



Adivasi Insurgencies and Power in Colonial India

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Abstract

Dramatic or mundane, passive or active, confrontations and negotiations, over natural resources, between the colonizer and the colonized manifest repudiation, uprisings, rebellions and even organized violent confrontationist movements. The basis of scientific forestry that allowed the state to commercially exploit the forests, putting curbs on the local use of subsistence, led to the formation of covert and unfair colonial forest management policies which were the reasons for Adivasi retaliation. The discourses on Adivasi resistance and scientific forestry have constituted a major concern for historians, sociologists, political thinkers and critical geographers, particularly those who are keen to delve into the universal urge of the oppressed towards liberation. Departing from the conventional understanding of resistance, I am keen to re-think the notions of resistance that can be applied to a much wider range of socio-cultural practices, taking into account the ways in which the subjectivity of the dominated is constrained, modified and conditioned by power relations. Therefore, through a detailed archival analysis of Adivasi insurgencies and colonial power, I conceptualize the entangled nature of power, knowledge and resistance. The rich variety of Adivasi (everyday) modes of resistance and unwillingness to submit to colonial exploitation/modernization contradicts the political conclusions derived



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from Foucault's analysis of power. What Adivasi struggles demonstrate is that power, in producing the people that we are, is both productive and repressive.

Introduction

The scholarly articles that have surfaced about the systems of colonizing knowledge, regarding either scientific forestry-conservation-siviculture or development, have not always adequately considered the historical processes that shaped such knowledge. Further, there are key continuities, in current, in forest management traceable to the colonial period (Sivaramakrishnan, 1995). A competing discourse has also challenged development rhetoric by considering indigenous knowledge as part of an improved strategy to fight against hunger, poverty and underdevelopment. It is claimed that the might of western knowledge and technologies has reduced the world into monolithic ways of production. Conversely, indigenous knowledge has permitted its holders to subsist in 'harmony' with nature² (Elwin, 1943, 1936). Some scholars (Elwin, 1935; Anderson and Huber, 1988; Sen, 1992; Guha, 2001) have taken this argument further to expose the indigenous communities' appreciation of nature, which was shaped over generations by living in the forests.

Taking a processual approach³, this paper examines the discourses and counter-discourses on scientific forestry intertwined with the Adivasi⁴ resistance movements. Adivasi resistance movements were both overt and covert, and grounded in complex, mutually transformative linkages between social categories such as nature, culture, history and power. The reasons behind indigenous resistance particularly kindled my interest because degraded proprietary classes were not the only factor in the evolution of retaliations. The marginalization of the Adivasis through colonial forest management and land settlement policies, some of which were questionable and others based on downright spurious claims, was an equally important ingredient that triggered resistance (for details see Strokes, 1986). During colonial times, indigenous access to forests was taken away and the biological diversity of the forests was tremendously reduced, which undermined

² Nature, in this article, means wilderness, floral and faunal species, grasslands, and forest commons used by Adivasi farmers, herders, swiddeners, hunter-gathers and fisher folks (Grove, et.al 1998; Arnold and Guha (eds) 1995; Guha 1989; 1994; 2001).

³ A processual approach is better suited to revealing a reality in its way of becoming such. It relies on introspective reality and intuition (Nayak, 2008, 1). In this manuscript, I move away from theory construction and attempt to understand the archival material on Adivasi struggles in colonial and pre-colonial times. I take a Foucauldian approach to analyze the reasons for everyday resistance, staying alert to Foucault's reductionism of (state) power as 'all' productive.

⁴ For the most part the article will employ the terms 'indigenous' and 'Adivasi' interchangeably, although the term Adivasi is the most widely accepted term in the Indian context, as the term is employed by the people to define their identity as 'original inhabitants' (literally translated). Indigenous is often unsuitable outside its original context of the Americas, where historically there is a sharper distinction between the Native Americans and the European settlers. The use of the term 'tribe' is also somewhat difficult because of the porous boundaries between caste and tribe, both of which have existed side by side in India for centuries (Beteille, 1986, 310).

Adivasi subsistence strategies. In various pockets of India, Adivasi disturbances took the form of everyday tactics⁵ to negotiate their status.

Taxonomic structures that systematized dominant genera and species of the biotic communities presaged colonial development projects in which human and natural resources were harnessed for the imperial metropolises. During the early 1840s, newly expropriated feral landscapes were cut and burned at a feverish pace to make way for plantations and expansion of roads and railways that connected the growing economic centers to the ports. In addition, minor and major forest products and grasslands were intensely used to generate capital or support colonial hunting expeditions (Ablion, 1926; Whitcombe, 1972; Guha, 1989). Large tracts of mixed tropical broad leaved forests in the Himalayas (producing *mahua*⁶, mangoes, jackfruit, tamarind, bamboo and berries) were cleared and replaced by pure stands of more profitable softwood species (pine, teak and eucalyptus). The evergreen mixed vegetation of the Ghats was converted to single strands of teak, and all over India, at different places and times, all forms of shifting cultivation and other subsistence activities were officially forbidden or controlled (Gadgil, 1983; Guha, 1985).

