

Dressing Lord Jagannatha in Silk: Cloth, Clothes, and Status¹

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Particular cloths in Orissa, such as a silk ikat with verses from the *Gitagovinda*, function in specific, highly codified ways within a ritual domain at the Jagannatha temple in Puri (Fig. 1). Within the complex network at this great religious institution, cloth denotes status for the hereditary temple *sevakas*, or servants, of Lord Jagannatha, who number in the thousands. The important capacity of cloth to denote status in Indian culture has been articulated in a number of recent publications.² My investigation, however, focuses on the circulation of cloth in various ritual and social arenas related to the Jagannatha temple, underscoring a dynamic process of status negotiation, contestation, or enhancement. I am concerned not only with the *sevakas*, but with a larger ensemble of people: artisans and devotees of the Jagannatha temple — spectators and participants, who, in turn, present and receive gifts of cloth. The public spectacle of the Rathayatra inverts the temple norms, erasing social and sectarian boundaries, by allowing all to gaze upon the divine body of Lord Jagannatha and to witness rituals generally excluded from all but temple officiants who, with the exception of a small group of female temple dancers, are all male.³ The inclusiveness of this procession reminds one of the syncretic nature of Jagannatha himself: a deity whose tribal origins have been assimilated into mainstream Hinduism as an incarnation of Vishnu. Tribal groups in Orissa, especially the Kondh who inhabit the hilly tracts of Phulbani district, worship numerous goddesses who may be represented by wooden posts or pillars. The mediation between religious and cultural systems is explicitly acknowledged by Jagannatha's iconography — rather than anthropomorphic, he retains a wooden, pillar-like form — and by the presence of both temple Brahmanical priests and tribal *daitas* who preside over different spheres of Jagannatha's life. By drawing on both historical documents and contemporary practices, I will argue that ritual, social, and political domains, like status, do not remain discrete or static but intersect through a series of shifting power relations.

THE SETTING: ORISSA'S JAGANNATHA TEMPLE AT PURI

The Jagannatha temple in the coastal town of Puri, Orissa is one of seven *Mokshapuris*, or “sacred places” in India where one gains liberation, and a celebrated place of pilgrimage (*tirthasthana*), especially for the Rathayatra, or Car Festival. At this annual event, the anomalous wooden images of Jagannatha,⁴ “Lord of the Universe,” his sister Subhadra, and his elder brother Balabhadra are brought out of their twelfth-century temple, placed in three massive wooden chariots with cloth-covered towers, and drawn by devotees in public procession along a one-and-a-half kilometer route along the Grand Road north to the Gundica temple where they reside for nine days. Considered the first residence of Lord Jagannatha and the older of the two temples, the Gundica temple maintains an empty sanctum to accommodate Jagannatha during the Rathayatra. At the end of nine days, the procession is re-enacted for the deities' return to the Jagannatha temple.

The Jagannatha temple's complex ritual calendar is regulated by daily rhythms punctuated by temporal markers. The temple rituals can be divided broadly into daily worship (*pūja*) and festival cycles (*utsava*) such as the annual *Snanapurnima* or “Bathing Ceremony” and Rathayatra, and the periodic *Navakalevara* or “New Embodiment,” with accompanying specialists. Hereditary temple priests attend to daily rituals, while the *daitas* preside over aspects of the seasonal calendar. Historian Ronald Inden has written of medieval Indian kings and their campaigns of temple building as constructing “scales of ontological spaces with their appropriate categories of people and activities.”⁵ I would extend his analysis to include categories of objects, and within the context of this paper, cloth. Textiles are cited repeatedly in the extensive literature on the Jagannatha temple. Indeed, colonial officers recognized if not their importance, at least their quantity by preparing separate inventories of cloth, giving us some idea of its pervasive use in temple rituals and as gift

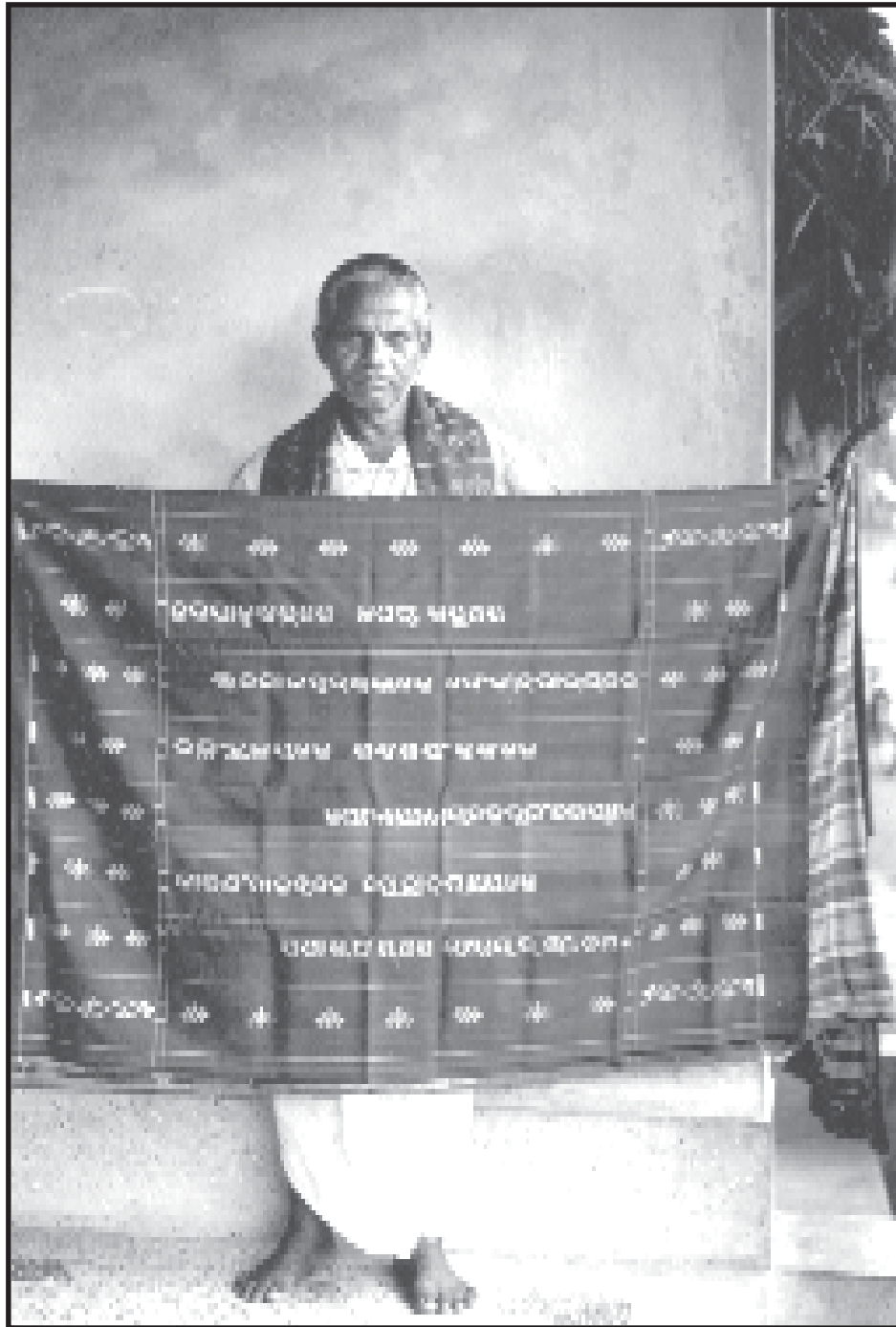


Fig. 1. Master weaver Sudama Guin outside his home in Nuapatna, Cuttack district, displaying a red silk Gitagovinda textile prepared for the Jagannatha temple. The verse on this cloth is from the *Gitagovinda* I.16. Photo: Katherine Hacker.

