected to ritual practice, this art took a radical turn when, in the the Seventies, Warlis started to paint for pleasure and on an increasingly regular basis, obtaing the attention of art galleries and social organizations. In her article Moitra is interested in assessing

the implications in the last decades of this process of recontextualization. Addressing various questions pertaining to the changed condition of an uninstitutionalized ancient art form translated and disseminated into an institutionalized and, at the same time, also highly commercialized global art market, the discourse questions the possible degradation of its artistic status and the loss of its cultural authenticity. But departing from accounts that see indigenous art as univocally defiled and devalued by commercialization, Moitra interrogates the possibility instead of navigating the shaking terrain upon which binaries are transcended and objects undergo processes of re-configuration and reconceptualization. Following the ways by which, no longer tied to the site of its original physical landscape, Warli art has been imported from the local to the global arena, the essay explores this tribal art's dialogue with the world and also its new role in promoting Adivasi economic and cultural forms of empowerment and awareness.

In the last contribution of this section, indigeneity is reframed in gender terms and in relation to old and new forms of colonialism. Taking his cue from Spivak's, by now classic, 'standpoint theory', Giuseppe De Riso, in "Of Smoke and Mirrors: Adivasi Women in Post-Colonial India" re-addresses the question of the danger of speaking *for* Adivasis instead of speaking *to* Adivasis or being able to listen to them when they speak. In analysing two short stories by Mahasweta Devi, *Draupadi* and *Behind the Bodice*, the latter recently transposed into a movie, *Gangor*, by the Italian director Italo Spinelli, De Riso reflects on the fact that, like the subaltern, the indigenous too can fall victim not only to an objective difficulty of articulating one's voice but also to the concurrent lack of hearing, or worse substantial mishearing, on the part of the intellectual. The attention not so much to the tribal failed act of communication as to the much more pernicious and full of dire consequences act of failed reception and misappropriation of tribal voices by the elite, is central in Devi's stories. In De Riso's reading both Draupadi and Gangor, the two female tribal protagonists who are victims of a terrible violence, which is at once male and colonial as well as male and postcolonial or neocolonial, are nonetheless able to somehow challenge and disparage the official epistemological regime of truth providing, with the language of their raped and twisted bodies, an act of revelation and denouement which renders evident and eloquent what was meant to remain unvisible and speechless.

In the subsequent section, "Exploring Gender Politics" the focus shifts to the tensions and contestations implicit in gender relations within Adivasi societies. Taking a long-term view spanning the colonial and the postcolonial periods, two related essays analyse the historical situation of Adivasi women in the Chotonagpur region in Jharkhand. The first article "Custom, rights and identity: Adivasi women in Eastern India" by Sanjukta Das Gupta draws attention to the contentious issue of land ownership as a marker of women's status in patrilineal Adivasi societies of eastern, central India which today involves questions ranging from Adivasi cultural

identity to strategies to fight social and economic deprivation. Challenging conventional arguments which held British colonialism responsible for the erosion of Adivasi women's rights, Das Gupta offers a more nuanced reading of the impact of colonialism from a historical standpoint. The major Adivasi communities of Jharkhand, even before colonial times, followed ritualized patrilineal forms of land inheritance where women were excluded. The British in their pursuit of legal homogeneity attempted to identify tribal customs, often resulting in the restructuring of tradition. This, on the one hand led certain sections of Adivasi society, both men and women, to actively claim women's hereditary right to land ownership in the colonial courts. On the other hand, greater exposure to exploitation by market forces and growing economic marginalization under colonial rule resulted in the weakening of traditional communal organizations and an overall restriction of women's entitlements. In postcolonial India, continuing land alienation has further increased women's vulnerability, and the fundamentalist discourse has simultaneouly advocated the suppression of women's rights in the name of social harmony. Adivasi politics of identity also tends to represent women's land rights as a threat to the 'traditional' tribal social order. Various forms of social ostracism have thus been adopted to control 'deviant' women asserting their rights.