European tropical colonies in the nineteenth century can be regarded as 'laboratories of modernity' and nowhere was this clearer than in plantations, which were sources of cheap raw materials for industrial production and bourgeois consumption (Metcalf, 1979). Plantations were conceived as technologies for the reconfiguration of space, tools, scientific instruments and material resources that revolved around the discourses of conservancy and scientific forestry. Courtenay (1980) describes this model of scientific forestry as 'industrial plantations', which occurred nearly simultaneously before mid-nineteenth century in British India, the Dutch East Indies, French Indochina, and the Philippines. The basis for scientific forestry has been, most importantly, outlined in the accounts of Stebbing (1922), who identified the destruction of forests as a cause of decreasing water levels in big rivers and local water supplies, and of deteriorating water quality and land fertility. The edifice of western scientific forestry also hinged upon the philosophy of maximizing profits from human and natural resources⁷, one that presumes that (some) humans are rational beings motivated by self-interest and who consciously evaluate alternative courses of action to maximize individual reward (Jaeger *et. al.*,

⁵ Throughout the article, I follow de Certeau's (1988) notions of tactics to refer to the Adivasis' resistance and strategies for conceptualizing colonial attempts of domination.

⁶ The scientific name of mahua is *bassia latifolia*, a large deciduous tree which flowers during February and April when the tree is nearly leafless. These flowers are eaten raw or cooked and fermented into a local drink. Mahua fruits are also consumed and the bark is pressed for oil. The tree both holds symbolic meaning and serves material needs.

⁷ Prior to the large-scale colonial commercial forestry practices, small-scale Adivasi exploitation of minor forest products (pepper, cardamom, honey, mahuda, and a variety of other berries, fruits, nuts, herbs and spices) were tolerated. Oak, which had tremendous value to the Adivasis, was replaced with pine, cedar, and teak that could be used to build ships and railways (Guha, 2001).

2001, 23). However, this rational-actor paradigm does not explain the seemingly non-rational behavior of the Adivasis (at least from a western perspective). On the other hand, if rational choice is constructed in relative terms, then the context or framing perspective becomes important (Smelser, 1998) and helps to explain the ‘irrational’ outcome. For example, drinking liquor⁸ may form an integral part of material-cultural-symbolic reality for the Adivasis in their indigenous setting but appears totally irrational in another, imperial setting. Following this philosophy of scientific forestry, the British first restricted the indigenous communities’ physical access to the forests and then reduced the value of the forests by degrading their species composition. The exclusion of Adivasi livelihood mechanisms from reserved or other categories of forests became emblematic to what modern European management could accomplish in the forests of India from the primitive techniques it claimed to supersede.

Metcalf (1979) and others (Hardiman, 1987, 35; Bhaviskar, 1995) argue that rationalization towards scientific forestry also created the so-called ‘contractor’ (*Bhaynia*) system, a caucus of economically and politically powerful people. The state owned the forests but played little part in the actual extraction of timber and other forest produce. The procedure was most widely carried out by contractors, money lenders (*sowkar*) and large landlords. The contractors were responsible for organizing labor, conducting felling operations and transporting the logs directly to the colonial forest officials. The trees were collected, sold and auctioned to the highest bidder. Contractors often bid prices far higher than the actual value of the marked trees, and disregarded the policy by felling both marked and unmarked trees. A similar procedure was followed with respect to the collection of forest produce. Wages for Adivasi and non-Adivasi workers were often depressed so as to obtain staggering profits. Corruption and waste were inherent in the organization and sale of forest products. This situation led to an uneven distribution of access and power among native populations.

State forest norms and institutions constructed an ‘abstract space’, which required abstract bodies. The Adivasi were converted into needed ‘docile/abstract bodies’, obedient servants, objects of study and subjects of harsh incomprehensible laws. Increasingly ubiquitous in critical geographies, ‘space’ is understood to have little meaning apart from the practices that occur within it (Bourdieu, 1977, 214). “Social space is produced and reproduced in connection with the forces of production (and with the relations of production).” These “forces ... are not taking

⁸ Major sources of local liquor (toddy) are fermented/distilled juice of palm tree and mahua flowers (dhooli). The British taxed toddy, which gave rise to a class of capitalists for whom the manufacturing of liquor became an extremely lucrative business. [I am not sure taxation itself leads to the emergence of a capitalist class; there needs to be more explanation, but I would eliminate the entire sentence, as it goes beyond the scope of the manuscript] Neither the zeal of the government nor the temperance/social reform movement could radically alter the Adivasi attitude towards drinking. They continued to drink as the liquor became more expensive and increasingly adulterated. As the laws grew more stringent and prices rose, the Adivasis resorted to smuggling, illicit distillation and other acts which were legally termed ‘crimes’ and ‘offences’ (Saldanha, 1995).