exchange in the early-nineteenth century.⁶ Today, weavers of the Buddhist Saraka caste, for example, prepare some fifteen distinct cotton cloths of prescribed sizes and solid colours for use at the Jagannatha temple.⁷

Cloth clothes the deities as well as their servants (Fig. 2). During an elaborate daily worship of offering sixteen *upacaras* (food, flowers, incense, or service), the deity is dressed with two cloths (*vastra*) after his bath.⁸ A presentation of silk or cotton cloth used to be the official recognition of all *sevakas* beginning their service to the temple, referred to as the *sadhi-bandha*, or sari-binding ceremony.⁹ *Sadhi* or sari is the name commonly given to a woman's garment. Rather than denoting a gender-specific garment, however, the term here signifies a six-yard loom-width cloth, uncut and unstitched. Unstitched cloth typically denotes the highest ritual value. Of great importance here is that this cloth - marking the *sevaka's* entry into the temple culture - has been worn previously by the deity and the selection of a specific cloth indicates the

sevaka's rank and prestige.

THE SILK GITAGOVINDA CLOTH

Known locally as the "Gitagovinda khandua," the Gitagovinda textile is an extraordinary silk cloth with verses produced by the weft ikat technique. Organizationally, this textile conforms to other Indian draped cloths such as the sari, with a clearly defined central field, borders, and decorative end panel (*pallu*) with its three alternating colours that correspond to the dominant colour of each of the three chariots: green for Balabhadra, red for Subhadra, and yellow for Jagannatha. Inscribed Indian textiles are rare; therefore their presence typically signals a symbolic dimension. For example, block-printed textiles with the repeating Vaishnavite salutation "Shri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram" are widely available at temple sites to be purchased by pilgrims as a religious memento, or they may be worn by priests, as during the 1994 Rathayatra celebrated locally at Raikia, Phulbani district, Orissa. The inscription on the Gitagovinda cloth



Fig. 2. The deities Jagannatha, Subhadra and Balabhadra dressed in cloth at the 1995 Rathayatra celebrated in Jagdalpur, Bastar district, Chhattisgarh. As seen here, images from numerous Jagannatha temples in the Jagdalpur area are installed collectively in a large pavilion near the king's palace for the duration of the Rathayatra. There have been strong historical and political connections between eastern Chhattisgarh and western Orissa, and, in turn, with coastal Orissa and the development of the Jagannatha cult. Photo: Katherine Hacker.

is not created by block printing, but instead by ikat, a resist-dye technique applied to a fabric's weft and/or warp before weaving (Fig. 3). Groups of threads are protected or reserved from dye penetration by tying or binding. Ikat, and other resist techniques such as plangi, are known as *bandha* from the Sanskrit "to tie" or "to bind." The main field is devoted to a single verse or *shloka* from the twelfth-century *Gitagovinda*, composed in Sanskrit but here written in the regional Oriya script, repeated on the entire length of cloth. Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* is a devotional poem, or *ragakavya*, of twelve cantos containing twenty-four songs dedicated to Krishna. The verse most frequently employed is the invocational stanza of the first part (I.16): the *Dashavatara*, recounting Vishnu's ten *avatars*, "descents" or "incarnations."¹⁰ The selection of the *Gitagovinda* locates Jagannatha more specifically in *bhakti* devotionism. In Orissa, Jagannatha is considered Krishna, Vishnu's ninth avatar. As Richard Davis has observed, "the concept of avatara...offered important advantages to an expanding community of Vishnu worshipers. It enabled the Vaishnavas to maintain their identification of Vishnu as the Absolute, yet also incorporate other local or regional deities and their cults as incarnations of an encompassing Vishnu" (Davis, 1994: 24).

The *Gitagovinda* textile's significance was underscored in K.C. Mishra's *The Cult of Jagannath*, where it was not his reference to "the new silken cloths used to cover the sacred Daru [ritually selected log to become the new cult image]" but the photograph of the log covered with the unidentified *Gitagovinda* textile that substantiated the prominent role of the latter in the ceremonial selection and replacement of the wooden image of Lord Jagannatha.¹¹ While the ceremonial renewal of the wooden images occurs only every twelve to nineteen years, implying an infrequent use of the *Gitagovinda* cloth,¹² the daily worship of Lord Jagannatha also entails the use of this textile. Hence, the *Gitagovinda* cloth participates in both the daily and seasonal cycles of the temple.

The *Gitagovinda* poem is recited at two separate phases of the evening worship. Among the 119 departments of *sevakas* with 36 different castes, a "Gitagovinda sevaka" is responsible for the first recitation - including the singing of the *Dashavatara*¹³ - accompanied by musicians, then by *devadasis*, or temple dancers, the only

group of women in attendance to Jagannatha. From a dated inscription on the Jayavijaya gateway within the Jagannatha temple complex, we know that the performance of the *Gitagovinda* has been sanctioned at least as far back as 1499 A.D.¹⁴ In her book *Wives of the God-King*, anthropologist Frederique Apffel Marglin (1985) describes and analyses this evening ritual at length. Singing represents one part of a larger sequence of ritual activities that begins after the evening meal with the dressing of the three main deities in *shringara vesa* (erotic or romantic cloth). Significantly, this dress is none other than the silk *Gitagovinda* cloth.¹⁵ The text of the cloth relates directly to its role in the evening ritual. As the ritual proceeds, sanctum lamps are slowly extinguished. The participants' interpretations of the complete ritual all alluded to sexual union.¹⁶ The appropriateness of this particular poem for inclusion in each evening's concluding ritual is apparent in its erotic content. As Miller elaborates, "The lyrical techniques of Jayadeva's songs combine with the conventional language of Sanskrit erotic poetry to express the intimate power of divine love. As Jayadeva's elaborates the passion of Radha and Krishna, he creates an aesthetic atmosphere of erotic mood (*shringararasa*) that is bliss for devotees of Krishna."¹⁷

Yet, as noted earlier, Jagannatha is not shown with his consort; rather the Puri triad is a familial one, composed of Jagannatha and his two siblings. It has been proposed that Balabhadra was added to a pair of divinities — identified in inscriptions as Purushottama, "Lord of the World" and Lakshmi¹⁸ — in the thirteenth century, and with this addition, Lakshmi as Jagannatha's consort was redefined as his sister Subhadra.¹⁹ It seems clear that the inclusion of this rite which references a divine marriage was grafted on to the worship of Jagannatha at an early stage of his transformation, and while Subhadra's status has changed, the rite has been retained, revealing the disjunctures between ideological and iconographic conceptualisations of the deities. Rather than a reductive opposition between two contrasting systems, the triad marks one moment in a more complex process of interventions. Indeed, this complexity is dramatically reinforced by the presence of not three but seven deities installed in the main sanctum: the three images of Jagannatha, Subhadra, and Balabhadra; small metal images