The question of the need to control 'deviant' women is further explored by Shashank S. Sinha in his article "Culture of Violence or Violence of Cultures? Adivasis and Witch-hunting in Chotanagpur", which analyses the nature and structure of violence related to witch-hunting from around 1850s to present times. Observing that the practice of witchcraft was almost exclusive to patrilineal agricultural communities while being absent among the nomadic foraging communities, Sinha identifies the colonial regime of the late 19th and early 20th centuries as the defining moment in this history. This was the period when witch-hunting became linked with the extension of colonial politics, legislation and justice into the region and he further emphasizes the role of Christian missionaries, ethnographers and anthropologists in this respect. Highlighting the gendered nature of victimhood, Sinha analyses the structure of such violence, its multiple meanings and its dynamic nature. He identifies certain radical changes in the recent past during which witchcraft accusations have become intrinsically associated with landgrabbing. Moreover, there has been an expansion in the territoriality of witch-hunts which today may encompass entire population, both Adivasi and non-Adivasi (including Dalits and Muslims), within the village. Another significant change is the sexualization of such violence and the public spectacles of humilation and shaming.

The final section entitled "Re-assessing colonial and postcolonial histories and anthropologies" traces certain aspects of Adivasi colonial history and the postcolonial present. In his essay on "Interpreting the Santal Rebellion: From 1855 till the End of the Nineteenth Century" Peter B. Andersen analyses the differing

interpretations of the Santal rebellion by Santals, colonial writers and contemporary social scientists in the second half of the 19th century, revisiting the methodological debate on the distinction between tribal and non-tribal movements. While Ranajit Guha, in his classic *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*[29] included tribal rebellion within his category of 'peasant insurgencies', other scholars argued that this tended to gloss over the diversities of tribal social existence. To Andersen, Guha's study is an example of how the ideology and discursive character of postcolonial enquiries have ignored a set of historical evidence regarding the Santal rebellion and prevented 'a full-fledged investigation of the social circumstances of events.' He illustrates his arguments with significant historical sources earlier ignored, such as Santal oral records and later reminiscences (which stress on the religious and moral element in the motivation and failure of the rebellion), archival sources and British writers of various periods and degrees of sympathy (those under East India Company were most critical, while those under the British Crown, like Hunter, more understanding), and a later account by a Hindu landlord (in an ambiguous relation to colonial power and the rebellion). These sources found no adequate space within Guha's three-layered notion of the 'prose of counter-insurgency'. There were different ideas among Santals about how to 'respond morally and strategically to challenges from the outside'. In the colonial world too, there were different responses to the rebellion depending on the ideologies and interests of specific groups. Andersen thus presents a more complicated reading of the Santal uprising.

[29] Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford U. P., 1983).

The theme of Adivasi rebellion also forms the backdrop of Daniel J. Rycroft's article, "Locating Adivasi Politics: Aspects of 'Indian' Anthropology after Birsa Munda", in which he demonstrates how the anthropological reformulation of the Mundas' past became linked up with India's national future in the second and third decades of the 20th century. This period witnessed the integration of Adivasis in national aspirations and 'time' by an emerging national anthropology. Thus, he argues, after 1912, Birsa Munda became a heroic 'intermediation' figure between nation and tribes which entailed resolving a series of 'inter-cultural complexities'. 'Indian anthropology' produced histories of inter-cultural exchange where local communities gradually integrated within the national collectivity to bridge the old and new: tribes and nation. These 'intersections' between scholarship, the culture of modern/national/human evolution and politics influenced the Indian National Congress to actively involve in 'Birsa-oriented activities' within a national framework in the 1930s. Visual arts, such as Maharathi's portrait of Birsa, specially contributed to Birsa's public image as the divine hero of an 'elevated dharma' (signifying national progress), and proposed a new aesthetic of social integration through alternative, 'post-primitive' perceptions of Adivasis. Birsa's images were circulated to represent sites of national resistance, the 'prospective citizens' of India, and its ethnic communities and traditions. Colonial administration, shifting from the anti-Munda attitude of the years of the *Ulugulan*,[30] to post-insurgency

[30] The 'Great Tumult' or the Munda revolt of 1898-1900 which took place near Ranchi in Jharkhnd.

protectionism and interest in Munda's *khuntkatti* system of land rights, also contributed to draw attention to and legitimize Munda ancestral heritage, culminating in the incorporation of anthropological epistemology into the Government of India Act. Rycroft avers that Sarat Chandra Roy, anthropologist and legal adviser to the government, was the link between the 'material' colonial archive as 'a closed entity', and the 'metaphorical' archive of the nation as 'a site of release, liberation, or future empowerment'.