over a pre-existing, empty or neutral space, or a space determined solely by geography, climate, anthropology...” (Lefebvre, 1991, 77). For Lefebvre, there is a parallel development between the hegemony of capitalism in the modern West and the production of ‘abstract space’. Nevertheless, Lefebvre does not view the modernized spaces as the end of history (Lefebvre, 1991). However, “an ideal abstract space requires the construction of ‘abstract bodies’ to conform it” (Duncan, 2002, 1). Therefore it is pertinent to link the colonial conceptualizations of Adivasi behaviors, traditions, consciousness and everyday resistance. Here, the works of James Scott (1990, 1985) are most useful. Power is produced through social processes where it is positioned against struggle, and this consistently alters its form; domination, rather than being solid and stable under ordinary circumstances, must be secured. Oldenburg’s (1991) essay on Lucknow courtesans renounced altogether this discourse of power by showing how struggle is embedded in attitudes and lifestyles that exist under ordinary circumstances when no usual threat is present. Chandravarkar (1991) details how commonplace actions, often within the bounds of legal and legitimate expression, could undercut hegemonic projects and ideological presumptions. Haynes (1991) also shows how the small-scale struggles of wealthy merchants can often—though rooted in the ruler’s own principles of justice—effectively impede colonial attempts to modernize. People in a great variety of class positions, taking a wide range of steps, can contribute to the redistribution of power. Emerging research on the social construction of class, gender, race, and colonial relations has shown that power, always tenuous, portrays the cultural practices of the subordinate groups as ever-ready to tear through the fabric of hegemonic forms (Haynes and Prakash, 1991). Through a brief excursus on South Asian Adivasi histories of retaliations, I detail the colonial production of scientific knowledge and their relationship to Adivasi livelihood systems.

Reasons for resistance – Blurring the Adivasi boundaries

Orientalist discourses burgeoned around the inefficient and inferior indigenous communities’ primordial and unscientific⁹ usage of nature, which was strongly viewed as an obstacle to development. These ideologies informed the production of a particular discourse on scientific forestry, generating a specific kind of knowledge, showing that knowledge cannot be presupposed or constituted without power relations (Foucault, 1977, 27-28). To grasp this, I follow the observations of Albert Sarraut (1931, taken from Agarwal, 1993), former governor general of French Indochina. Sarraut writes:

while in a narrow corner of the world nature has concentrated in white Europe the powers of intervention, the means of progress, and the

⁹ I use highly problematic terms such as primitive, savage, western, and backward without quotation marks only to promote fluency in reading. Additionally, since the Constitution of India features the word ‘primitive’ to describe Adivasis, I retain it to keep the meaning intact and also to stress that the use of these terms as a rhetorical strategy of the postcolonial (and colonial) state belies an ideology, which supports a disparity of scale in power (for details on the tribes of India, see, Beteille, 1986; Hardiman 1987).

dynamic of scientific advancement, the greatest accumulation of natural wealth is locked up in territories occupied by backward races who, not knowing how to profit by it themselves, are even less capable of releasing it to the greater circular current that nourishes the ever growing needs of humanity.

Sarraut's observation does not quite manage to conceal imperial impatience when confronted with obstacles to alienating resources controlled by backward races. But what is prominent in this quote is the belief that the white race stood at the 'helm of progress'. Along the same lines, in the 19th century, American writer Richard Davis (see Agarwal, 1995) made the following remarks upon his visit to what is now Honduras:

... what is to be done with the world's land which is lying unimproved; whether it shall go to the great power that is willing to turn it to account, or remain with its original owner, who fails to understand its value. The Central Americans are like a gang of semi-barbarians in a beautifully furnished house, of which they understand neither its possibilities of comfort nor its use.

These quotes stand as classic examples that fuse self-interest with global visions of the "improvement" of humanity, which can be captured in the classical theory of development in the 1940s. Although there are many elements of self-serving rationalization concealed in these arguments, imperialist writers focused exclusively on the justification behind colonial engagement and commitment to appropriation and commercialization of resources from tropical colonies (Agarwal, 1997, 1995)¹⁰. These quotes also represent ideas that went into realizing colonial discourse and its manifestations in state authority structures. The contradictory nature of colonial intervention and the institutional basis for scientific forestry invites the re-examination of processes through which colonial scientific forestry was constituted and the politics of forest management legitimized (Scott, 1990, 1985).

In the early decades of colonial rule, there was wide-scale apathy towards conserving forests, and until the nineteenth century forests were viewed as impediments to commercial agriculture. The intensity of forest use, and thereby control over forests, increased in later years when forests were identified as an important source of revenue. Stebbing (1926, 345) points out that the Forest Service came to be regarded "as a purely commercial concern—its chief *raison d'être* the production of revenue". He makes this assertion based on an extensive

¹⁰ Agarwal (1995, 1997) shows how the classification of knowledge into indigenous and western is bound to fail not just because of the heterogeneity between elements, but because the two can never be wholly separated or fixed in time and space. This is because such separation requires an untenable divorce of historical sequences of change for the two forms of knowledge.

analysis of government records on the last quarter of the nineteenth century, on forestry and conservation. On this, Grove (1988, 20-21) states:

The colonial state in its pioneer conservationist role provided a forum for controls on the unhindered operation of capital for short-term gain which, it might be argued, constituted a contradiction of what is normally supposed to have made up the normal currency of imperial expansion and profit maximization.