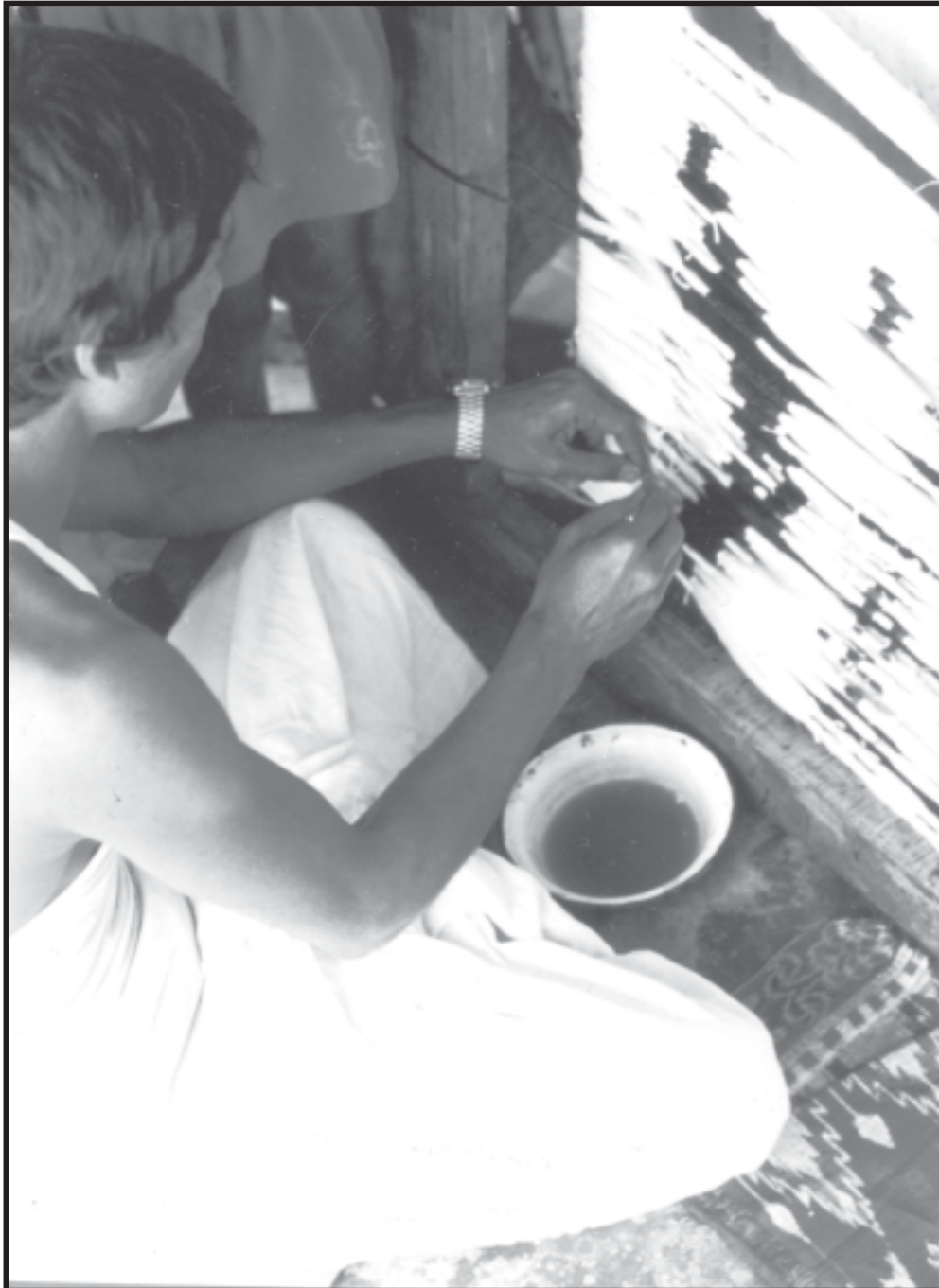


Fig. 3. A young man in Nuapatna, a large village specializing in silk ikat, prepares weft ikat stretched on a wooden frame. As the finished cloth will have many colors, he is painting a dye directly on to specific portions of the weft. These threads will later be bound to resist an immersion dye-bath. The cloth at his feet serves as a pattern guide. Photo: Katherine Hacker.

of Jagannatha's consorts Lakshmi and Sarasvati; the wooden pillar Sudarshana; and Madhava.²⁰ The ambiguity and potential multiple readings of the cult of Jagannatha are constructed and reconstructed in the mythologies and ritualised activities of the temple.

In addition to the evening dressing of the deities in the Gitagovinda cloth, Jagannatha wears a small piece of this silk ikat at another key daily ritual: the offering of *bhoga*.²¹ Consisting of puffed rice, fruits and yogurt in the morning, and large quantities of cooked rice and other prepared dishes for the remainder of the day, *bhoga* is considered the most important element of the sixteen *upacaras* ritually presented to the deities five times a day. It is only after the deity partakes of this food that the *bhoga* becomes *mahaprasad*, to be distributed to the *sevakas* and pilgrims present at the temple. As we shall see, cloth, like food, is ritually consumed and redistributed.

KINGS, DAITAS AND AUTHORITY WITHIN THE TEMPLE CULTURE

Political history interacts with religious history. The Jagannatha temple has been a royally sponsored institution since its founding, after 1135 A.D., by Anantavarman Codaganga (1078-1147 AD), who conquered central Orissa (Utkala). The Shaivite Codaganga employed two strategies to promote stabilisation and legitimation of his power over his new empire: he shifted his capital from Kalinganagara to central Orissa and erected the Vaishnavite temple in Puri to honor Orissa's popular cult.²² In 1230 King Anangabhim III of the Ganga dynasty ritually dedicated the empire of Orissa to Jagannatha as Lord of the Universe; and in the fifteenth century, King Kapilendra declared himself *adisevaka*, the first servant of Lord Jagannatha, thus shifting control of the temple from the priests to the king, at the apex of the temple hierarchy. In inscriptions, Kapilendra boldly equated himself with the deity; if anyone opposed his rule, it was tantamount to treason (*droha*) against Lord Jagannatha himself.²³ In Orissa, kingship cannot be categorized strictly as a secular activity nor separated from the religious domain as the ruler was seen to embody the divinity on earth. When superimposed with Orissa's history, the rich layering of religious meanings of the Jagannatha cult can also be read as strategic manipulations

for political authority. Kapilendra, for example, usurped the throne from the Gangas and founded the powerful Suryavamsa dynasty. The Jagannatha cult has been integrally connected to the political power of Orissa throughout their shared history by its status as a state religion.