How have Adivasis fared in the six decades of democracy and development in postcolonial India? Unlike Dalits, as Ramachandra Guha points out, Adivasis grievances have not been effectively articulated in the democratic processes.[31] Amit Prakash *et al* provide an answer to this through analysing the 'dialectical evolution' of governance of the 'resistant world' of the Adivasis of contemporary Jharkhand in the article "Homogenising discourses of governance: Identity and autonomy in Jharkhand." While the rationality of governance in India had been to secure the welfare of different categories of the population, contestations over resource-sharing and the politics of development created obstacles in the implementation of redistributive policies. The functioning of Indian democracy, they argue, is based upon a broad discursive consensus across multiple political actors encompassing the principles of state security, democracy and development, and ensuring social justice. Prakash *et al* demonstrate how this consensus has been, and is, negotiated at various levels of governance. The rise of radical Naxalism since the 1970s constituted the most signficant threat to 'state-security' in Jharkhand, and was facilitated by the inadequate grassroots governance structures and perceived neglect and injustice among the Adivasi people of the region. The authors argue that there exists a complex, negotiated consensus between these Naxal units and the indigenous elite controlling the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), i.e, the institutions of local self-government. PRIs at the village-level form the thrust of the research of Prakash and his team of researchers who have undertaken extensive field studies in the state of Jharkhand to study the local functioning of democracy. Despite developmental funding in Naxal-effected areas, policy objectives, they point out, are seldom realized. On the positive side, PRIs increase inclusivity and participatory politics, but they lack autonomy in the choice of policies. In conclusion they state that while the governance processes do manifest stability and a degree of discursive coherence, yet this very stability results in a slow pace of social change.

In the final article of this issue, "The end of time *in* Adivasi traditions or the Time of the End *for* the Adivasi traditions?", the social anthropologist Stefano Beggiora relates Adivasi ideas regarding the 'end of time' to 'major classical traditions of the subcontinent'. To him, the real issue today is an approaching 'time of the end' for Adivasis, despite the fact that any sustainable development for the future of mankind should take indigenous culture as a 'paradigmatic starting point'. He identifies several threats to Adivasi lifestyle, ranging from the policies of

[31] Ramachandra Guha, "Adivasis, Naxalites and Indian Democracy", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42.32 (August 11, 2007), 3305-3312.

economic development implemented by Central and state governments, the fight of the Indian state against Naxalism – together with its corollaries (Maoism, Salwa Judum, Operation Green Hunt, the 'Wham' policy), the rise of large metropolitan centres and the right-wing Hindutva ideological thrust towards cultural homogenization. Beggiora further traces the extant ideas of 'End of Time' within Adivasi cultures and 'tribal shamanism'. In course of 15 years of field research and study of oral traditions, he observed certain common traits of such ideas based on three premises: that end leads to regeneration, that the focus is on material and not on metaphysical theory, and, that messianism and eschatology as attributed to contemporary Adivasi movements are due to a 'misinterpretation of indigenous cultures'. Highlighting the continuity between Adivasis, Hinduism and Buddhism, he further argues that such ideas are related to cosmogonic myths of Space and Time in India's indigenous traditions and are a source of identity for Adivasi communities.

Adopting an inter-disciplinary approach with diverse disciplinary methodologies and subjectivities, this *Anglistica* issue aims at bringing 'hidden India' – as opposed to the celebrated 'New India' – into academic visibility. The essays draw out the complex historical and contemporary specificities of Adivasi life experiences and we editors hope that it will contribute to further academic research and discussions.