By the 1920s net revenue from state forests had increased. Forests were integrated into the market economy by forest administration, demarcating areas with promulgated regulations for their management and implementing directives to generate budget surpluses in forestry operations (Hurd, 1975). These conditions were also shaped by the intellectual predilections of the administrators imposing the imperial will and securing national revenues¹¹. Colonial efforts to carry out surveys and enumerate natural reserves were ostensibly to aid good governance, but were ultimately executed to tax and take away resources. Evidence for deforestation and its consequences can be largely gleaned from the state's accounts on income, mainly as land revenue, excise dues and revenues from selling of minor and major forest produce (Troup, 1980; Tucker, 1983). To understand 'autonomous' colonial strategies and how they were linked to forms of political rule and economic exploitation carried out in the imperial dominions it is important to analyze Foucault's concept of governmentality (Foucault, 1991; Simon, 1995).

Maybe, after all, the State is no more than a composite reality and a mythical abstraction whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think. Maybe, what is really important for our modern times ... is not so much the state-domination of society, but 'governmentalisation' of the state (Foucault, 1979, 20).

Foucault's thrust on government draws to distinctive mentalities of government that he calls 'governmentality' or 'governmental rationality' and which, according to Gordon (1991), involves a calculating preoccupation with activities that are directed at shaping, challenging, and guiding the conduct of others. Such activities are well-illustrated in the nineteenth century practices of the appointment of factory inspectors. Karl Marx (1867) drew attention to the enormous importance of factory inspectors, for example. More recently, Curtis (1992) has depicted the role of school inspectors in the Canadian west. And Foucault himself underscored the importance of the medical profession as an important source of government activity

¹¹ The appointment of Brandis as the first inspector general gave the central government an agency that could formally intervene in provincial forest management. His appointment had much to do with his image as the hero or 'Pegu', who had rescued the teak forests of Burma from timber traders and made them available to the British for the expansion of their shipbuilding industry (Troup, 1990). Brandis toured the presidencies and centrally administered provinces, laying down more specific duties for the forest service, which included forest settlement, demarcation, surveying and constructing roads, bridges, buildings and drainage channels (Saldanha, 1996).

in his 'Birth of the Clinic' (Foucault, 1973). It remains unanswered why Foucault deflects attention away from the 'techniques' or strategies of (state/economic) power. There is little doubt that the concept of governmentality is extremely suggestive, but he does not offer his readers any specific period of historical development of government or a complete analysis of power. More significantly, he says little about the 'mentalities' of modern government. In this respect, Foucault contrasts rather poorly with Max Weber, who provides a careful analysis of modern bureaucratic rationality. Foucault's refusal to accord great significance to the state is, in large part, a reaction against Marxist recognition of the importance of the state. By avoiding Marx, I comprehend that Foucault was opening up a new and unencumbered dialogue to address classical discourses of the state, but, disappointingly, he avoids dealing with the question of the state. Downplaying the negative conception of state and excluding the repressiveness of economic power by lauding the descriptive/non-repressive notion of power, Foucault was missing the normative judgments about what constituted domination, or distinguished between dominator and dominant.

The nature of Adivasi anti-colonial protests suggests the need for a more refined and descriptive analysis of the mentalities of government, the strategies of colonial rule or for interrogating the basis of legitimate and illegitimate power of the neocolonial multinationals and postcolonial state governments. Unfortunately, Foucault's hesitation to challenge the conventional wisdom of power not only leads to his dramatic silences on colonial, capitalism, or neo-colonial and neo-liberal discourses, in general, but appears to ignore or understate, without justification, the condensation and operation of colonial conglomerates in centralized imperial dominions. This weakness in Foucault's analysis of power manifests itself in a descriptively inadequate theory and also impedes the generation of an efficacious, productive political strategy.

Land appropriation – the *raison d'être* of state forestry laws

Unwritten arrangements for common property management were not recognized by dominant elements in the British administrative hierarchy. This is best exemplified by the elaborate provisions for assessing commercial value and compensation in proportion to rights for agricultural lands acquired under Land Acquisition Act VII (1894) (Washbrook, 1981). Contemporary forest legislation did not share this implementation or interpretation of domain but chose to rely upon different principles of jurisprudence. This has much to do with the notion of administrative expediency, which state institutions identified as rational and progressive, leading to better service for the public interest (Sivaramakrishnan, 1995). While Blackstone accepted the general proposition that the institution of property is a natural right, he argued that it was, at the same time, a product of civil government and its laws (taken from Embree, 1969). This paternalistic approach, a powerful mix of conviction and coercion, undermined traditional structures of authority.