The king exploited cloth as a visual means to establish hierarchy and to mark status and prestige within the institutional boundaries of the temple cult. Just as temple servants are bound by specific obligations to the temple, the king extended a network of religious obligations, rights, and privileges, patterned on the religious institution, to incorporate the political landscape. By appropriating these recognizable symbols, rulers sought to consolidate the Orissan empire, or to maintain control of the tributary states within the region. One tool royalty consistently commanded was the distribution of cloth, which functioned as part of a political contract. As example, cloth used by the deities and *mahaprasad*, sacred food prepared in the temple kitchen and offered to the deities, were sent to the Rajas of Dhenkanal and Talcher in return for supplying iron, and to the King of Ranpur for providing ropes to construct and pull the carts during the Rathayatra.²⁴ The annual supply of wood for the construction of the carts was the privilege of the Rajas of Dasapalla, to the west of Puri. The *Madala Panji*, or "Puri temple chronicles," record that "sarīs (or turbans, as signs of honor) should be sent from the temple store for the two chieftains."²⁵ The rajas of these feudatory states, in turn, engaged tribals in duties related to the festival, and they were rewarded in the same manner: cloth and an honorarium from the temple.²⁶

The *Jagannatha Sthala Vrttantam*, containing approximately thirty-five royal letters (*chamu citau*) dating from 1654 to 1913,²⁷ reveals a consistent pattern of recognition and honors issued by the king on behalf of the temple to visitors to the Jagannatha temple. Entries record the year of reign, the name, title and place of origin of the visitor, as well as those in his party and their relationship to him, the purpose of his visit, his endowment and gifts to the temple, and the special privileges and facilities to be accorded him. The king, acting on behalf of the temple, bestowed gifts to the visitor. Invariably, like those provided to the feudatory kings for services rendered, these gifts were cloth. The Raja of Avanti, for example, "visiting Puri for darshan

should be honoured by presents of garments and sandalwood paste in the temple.”²⁸ The Raja of Khandapada’s family members were honoured with “twenty-one pieces of cotton cloths” while the king was given “a silk cloth of orange colour... further gifts of a piece of cloth from the sacred flag of the temple (*bana*), three pieces of local cloth and a silk cloth.”²⁹ And a third example, the Raja of Kendujhar, who endowed fifty rupees to the temple, was given a silk cloth called “Phillatoni” and his secretary, a piece of cotton cloth.³⁰

The above three entries are representative of the corpus of royal letters in that they underscore the presentation of cloth as an honour, and the category of the gift appropriate to the status of the recipient. Kings receive the prestigious silk, their ministers and family members, cotton. Even when the cloth is specifically identified such as Phillatoni, cited above, the fiber is always named, underscoring the differentiating significance and power associated with silk. Furthermore, the cloth’s size is communicated in the descriptive language of *sari*, indicating that it is a six-yard length of cloth; and *khandua*, approximately two yards. The Rajas of Khurda tried to bolster their increasingly weakened political position through ritual means, such as the granting of special privileges.³¹ Cloth was a major element in the system of according special status and a means of formalizing relationships; thus it served not only religious and ceremonial functions but the political realm as well.

As a way of marking their independence from the collapsing Khurda dynasty in the sixteenth century, a number of rajas within the larger network of Khurda’s eighteen feudatory states erected their own Jagannatha temples. These feudatory kings also emulated Puri’s Jagannatha tradition by staging their own cart festivals.³² Talcher, Atgarh, Tigiria, and Dhenkanal — each with their own Jagannatha temple — appear to have replicated this political and religious authority with the rituals at Puri by presenting Gitagovinda cloth.³³ In 1994 at Tigiria’s sixteenth-century Jagannatha temple, two elderly temple priests in charge of dressing Lord Jagannatha were able to verify the existence of a Gitagovinda cloth. Both in their sixties, they remember this textile given by the king. When it became old and torn, however, the cloth was ritually disposed of by being placed in a tank. Since then the cloth has not been replaced.³⁴ At Atgarh, the present

generation of temple priests knows of no Gitagovinda cloth in use at their Jagannatha temple, constructed in 1728 by Raja Raghunatha Harichandana.

Although in the present day kingship has been superseded by modern forms of governance, and management of the temple shifted to the state in the mid-1950s, the King of Puri continues to carry out ceremonial duties within the Jagannatha temple’s ritual arena and, as *adisevaka*, receives the largest share of the temple *mahaprasad*.³⁵ As a token of his coronation when he becomes the temple’s “first servant,” the king wears the Gitagovinda cloth, referred to as *pagabandhiba*, an ikat-patterned turban (*paga*). This ceremony took place most recently in January of 1971 when Divyasimha Deva IV became Raja of Puri. A seventeenth-century manual of Jagannatha’s ritual (*Niti*) records the important sweeping of the carts (*chera pahamra*), which is initiated by the Raja. Although the rituals are undergoing change, this grand ceremony of sweeping the carts remains a most important “royal duty” (*rajaniti*) of the present Raja of Puri and a conspicuous part of the festival (Fig. 4).³⁶ Indeed the king signals the entire procession to begin, as he makes a formal entrance, from his palace located on the Grand Road, up to the carts in a covered palanquin escorted by the royal elephant. After the ritual cleansing or purification, the king returns to his palace in an open palanquin so as to be seen by all the spectators assembled along the route. As Kulke has argued, these processions served as a public means of displaying power, and of ritually linking tribal rural communities with royal or urban centres through the Hinduized worship of a local deity.³⁷

Of tribal or Shabara origin,³⁸ the *daitas* hold an interesting position within the institutional structure. They play an extremely important role in the festival cycle of the temple, especially during *anavasara*, when annual repairs and repainting of the images are made after the Bathing Ceremony, prior to the cart festival; the eleven-day annual Rathayatra; and the periodical *Navakalevara* or “New Embodiment.” During these events held in the summer months of *Jyestha* (May-June) and *Ashadha* (June-July), the *daitas* may wear the Gitagovinda cloth.³⁹

A new set of Gitagovinda cloths is given to the *daitas* at the annual *Khadilagi Ekadasi*, when the images are repainted at the conclusion



Fig. 4. The Raja of Puri, sweeping Subhadra's chariot at the 1994 Rathayatra. After this symbolic task is completed, the ramps will be dismantled and wooden horses attached to each chariot. This work is already in progress on Balabhadra's chariot. Photo: Katherine Hacker.

of the bathing ceremony.⁴⁰ The ritual of bathing, painting, and dressing the images represents their annual rebirth prior to the cart festival. At the beginning of the *Navakalevara*, four *daita* chiefs — from the four divisions of *daitas* serving Lord Jagannatha, Subhadra, Balabhadra and Sudarshana—are presented with silk Gitagovinda cloths of approximately eighteen feet in length, or, in the local system of measurement, twelve *hata* (hands). The remaining compliment of *daitas*, thirty-two in all,⁴¹ receive four to five *hatas* (*charihata*) of the same fabric.⁴² The *Vishwakarma* carpenters receive cotton and silk saris from the Raja of Puri as “a symbolic authorization of the king to begin work.”⁴³ When the proper tree has been selected for each of the four images, it is circumambulated seven times, sprinkled with holy water, applied with sandalpaste, offered flowers, and finally wrapped with a “new cloth.” Mishra's photograph, cited above, documents the 1969 *Navakalevara* in which the wooden log (*daru*) is protectively wrapped in the silk Gitagovinda cloth, revealing

that the very first cloth to be worn by the future deity in its unrealised form is the Gitagovinda cloth.

Drawn ceremoniously in wooden carts back to Puri, the four *darus* are then carved by the *daitas* in a specially constructed pavilion in the northern precinct of the temple compound. This special two-week event is conducted under great secrecy, concluding with the all important transfer of the “life-substance” (*brahmapadartha*) from the old images to the new icons who now are considered alive. This most important ceremony is performed by the head *daita* for each of the four deities. The previous, “dead,” images are ritually disposed of in a deep pit lined with red cloth. This burial site (*Koili Vaikuntha*) is also located on the northern side of the temple.