The bedrock of the law was the assertion that all uncultivated lands were under state jurisdiction. In a narrow sense, this was consistent with Vedic law and historical precedent. Indian monarchs had rarely interfered with local usage (Singh, 1986). However, there were occasional exceptions (Rangaragan, 1994). In the eighteenth century, commercially important species of trees, namely sandal and teak, were marked as royal. This justified the monopoly of Indian rulers (and regional chiefs) behind the rapacious felling of such trees when a lucrative trade developed (Stebbing, 1922). Later on, the colonial state, claiming to be acting for the greater common good¹², introduced and enforced the law of eminent domain, drawing on European jurisprudence, to establish total ownership of the forested land (Singh, 1986). In the case of forests, procedural artifice was used to evade juridical obligation to provide compensation for rights abrogated in the process of declaring forests exclusive state property. This notion can be further gleaned from Baden Powell's Forest Act of 1878 (Baden Powell, 1892). A crucial contribution was his distinction between rights that could not be abrogated without compensation but must be engraved in settlement record, and privileges that were always regulated, could be terminated and were not alienable. He averred that villagers, who from time immemorial were accustomed to cut and graze in the nearest jungle lands, did not acquire a right by prescription because they used the forest without any distinct grant or license (Ghosh, 1973). All customary rights, therefore, became mere privilege. Thereby, the forestry policies reinforced the subjugation of the Adivasis, employing economic terms like utility, and the colonial government diminished indigenous rights (essential for their subsistence) in political terms through the application of such forestry policies.

On this account, government can be seen to refer more to systematized, regulated and reflected modes of power (a technology) that go beyond the spontaneous exercise of power over others. Government then is "the regulation of conduct by the more or less rational application of appropriate technical means" (Hindness, 1996, 106). In the same way, disciplinary and sovereign power are reinterpreted, not as opposite forms of power, but as different technologies of government. In short, disciplinarity as internalized control was rarely achieved and consequently direct surveillance and the threat of physical force was applied to regulate and transform the self-sufficient Adivasis into docile state servants (Foucault, 1977, 138)¹³.

One way of creating docile bodies is through intense and rigid regimes of setting norms, exercising punishment and implementing strict observation. For instance, at Andhra Pradesh (A.P.) teak plantations in Tekluru, a group of slash-and-burn (Reddis) cultivators had to work as laborers for a nominal fee (less than

¹² This is a specific 'good' that benefits the members of its community. To put this into perspective, I recall Nehru's speech (1948) to villagers who were to be displaced by the Hirakud Dam; he said, "If you are to suffer, you should suffer in the interest of the country" (<http://www.narmada.org/gcg/gcg.html>, last accessed February 22, 2011).

¹³ Please refer to pp. 5 and 6 on the limits to Foucault's concept of power and governmentality.

one dollar for the entire group). This exploitation was tolerated by the Reddis because the complete cessation of slash-and-burn would lead to their virtual starvation (von Haimendorf 1982). This implies that the state not only asserted its absolute authority over the forests but also showed no compunction in compelling the Reddis to work for a pittance. Slash-and-burn farming was gradually stopped and Adivasi shifting cultivators were slowly weaned from their farming and hunting-gathering-collecting practices to become laborers or collectors of minor and major forest products for nominal fees or wages.

The Chenchus of Nallamalai forests (A.P.) on both sides of the River Krishna were hunting and gathering tribes who depended purely on wild fruits, tubers and the occasional game. They frequently shifted from one collecting ground to another, and, on the rare occasion, obtained grains in exchange for honey and minor forest produce. They were completely detached from settled cultivators, but this isolation came to an end with the state forestry policy of 1894. The hardest blow for the Chenchus was when timber merchants contracted the forests to outside laborers for felling timber and auctioned minor forest products. In order to survive this change, the Chenchus had to collect minor forest produce (honey, gum, nuts and wild fruits) for the state for a fixed price (von Haimendorf, 1971).

So the Reddis and the Chenchus were manipulated into objects prime for coursing power and disciplined, rationalized and normalized into abstract docile bodies that were needed for state-constructed abstract forest spaces. State forestry norms had majorly impacted the freedom and autonomy of the Reddis and the Chenchus who were unable to cope with the changes. Those who refused to cooperate with the state were economically marginalized, monitored, observed and controlled through punishments (Mitchell, 1990). A Forest Officer once mentioned to Elwin that “our laws are of such kind that every villager breaks one forest law every day of his life” (Elwin, 1936, 115). Discipline, therefore, as the colonial technique of rule, appears to be neither an institution nor any specific apparatus but rather a kind of power which is exercised through a set of instruments, techniques and procedures. Discipline is an anatomy of power, a technology that is taken over by the colonial state apparatus, whose major, if not exclusive, function is to assure that discipline reigns over the Adivasi community as a whole (Hunt and Wickham, 1994).

Foucault offers a concrete example from around the 1830s with the industrial workers in the northern French town of Mulhouse, who were subjected to strategies of domination through dispersed exercises of power at work, housing, consumption, education. He concedes that a combination of moralizing practices, effected by a range of different agencies, established bourgeois domination, but rejects the notion that the bourgeoisie was a unitary self-conscious subject at work to produce this domination (Hunt and Wickham, 1994). However, Foucault leaves open to question the following: if there is no unitary self-conscious class that plans the techniques of rule then how does it have a dominating effect on its subjects? Here, I depart from Foucault, as I stress the importance of the dispersion of

colonial/state disciplining and recognize that this style of disciplining can become aggregated into overall 'strategies' and 'global domination'.