While the *daitas* are the major players in this festival cycle, temple priests are not excluded. Interestingly, during *Navakalevara*, the location of the proper trees is revealed in a dream not only to the *daitas* but to the *Vishwakarmas*, and to the temple priests who perform rituals in the

forest that parallel those in the temple's daily worship of Jagannatha. After the return to Puri, Vedic rites are conducted simultaneously by the temple Brahmins in a structure adjacent to the one housing the Vishwakarmas who are carving the new images. After the images are painted by the *chitrakaras*, it is the Brahmin priest who performs the important ceremony of eye-opening (*Netrotsava*) by painting in the pupils of the eyes of the deities. The deities then receive a purification bath at the hands of the priests which is meant to cleanse them of the contamination received from the artisans. The public *Snanapurnima* ceremony is another example where social boundaries are negotiated and temple authority is mediated; tribal *daitas* and Brahmin *sevakas* together bathe the images, and sit together while cooked food is offered.

While the periodic ceremony celebrating the renewal of an ephemeral form subverts the primacy of Jagannatha as a Hindu deity, the use of the Gitagovinda cloth with its word images of Krishna reasserts Jagannatha's incorporation into devotional Hinduism inscribing the ceremony with a certain tension between religious ideologies. At these moments where contrasting traditions and competing interests intersect within existing power structures, we see ritual systems to mediate the authority at the temple.

As the *daitas* are considered family members (*kutumba*) of Jagannatha and actually observe a period of mourning and death pollution after the transfer of the "life-essence" to the new images, they are entitled to the personal effects of the old images after the "New Embodiment" ceremony. Of concern here is the fact that the statues are not made solely of wood, but also of seven layers of cloth, resin, and sandalwood. As part of the deconsecration of the old images, these materials may be given away by the *daitas* at their discretion, whereupon they are then treated as relics. The Gitagovinda cloth is accorded a similar status. It is preserved for generations; when the cloth has almost disintegrated, thin strips (*shirikapa*) are tied around the necks of devotees, as a token of the goddess, who is none other than Lakshmi, consort of Lord Jagannatha. Moreover, small pieces of the cloth may be purchased from the *daitas* by villagers for their goddess to wear as a head covering or *odhani*. The *daitas* themselves preserve small fragments of the Gitagovinda cloth in their Lakshmi *puja phedi*, a traditional casket of bamboo or brass

where images and articles for Lakshmi's *puja* are stored. Among the *daita* community, another significant function of the Gitagovinda cloth is as a funeral shroud for a deceased member of their family — male or female.⁴⁴ By placing an old fragment on the body of the deceased, Jagannatha's renewal is symbolically re-enacted, and with it, the promise of reincarnation.

The silk Gitagovinda cloth, in its various forms, manifests the divine body. Initially clothing the deity himself, the cloth goes on to circulate within the domains of kingship, kinship, and devotion. Worn only by the king when he assumes the title of first servant at his coronation, at this ceremony and with the Gitagovinda cloth the institutions of state and religion are officially bound. Although the status of the *daitas* within the temple *sevaka* organization is ambiguous, the cloth wraps the *daitas* in a collective identity by proclaiming their kinship ties with Lord Jagannatha. Their status within the larger temple culture is enhanced by the privilege of distributing the Gitagovinda cloth. The process of redistribution also establishes new sets of social and political relationships. Even as it physically degenerates, the cloth retains its religious resonance for the pilgrims who accept portions of the divine body from the *daitas*.

THE WEAVERS OF NUAPATNA

Having discussed the roles of textiles for the consumers, what of the makers of the cloth? Do the weavers simply fulfil an order or are they too recipients in some of the merits and gifts of the temple? What is the nature of their affiliation with the temple?

At present, the Gitagovinda cloth is woven in Nuapatna, Cuttack district, a large village located along Orissa's Mahanadi River. Perhaps ninety percent of Nuapatna's population of approximately 4,000 people are hereditary weavers, comprised of five different castes: Asini patara; Gaudiya patara; Saraka and Rangani, (Buddhists); and Odiya patara. Sixty year-old Sudama Guin, a master weaver whose family belongs to the Gaudiya pataras, prepares the Gitagovinda textile (see: fig. 1). According to their oral history, Guin's family who migrated from Burdwan, Bengal, have been weaving this cloth for fourteen generations. Adopted by his maternal uncle Cintamani Guin, Sudama Guin was the youngest of three sons and had to receive

permission from his mother to begin weaving the Gitagovinda cloth, and then only after his marriage. Had he been an only son, this occupation would not have been allowed because in Guin's own words: "In God's work, you have to be very careful; if not, he'll destroy you." He cites the example of his father's younger brother a weaver who died prematurely at thirty-two. Villagers thought perhaps he had made a mistake in weaving and expressed their belief that there is great danger (*bipada*) attached with temple weaving. Of Sudama Guin's four sons, only his second and married son Nityananda has begun weaving the Gitagovinda.⁴⁵

The Gitagovinda cloth is known alternately as "Kenduli pata" or "Kenduli Khandua," the title Kenduli referring to the village where, according to legend, the cloth originated.⁴⁶ An early historical document referring to these cloths and their place of manufacture appears in the *Madala Panji*. The royal decree by King Ramachandra Deva II, dated 1641 *Shaka* (1719 A.D.),⁴⁷ states that "'the bandha gitagovinda' set of cloths previously woven by Kenduli weavers could not be done there and therefore the order was to be placed with the eight brother weavers of Nuapatna (Tigiria) and they were to be remunerated for their labour by Shreekheta [a name for Puri] by way of *Bhoga-prasad* and other gifts."⁴⁸ Master weaver Guin's oral history of fourteen generations of weavers, or approximately two-hundred and eighty years, is consistent with this date.

The Jagannatha temple administration currently purchases directly from master weaver Guin a set of "Gitagovinda Khandua" for Rs 13,500 (approximately \$450). This silk set consists of twelve pieces for seven images: the wooden triad of Jagannatha, Subhadra and Balabhadra, the wooden pillar Sudarshana, small metal images of consorts Lakshmi and Sarasvati, and Madhaba. These additional four deities are also installed in the main sanctum of the Jagannatha temple. The twelve cloths have specific names, sizes, and functions. The *bara hata*, a cloth of eighteen feet (twelve *hata*), is an upper garment worn like a shawl. Three *bara hata* are prepared for the Trinity. Another upper garment, the *paharana* covers the head and body and is twenty-one feet long (fourteen *hata*). The *khandua*, a lower garment of eight *hata* is also prepared for Jagannatha, Subhadra and Balabhadra. An extremely long cloth of thirty-six

feet (twenty-four *hata*), the *phuta* is wrapped around the deities's arms and in front of the body to resemble a garland. Only two *phuta* are required — for Lord Jagannatha and Balabhadra — as Subhadra, who stands in the center of the triad, has no arms. The twelfth cloth is the *kani*, which is cut into fourths for the accompanying deities Sudarshana, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, and Madhaba. These cloths — three *bara hata* (shawl), *paharana* (head cover), and *khandua* (lower garment); two *phuta*; and one *kani* make up a complete set for the Jagannatha temple. According to Guin, the temple has four unnegotiable requirements: the *Gitagovinda* is the only text to be used; the verses, created in *ikat*, must be in Oriya script only; the cloth must be silk; and the cloth's background colour must be red. Eberhard Fischer suggests that Devanagari script was used in an earlier period, replaced by Oriya, and while there are cloths utilizing Devanagari, such as the above-cited cloth by Nityananda Guin in the Orissa State Museum, these, I believe, represent private orders rather than those placed from the Jagannatha temple.⁴⁹ Temple insistence on vernacular Oriya rather than classical Devanagari script underscores the regional nature of the Jagannatha cult, and may recall the historic circumstances of privileging or consciously selecting Oriya to promote an Oriya identity.