Hunters and gatherers – on the edge

Conservation came to denote the restriction of local rights and customary usage of the forest. I take the example of shifting cultivation as one of the major subsistence activities, which were gradually banned as environmentally destructive, and the state authority prescribed the forests as 'reserved'. Other rights, such as the rights to grazing and pasture, grass-cutting, lopping and gathering leaves or wood, rights to dead or decayed leaves for litter and manure, rights to honey, gum, fruits, tubers, or wild game were curtailed or regulated. Unified forest policies covering a range of species undermined the very basis of life work among Adivasi communities, especially those not yet sedentarized and incorporated into commercial agriculture. In his study of South India, Nadkarni (1989) estimated that the decline of local populations in the period from 1850 to 1900 was due to the abrogation of forest rights¹⁴. Following the modes of control of the forests, domination stands as a particular type of power relationship that is stable and hierarchical, fixed and difficult to reverse. Foucault prefers the term domination to "what we ordinarily call power" (1988, 19). Domination refers to the asymmetrical relationships of power in which the subordinated, in this case the Adivasis, had little room to maneuver because "their margin of liberty was extremely limited" (1988, 12). But states of domination are not primary sources for holding power or exploiting asymmetries. On the contrary, they are effects of technologies of government. Technologies of government, then, account for the regulation and systematization of power relationships that may lead to the state of domination (see Foucault, 1991; Hindess, 1996).

The Chenchus of Hyderabad (A.P.) were forced into poverty and starvation through a state ban on hunting and gathering and the cumulative effects of commercial forestry. The Chenchus of Kurnool, almost in desperation, took to banditry, frequently looting Hindu pilgrims. Later, the Chenchus were forced to live in large settlements where powerful cultivating classes imposed relationships of agrestic serfdom. This tremendously reduced their pride, morality and autonomy (Haimendorf, 1945; Aiyappan, 1948). The Kadars were prohibited from hunting or using the forest produce for food, but their knowledge was used by the colonizers to gain information on marketable forest species. Due to hunting restrictions in the early 1900s, the populations of the Birhors of Chotanagpur plateau fell from 2,340 to 1,610 in the span of a decade (Roy, 1925; Ehrenfels, 1952). Micro-penalties

¹⁴ The compilation of reserved species in several provinces reflects the outcome of early forest rules and regulation promulgated between 1865 and 1875, which were formulated around conservancy and scientific forestry. Teak, sal, unjun, and babul were reserved (for details see the account on Brandis in Saldanha 1996). This resulted in considerable hardship to the local communities as their sustenance from forests was sharply reduced (Guha 1985, Nadkarni 1989).

were implemented by charging fines for hunting wild game, taking away Adivasi products or making them work as laborers without pay (consider the above example of the Reddis). Gradually, hunters and gatherers were pushed to less plentiful areas (infertile or less cultivatable lands and remotely accessible forests). These examples highlight the surveillance techniques as the epitome of disciplinary power.

The Baiga hunters and gatherers were adept in escaping colonial control and carrying out their hunting practices for survival, using loopholes in the imposition of abstract space. They were known for their awe-inspiring hunting tactics and their knack for chasing wild game (Elliot, 1973; Bennet, 1984). In fact, British hunters acquired the art of hunting from the Baigas. The Baigas were not only skillful in hunting but also adroit in tackling the hunting restrictions imposed on them. Their defiant disposition displayed their ability to avoid disciplining and modes of control and domination. Their audacity to hunt and capacity to elude colonial controls highlights their ability to operate under strict surveillance. A Baiga once asserted that “one of us will keep the official talking; the rest will go and shoot a deer” (Elwin, 1939). Here, the Baigas played dual roles: that of forest guard and of hunter (Foucault, 1980, 147-165; Mills, 2003).

I associate disciplinary power with Foucault’s notion of panopticism (Foucault, 1977). A panopticon is not just an efficient prison but a design or a diagram of mechanisms of power reduced to ideal form. In the case of the Adivasis, the British supervised them through state forest officials, contractors, money lenders and large agriculturalists. In this context, the panopticon is an exemplary technological metaphor for the operations of modern power which cut through the lives of the subservient through observation, control and individuation. The most distinctive embodiment of ‘discipline’ to which Foucault draws attention is the technique of ‘surveillance’. Foucault argues that while prisons are advantageous for capitalist interests, this was discovered rather than intended or planned. Foucault, here, strives to go beyond the pragmatic concern with unintended consequences by insisting that the very nature of power, its success/failure, lies in what we might call the necessary non-correspondence between discourse, practice and effects. Foucault’s work on power has its own limitations for not acknowledging the repressiveness of state power. However, Foucault’s analysis of power underscores that power relations did not always result in the removal of liberty or options available to individuals, and this is a novel understanding. Power could result in the empowerment of subjects, enabling free decision-making in the field of action (Foucault, 1977; 1978; Brown, 2000). For example, Bhil insurgencies were mostly directed towards colonial forestry apparatuses for their negligence against the exploitation by local rulers, contractors or money lenders. The Bhils made rich plain dwellers their targets and resisted by looting and plundering. These actions proved that the Bhils were empowered to exhibit discontent, which was contingent upon the degree of their marginalization and exploitation by rich plain dwellers and state forest officials. So, the play of

power creates systematic power relations that are more complex than simple polarities of power (British versus Adivasis).

Forced sedentarization

Jhum cultivation was practiced in large tracts of northeastern India where plow cultivation was not possible. Jhum was not only a form of cultivation but a way of life and was deeply ingrained in the Adivasi cultures for generations. Jhum cultivators conceptualized forests and farms as interlocked in a special bond. Jhum was practiced as a communal activity. Different clans had clearly demarcated areas whose boundaries were respected and not disputed between clan members. The significance of jhum was so profound that it was manifested in their myths, legends and tales (Savyasachi, 1987). They liked to think of themselves as children of the *Dharti Mata* (Mother Earth) who fed, loved and cared for them. The Gonds' notion of the heaven was “miles and miles of forests without a forest guard” (Elwin, 1936, 22). For the Adivasis, forests were the primary source of fuel, leaf manure, herbs, wild game and timber. An adequate forest cover was necessary, especially in the hill tracts where slash-and-burn was practiced. The Adivasi relied on forests because their modes of resource use were distinct from that of the dominant culture of plow cultivation, which was the bedrock of Hindu caste society. Some Adivasi groups, like the Gonds, however, were plow cultivators. Even for them, the forests were important as they supplied the necessary fodder for their cattle (animal husbandry was a valuable auxiliary to cultivation). These nature-culture linkages were guided by longstanding cultural traditions and dependence on nature for livelihood. The collection and sale of minor forest products was critical for Adivasi subsistence. Forests were embedded in their socio-cultural fabric. These reserves were preserved for practical and economic interests and were protected as symbolic landscapes. Ownership of the forests was clearly defined among native clans.

The Baigas resisted plow agriculture by invoking their cultural myths. They argued that they could not lacerate mother earth with the plow. As Elwin notes, “every Baiga who has yielded to the plow knows himself to be standing on *papidharti* (sinful earth)”. One Baiga reluctantly stated, “when *bewar* (slash-and-burn) was stopped and we first touched the plow ... a man died in every village” (Elwin, 1939, 106-7). The Gonds were convinced that the loss of forests signaled the coming of *Kaliyug* (the age of darkness). According to them, “so insidious and seductive was the power of modern civilization that even their deities had gone over to the camp of the powerful” (Elwin, 1935, 16-17; 1936, 58). The Adivasis submitted petitions to draw the attention of forest officers to their plight:

We daily starve, having had no food grain in our possession. The only wealth we possess is our axe. We have no clothes to cover our body with, but we pass cold nights by the fireside. We are now dying for want of food. We cannot go elsewhere as the British government is everywhere. What fault have we done that the government does not take care of us? (Elwin, 1939, 111-130).

Verrier Elwin, an Oxford scholar, came to India as a clergyman. He pioneered ecological anthropology, dedicated his life to establishing Adivasi rights to forests¹⁵ and on various occasions and most significantly claimed that swidden cultivation was an ecologically viable system of cultivation. Elwin wrote:

The reservation of forests was a serious blow to the tribesman. He was forbidden to practice his traditional methods of cultivation. He was ordered to remain in one village and not to wander from place to place. .. If he was a Forest villager he became liable at any moment to be called to work for the forest department. If he lived elsewhere he was forced to obtain a license for almost every kind of forest produce.... It is obvious that so great a number of offenses would not occur unless the forest regulations ran counter to the fundamental needs of the tribesmen (Elwin, 1941, 21).

Cultural anthropologists have provided abundant documentation to show that under conditions of stable population growth and sustainable use of resources, shifting agriculture can be highly efficient (see Elwin, 1936; Geertz, 1988). The hill Marias are one of the few surviving Adivasi communities who still exclusively practice jhum. A major study of the hill Marias demonstrates that under the long fallow system they practiced, both soil fertility and forest vegetation had sufficient time to recuperate. Further, as von Haimendorf (1982) observed, some of the largest natural forests existed in areas inhabited by slash-and-burn cultivators for centuries, whereas plowing cultivation had destroyed forests wherever it was practiced.

Having outlined this, I am not affirming an essentially positive or romantic view of the Adivasis as the conservers of the forests because this represents the scientific and essentially pejorative view normally held by the western scholars of the Orient. Adivasis are uniquely spiritual and exhibit their dependence and reverence for nature. On the one hand, this is symptomatic of their pre-scientific and backward culture and, on the other hand, designates their ecological consciousness and wisdom. Both views are monolithic and simplistic and commonly underline the structure of discourse that the Adivasis merely serve as a vehicle for the projections of western scholars' viewpoints. The danger of such reductionism places the hunting-gathering tribes and sedentary agriculturalists on opposite ends of an evolutionary scale that has faced criticism within human ecology (Orlove, 1984; Wilmsen, 1989; Bhaviskar, 1995).