Working within these prescriptions, Guin is free to choose the verses from the *Gitagovinda*. According to the weaver, Lord Jagannatha himself appears in a dream (*sopna desa*) and reveals which shlokas to prepare. Sometimes a whole song is written, or a single verse is repeated. Guin's personal and visionary participation is, therefore, of crucial importance to the outcome of the cloth.

Whereas the temple orders Gitagovinda cloths annually, this is not the only new set coming into the Jagannatha temple. Devotees request Guin's address, from the temple administration or from shopkeepers, and order sets for presentation at the temple. According to Guin, commissions from devotees have increased over the years: in the summer of 1994, he had prepared four or five sets, including one order received from a top industrialist from Orissa. In addition to his role as weaver, Guin as a personal devotee of Lord Jagannatha annually gives four pieces of cloth (*ghoda*) he has woven to be worn as shawls by the deities in the winter season.

Furthermore, like the *daitas*, Sudama Guin preserves a fragment of the Gitagovinda cloth, woven by his great grandfather, for a head covering for the goddess, for his personal devotions.

Guin also prepares a cotton cloth specifically for pilgrims or devotees. Evoking the silk Gitagovinda cloth, the ground is red and bands of inscriptions are prepared in ikat. With verses from the *Gitagovinda* or the *Caritamamaritam* by the famous Bengali Vaishnavite saint Caitanya (1485-1533 A.D.) or even an image of Lord Jagannatha created by the ikat technique, these cloths are worn by pilgrims as scarves or shoulder cloths, perhaps to emulate the *daitas*. Not as time-consuming or finely wrought as the silk Gitagovinda, the cotton pilgrim cloths can be prepared twenty at one time. This finished cloth enters a well-established commercial network, a major industry around the temple selling religious souvenirs for pilgrims such as paintings, small wooden shrines, conch shells, and bamboo baskets filled with *prasad*.⁵⁰ While merchants sell these wares year-round at the square in front of the temple, during the Rathayatra this industry more than triples in quantity, types of goods, and the physical space required for display. Separate, portable stalls, often no more than a piece of cloth to demarcate their space, appear during the summer lining both sides of the processional route. While seemingly random and chaotic, a certain ordering is detectable: spaces directly in front of the carts, at either end of the festival site, carry goods for the immediate ritual needs of the pilgrims in their devotions to Lord Jagannatha — incense, oil lamps, coconuts, and flowers.

That ikat cloth was produced for other special, secular occasions can be verified from another source. The Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad, has in its collection a “silk souvenir sample” woven on the occasion of George VI’s coronation in 1937, with a repeating refrain in English: “God save great George our King, Long live our noble King, God save the King, Send him Victorious, Happy and Glorious, Long to reign over us God save the King, Tigiria.” The date of this coronation cloth coincides with the date that Guin’s great grandfather Kalindi Katuala was presented a Certificate of Merit from the King of Mayurbhanj state, suggesting that the cloth was a commission of the Raja and prepared by Guin’s ancestor.

Guin receives cash payment for his cloth; whereas in the past, according to the *Madala Panji* temple records, the weavers received *prasad* and other gifts. Are the weavers of the Gitagovinda cloth, then, honoured as *sevakas*, like the *chitrakaras* who paint images for the temple or the potters who prepare pots for the *mahaprasad*? Those artisans are acknowledged as *sevakas* by beginning their service with the *sari-binding* ceremony and receiving fire from the temple kitchen to light their funeral pyre. The potters carry an honorific surname Bisoi (“leader”) which distinguishes them from other potters, and they have received a large tract of land as well as other benefits from the temple.⁵¹ The potters’ service to the temple is, in fact, their main occupation. Yet they have begun to find their obligations and duties onerous and are searching for new means to maintain their obligations as well as economic solvency. Perhaps this was the situation for the weavers as well. What I found, instead, is that these weavers are excluded from the *sevaka* system.

Like the other silk ikat textiles of Nuapatna village, the Gitagovinda is woven on India’s most common loom — the pit loom, where the male weaver sits at the edge of a pit with the breast beam stretching across his lap. Whereas I saw no women weaving in Nuapatna, they do, in fact, perform related tasks, such as reeling silk and warping the loom.⁵² Indeed, there is a special prohibition against women weaving the Gitagovinda cloth, and they will not even enter the workshop where this cloth is being woven. The exclusion of women as weavers conforms to the pattern within the male-dominated *sevaka* structure of the temple where status is linked with the male domain. The execution of this cloth requires special and stringent ritual observances, such as fasting and sexual abstinence during its production. Remarks made by the weavers suggest the magical transformative nature of the Gitagovinda textile: “People are afraid to weave this cloth.”⁵³ In this regard, their work sets them apart from the other craftspeople in Nuapatna who also weave silk ikat. Indian weavers could improve their status by creating finer and purer commodities, such as silk rather than cotton. The issue here, however, is not only one of purity, but of power, perhaps a perceived uncontrollable power. It seems that the weavers of the Gitagovinda cloth and the *daitas* have much in common — both may be described as artisans or

ritual specialists who engage in work considered dangerous, and polluting; consequently, their status is also ambiguous.

While Sudama Guin has received recognition for his craft at the state and national levels — he was awarded the National Craftsman's Award in 1976 — among both artisan and temple communities his status is contested. The Gaudiya weavers, Guin's hereditary caste, are also known as Kosa Katiya, people who extract thread from cocoons, and, by extension, kill silkworms. Because of this, the Asini patara caste considers the Gaudiya pataras inferior. And within the temple culture, although his textiles are instrumental in defining key ritual moments and players, Guin and his family are not acknowledged as *sevakas*; they receive no sari-binding nor is fire from the temple kitchen provided to light their funeral pyre. Guin has taken the unprecedented step of seeking admittance into the *sevaka* network. He appears to be the first artisan to actually *petition* for entry.⁵⁴ As Guin's cloth is the object of a complex series of exchanges within the temple culture, Guin would like this to be acknowledged, and acknowledged through the status of *sevaka*, as are other hereditary artisan groups. Perhaps his motivation is also partly financial since, in addition to the inherent high prestige, *sevakas* are now awarded a pension by the government.

I would suggest that forms of contestation exist at other levels of this great religious and economic institution. In recent years, the control of the Rathayatra has been contested between the *daitas*, the traditional authority, and the state government, which increasingly dominates the event. This rivalry is played out each year, with the police in riot gear overseeing events on the ground, the dhoti-clad *daitas* orchestrating from above on the chariots. The Rathayatra — religious event and public spectacle — is being promoted as one of Orissa's major tourist attractions. Japanese film crews jostle with incense and coconut-bearing pilgrims for a better glimpse of Lord Jagannatha. The 1994 Rathayatra was even televised live on Doordarshan, India's national television. As a means of demonstrating their ultimate power over the ritual, the *daitas* at the 1993 Rathayatra withheld the image of Lord Jagannatha, upsetting the scheduled return of the deities to their temple residence. By extension, the Jagannatha temple itself actively strives to enhance its prestige by prohibiting the sale of non-vegetarian food and the playing of film

music in front of the temple and along the Grand Road. Shopkeepers are encouraged to play *bhajans* and other devotional music. The local Municipal Council justifies this decision by citing other major Hindu holy places — Rishikesh, Dwarka, Brindavan, Mathura — that impose these regulations. Mr. Maheswar Mohanty, the Council's chairman, states "Sri Kshetra, as Puri is known, was no less important than these pilgrim centres."⁵⁵ By affiliating itself with canonical Hindu institutions, Jagannatha's regional cult is positioning itself in the national arena. The fluid process of accommodation to changing cultural, economic, and political forces speaks to the vitality of this living religious tradition and the active roles assumed by a large cast of sometimes disparate players.

The opening verse of part III of the *Gitagovinda* uses the metaphor of binding to underscore the relationship of devotee to deity: "Krishna, demon Kamsa's foe, feeling Radha bind his heart with chains of memories buried in other worldly lives, abandoned the beautiful cowherd girls."⁵⁶ Focusing on one aspect of visual culture, cloth at the Jagannatha temple serves as a visual reminder of the covenant between individual and temple in the all important sari-binding ceremony, where cloth previously worn by the divinity is tied around the head of the new *sevaka*. This is one of cloth's many meanings — garment, blessing and honour, status and prestige, rebirth, relic, and commodity — whose sphere of influence increasingly radiates out from its locus at the Jagannatha temple. *Gitagovinda* cloths produced in Nuapatna, Orissa today preserve indigenous knowledge while extending into different networks of cultural consumption. In this constellation of players, the *daitas* function as artistic mediators who enhance the meaning and value of the *Gitagovinda* cloths. The technique of ikat — *bandha* from the Sanskrit "to bind" — intensifies the explicit meanings of cloth at the Jagannatha temple and its sphere of influence, within which duty, privilege, and status are communicated, contested, and mediated.

KEYWORDS Jagannatha; temple authority; contemporary ritual practices; *Gitagovinda*; cloth; weavers.

ABSTRACT Particular cloths in Orissa such as a silk ikat with verses from the *Gitagovinda*, function in specific, highly codified ways within a ritual domain at

the Jagannatha temple in Puri. Drawing on both historical documents and contemporary practices, this paper focuses on the circulation of cloth in various ritual and social arenas related to the temple, underscoring a dynamic process of status negotiation, contestation or enhancement.

NOTES

- 1 This paper draws on several extended periods of research in Orissa, initially in 1978-79 with a Fulbright fellowship. Research trips in 1994 and 1995 were funded by the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute and the University of British Columbia. The author wishes to acknowledge Purna Chandra Mishra (M.A.) of Puri for his invaluable assistance in Orissa and further thanks for the permission to reprint the paper from: Hacker, K. 1997. "Dressing the Lord Jagannatha in Silk: Cloth, Clothes, and Status," *Tradition-Translation-Treason*, Res 32: (Autumn) 124. Copyright by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.
- 2 See Tarlo (1996); Bayly (1986); Cohn (1989); and Bean (1989).
- 3 Entry into the Jagannatha temple is restricted to Hindus only; furthermore, they may view the images installed in the sanctum at prescribed times of day only.
- 4 Unlike stone images typically installed permanently in Hindu sanctums with smaller metal sculptures for processional use, Puri's large wooden triad leaves the temple annually for the Rathayatra.
- 5 Inden, 1985: 53.
- 6 Groome and Webb, "No. 14: List of Expenses of every department belonging to the Jagannath Temple," "No. 15: List of articles in the Store Room of the Jagannath Temple" and "No. 16: Account of the Distribution of cloths given to the Idol by government or by Pilgrims." After the British conquest of Orissa in 1803 Charles Groome served as Collector of the Southern Division at Puri (Juggernath Temple Correspondance, 1804-1832: 258-286).
- 7 The fifteen cotton cloths are: *patani* (yellow) 12 x 1.5; *hata*; *boirani* (blue) 12 x 1.5; *Shri Kaporai* (red) 22 x 4; *Godi phetai* (red) 2 x 5; *suta phota* (white) 22 x 1.5; *nuchali* (white) 4 x 1.5; *tarapo* (white) 9 x 3; *Shri mukhota* (white) 22 x 2; *cona kosha* (white) 22 x 2; *cemedi* (white) 1 x 3; *chotagamucha* (white) 5 x 4; *neta phuta* (blue) 24 x 1.5; *neta khandua* (blue) 3 x 8; *barahati ghora* (white) 12 x 1.5; and *solahati ghora* (white) 16 x 1.5. Pers. comm. with Govinda Das, a weaver in Nuagodi village, near Nirmala, Puri district, July 1994. According to Das, this tradition of weaving cloth for the Jagannatha temple has been in his family for two generations. One day his father was in the market selling some towel-like cloth (*gamucha*). Also in the shop was the present king's grandfather who was relating to the shopkeeper some problem with the supply of cloth, just prior to the Rathayatra. The shopkeeper recommended Sanatana Das, Govinda Das's father, and this is how his family entered the temple culture. These weavers are suppliers only; they do not have *sevaka* status.
- 8 Articles are presented in a specific order, with cloth offered ninth. For a detailed examination of the entire ritual, see: Tripathi, 1978: 285-307.
- 9 Some servants, such as potters, now forgo the ceremony because of its prohibitive cost in the form of payments to the temple priests who perform it. Personal communication, Louise Cort, 1997.
- 10 This verse, in translation, reads: For upholding the Vedas, For supporting the earth, For raising the world, For tearing the demon asunder, For cheating Bali, For destroying the warrior class, For conquering Ravana, For wielding the plow, For spreading compassion, For routing the barbarians: Homage to you, Krishna, In all your ten incarnate forms! (Miller, 1977: 71).
- 11 Mishra, 1971: Plate 52. Other scholars have subsequently published on the Gitagovinda textile. See: Fischer and Pathy, 1980: 289-91; Fischer and Pathy, 1982: 7-15; and Hacker and Turnbull, 1982: 28-29.
- 12 While initially determined by the occurrence of an extra *Asadha* (June/July) in the lunar calendar, economics increasingly plays a significant role in this expensive ceremony. The last *Navakalavera* was held in 1996; the one before, 1977. Not only was 1996 the last year in which the festival could be held within the prescribed cycle of 12 to 19 years, but many of the most knowledgeable, senior *daitas* are quite old, and as these traditions must be practiced to be followed properly, this ritual knowledge was perceived to be in jeopardy.
- 13 Miller, 1977: 42, n. 18.
- 14 This lengthy inscription written in the Oriya language and script was translated into English as early as 1898 in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. I include here Miller's (1977: 6) translation: On Wednesday the tenth lunar year of Kakada, bright half in the ninth mark of the warrior, the elephant-lord, the mighty Prataparudradeva Maharaja, king over Gauda and the ninety millions of Karnata and Kalabaraga, orders as follows: "Dancing will be performed thus at the time of food-offerings (*bhoga*) to the Elder Lord (Balarama) and the Lord of the *Gitagovinda* (Jagannatha). This dancing will continue from the end of the deities' evening meal to their bedtime meal. The dancing group of the Elder Lord, the female dancers of Lord Kapileshvara, and the ancient dancing group of Telengana will all learn no song other than the *Gitagovinda* from the Elder Lord. *Aum*. They will sing no other song. No other dance should be performed before the great God. In addition to the dancing, there will be four singers who will sing only the *Gitagovinda*. Those who are not versed in singing the *Gitagovinda* will follow in chorus - they should learn no other song. Any temple official who knowingly allows any other song or dance to be performed is hostile to Jagannatha."
- 15 Correspondence with Purna Chandra Mishra of Puri, March 1994.
- 16 Marglin, 1985: 195-98. Whereas the imagery in the *Gitagovinda* celebrates specifically the union of Krishna, the deity, and Radha, devotee *par excellence*, Jagannatha's evening ritual is comparable with other divine marriages at major festivals, such as the South Indian goddess Minakshi's marriage to Lord Shiva at the Minakshi temple in Madurai, and more specifically to the nightly ritual of *palliyaria pujai* with its key aspect of the joining together of the god and goddess, seen explicitly as lovers (Fuller, 1984: 11). For further reading on this topic, see: Harman, 1989: 1-20.

- 17 Miller, 1977: 14
- 18 Tripathi, 1978: 53-54.
- 19 Williams, 1984: 301. For a more complete explication of this fascinating process, see: Eschmann, 1978: 79-118.
- 20 One might well expect this image to be a personification of Vishnu's weapon the *chakra*, or discus, as the name Sudarshana suggests. Instead, this simple wooden pillar is considered to be Narasimha. Within the context of the Jagannatha temple, Madhava or Nilamadhava is seen as another aspect of Jagannatha.
- 21 Personal communication with Laksmanadas Mahapatra, a senior *daita* at the Jagannatha temple, Puri, July 1994.
- 22 Kulke, 1978: 149-50. Anantavarman's kingdom was south of Utkala. Near present day Cuttack, his new capital of Chaudwar was located along the Mahanadi river.
- 23 Kulke, 1993: 52.
- 24 Tripathi, 1978: 252.
- 25 Kulke, 1993: 77. From the *Madala Panji*, No. MP, 2, 3, 2 V.
- 26 Kulke, 1993: 81. The Raja of Keonjhar gave the responsibility of making chariot ropes for the Rathayatra to the Bhuiyans and Juangs.
- 27 Kulke, 1993: 62. The Orissa Research Project of Heidelberg has assembled over 125 royal letters from this unpublished manuscript in Telugu. While all of these documents are addressed to royal or princely families, from Rajasthan to Assam, they are mainly from the feudatory states of Khurda in central Orissa.
- 28 *Jagannath Sthala Vrttantam* [hereafter abbreviated JSV], MSS 440, typescript p. 135. I thank Louise Allison Cort for sharing with me a number of documents she obtained from the Orissa Research Project in Heidelberg in connection with her own work on Puri potters.
- 29 JSV:137.
- 30 JSV, p. 139.
- 31 Kulke, 1993: 55.
- 32 The cult of Jagannatha is continuing to increase its sphere of influence from coastal Orissa into the interior. I observed the celebration of the cart festival in hilly, predominately tribal areas of central Orissa and in the adjacent state of Chhattisgarh in 1995. This also speaks to migration patterns — which have increased dramatically since the 1960s — of Hindus from the plains up into the hills.
- 33 This list of princely states commissioning Gitagovinda cloth was given to me by weaver Sudama Guin.
- 34 Pers. comm. temple priests at the Jagannatha temple, Tigiria, Puri district, Orissa, July 1994.
- 35 Hein, 1978: 449-50.
- 36 As reported by Kulke (1993: 73), after finishing the symbolic cleansing, the king puts a silk cloth (*pata mucula*) around his head and symbolically pushes the cars from behind, thus starting the Rathayatra. This aspect of the rite is not presently performed. Other examples of change: the image of Jagannatha is traditionally supposed to be carried around his cart once, and Sudarshana, who is brought out first, is to circumambulate all three carts once. At the 1994 Rathayatra, Jagannatha and Sudarshana were carried directly up into their carts.
- 37 Kulke, 1980: 35.
- 38 Tripathi, 1978: 224.
- 39 It would be important here to establish at what points in the ritual cycles these cloths are worn. According to the *Niti*, Gitagovinda cloths are required on the first day of the deities' residence at the Gundica temple. As this mention is from a list of requisite items, it does not specify the recipient of the cloth - deity, *daita*, or other ritual specialist. JSV, p. 83.
- 40 *Khadi*, meaning the color white, refers to the painting of the images.
- 41 Tripathi (1978: 231) records twenty eight *daitas*; but according to Laksmanadas Mahapatra, a senior *daita*, the figure is thirty-two, perhaps reflecting the continuing expansion of the institution over the last twenty years.
- 42 Pers. comm. with Laksmanadas Mahapatra in Puri.
- 43 Tripathi (1978: 252) states that the Vishwakarma belong to the caste of *daita*. According to Purna Chandra Mishra of Puri, who interviewed them in 1993, the carpenters are not *daita*.
- 44 Pers. comm., Laksmanadas Mahapatra, Puri.
- 45 Nityananda Guin's work is on exhibition in the Ethnographic wing of the Orissa State Museum in the capital city of Bhubaneswar. On this small cloth with a red ground, four white ikat lines from the *Sampurna Ramayana* are created in Devanagari characters. At the bottom, also crafted in ikat, is the weaver's signature in English: "Nityananda Guin son of Sudam Guin Nuapatna CTC Orissa." Also exhibited are two other small ikats on cotton: a representation of the Jagannatha temple highlighting its soaring tower, and a "Jayadev Khandua" All three carry the brief label in Oriya and English, "Findspot: Nuapatna (Cuttack)." In a separate open vitrine, images of Jagannatha, Subhadra and Balabhadra are draped with silk Gitagovinda cloths.
- 46 Communities of weavers from Kenduli, as well as Dhenkanal and Baramba appear to have moved to Nuapatna in the 1760s. The possibility of the cloth originating in Kenduli is indeed a fascinating one, as Jayadeva, the twelfth-century author of the *Gitagovinda*, names "Kindubilva" as his birthplace in the *Gitagovinda* (III.10). There has been much discussion, however, about the location of this village: Orissa or West Bengal. See Miller (1977: 4). Historian K.N. Mahapatra has published on this issue arguing convincingly for Orissan authorship, but as his publications *Khurudha Itihasa* (1969) and *Shri Jayadeva o Shri Gitagovinda* (1973) are in Oriya, his ideas are not yet part of the larger public discourse.
- 47 Whereas the *Madala Panji* verifies an eighteenth-century date or earlier for the ikat technique in Orissa, there are no extant ikat textiles of that age. The oldest documented Orissan ikat appears to be the commissioned piece for the 1937 coronation of King George, in the collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad.
- 48 Mohanty and Krishna, 1974: 20-21.
- 49 Fischer and Pathy, 1980: 290.
- 50 For a discussion of painting on cloth (*pata chitra*), the artisans and their ritual status as *sevakas* at the Jagannatha temple, see: Das (1982).
- 51 Cort, 1984: 33-43.
- 52 This phenomenon is not unique to Orissa. Gender and skill hierarchies among weavers, and other artisan communities, are characteristic of north India in general. The notable exception is India's Northeast - Assam, Manipur, Nagaland - where women weave on backstrap looms.

- 53 These comments recall those I have received from other craftspeople in relation to the creation of special imagery. Brasscaster Jaidev Baghel of Kondagaon, Bastar district, Chhattisgarh, speaks of how certain deities are "dangerous" and their making is restricted to old men. Pers. comm., Jaidev Baghel, Kondagaon, 1993.
- 54 About ten years ago, Guin appealed to the Jagannatha Temple Managing Committee, the governing board of the temple, which consists of the Raja of Puri, the Collector, and four *sevakas* among others. According to Guin, there were members on the board who were sympathetic to his case. The committee, however, did not rule in his favor. Pers. comm., Sudama Guin, Nuapama, 1994.
- 55 *The Hindustan Times* (August 3, 1994:7).

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