The British banned all forms of slash-and-burn farming based on their modernist prejudices. The circumstances under which the Indian Forest Department was created and the debates preceding the formal legislation of the Indian Forest

¹⁵ Elwin pleaded equally to the colonial state and the Indian National Congress, which in the 1940s was the government in waiting, for the involvement of Adivasis in India's forest management. When the Congress followed the colonial route and banned swidden agriculture, Elwin angrily wrote that "the forests belong to the aboriginal. I should have thought that anyone who was a Nationalist would at least advocate *swaraj* [freedom] for the aboriginals!" (Elwin, 1941, 12).

Act are significant as the historical context and as one set of structuring forces on modern forest management practice. According to Metcalf (1964), these conditions included the objective of economic compulsions of railway development and financial crisis faced by India's British government after the *Sepoy* Mutiny, which was also shaped by the intellectual predilections of the administrators imposing the imperial will and securing national revenues. A combination of revenue needs, the expansion of commercial crops and the development of the mining industry accentuated the powerful impact that building railways had on Indian forestry in the nineteenth century (Guha, 1989). This was the basis for scientific forestry-conservation-siviculture, which had labeled all forms of slash-and-burn cultivation as primitive, economically less profitable and ecologically destructive. The native contractors, money lenders and large cultivators reiterated this modernist rhetoric (for details see Guha, 1994, 20-37; Mendelsohn and Baxi, 1994).

The colonizers converted self-sufficient Adivasis into landless laborers, attached laborers or settled cultivators made entirely dependent on the market and the powerful ruling/elite classes for credit and/or wages. As a result of the colonizers' strict control, the Adivasis were forced to create uncompromising and non-cooperating spaces to open spaces of negotiation with the state. But when the Adivasis were ignored, they evaded taxes and operated in restricted forest spaces. The formation of the contested ground increased the tension and hostility between colonial foresters and Adivasi forest dwellers (Haimendorf, 1945).

Arts of struggle

According to Ramachandra Guha, the material structure of society serves as 'the landscape of resistance' for people fighting against exploitation. Social relations and forces of production limit the forms a culture (and, within, resistance) may take. Here my analysis includes not only the economic landscape but also the natural setting in which the economy is embedded. Though production relations sharply redefine the boundaries of political structures and cultural systems, they are in turn limited by the ecological characteristics (biota, topography and climate) of the society in which they are placed (Guha, 1989, 5-6). I am also keen on conceptualizing de Certeau's use of tactics to refer to the manner in which the oppressed 'poach' in the space of their oppressors, but I am, at the same time, uneasy with his claim that the oppressed can only resist through controlling time and not place (for this see de Certeau, 1988). In situations of greatly unequal power, covert resistance—what Scott (1985) defines as 'weapons of the weak'—were most suitable. These tactics were used by Adivasis who did not have the power to directly challenge those in authority. They therefore poached within spaces of power (de Certeau, 1988), as in the case of the Baigas, who escaped colonial surveillance and continued hunting and jhum at different locations after it was restricted or banned in their inhabited areas. Several instances of encroaching, intruding or taking away continued as forms of circumventing the legal restrictions. Adivasis used all of these everyday forms of resistance as tactics to escape the

colonial overseers' panoptical procedures (such as the choice of terrain and choice of time and place, or taking advantage of moments when supervision was lax) and thereby maneuver within an enemy field of vision (de Certeau, 1988).

Interestingly, Brahma and Upadhyaya (1979) refer to the laziness of which Adivasis were and are often accused. They see it “as a deliberate weapon to preserve, materially, one's labor, and ideologically, one's self-respect”, given the social relations of production prevalent at that time. Brahma and Upadhyaya (1979) further elaborate, “laziness, lack of ambition, unintelligent minds, the lack of desire, ... represent aspects and instances of the most elemental form of class struggle” (taken from Saldanha, 1986, 43)¹⁶. Many Adivasis pledged their labor to the landlord-money lender in return for small loans of either grain or cash. Lifelong servitude, sometimes for generations, was the fate of those Adivasis whose marriage expenses were met by the landlord-money lender. The meager amount paid to the *lagnagadi* (marriage servant) and the dishonesty of the landlord made it impossible in most cases for the *lagnagadi* to repay the loan and to free himself from the bondage. The *lagnagadi*'s wife and children then became the slaves of the landlord. Violence used by landlord-money lenders on Adivasi women as an exercise of domination not only kept Adivasis in a constant state of fear, but also grievously injured their pride. The strategies administered by the powerful classes were to discipline the “moral life” of Adivasi debtors (for details Saladhana, 1989). Importantly, in the historiography of popular struggles which partly subsumed women under the category of 'man' thereby ensuring their invisibility and partly created the myth of women's passivity. It gave rise to the belief that men alone were capable of militant action, of leadership, of changing the course of events, in short, of making history. Deprived of initiative and courage, Adivasi women were portrayed at best, as followers in historical treatises. However, occasional references, casual remarks and folk tales and folk songs do provide one clues to the militancy and valor displayed by women in their fight against injustice and oppression¹⁷.

Many resistance events in India were recorded in the official records as outlawry, dacoity, or some form of statutory crime (Hardiman, 1985). Thus the details of clashes between Adivasis and forest officials may be gleaned from

¹⁶ Refer to page 10 of this paper for similar findings by Verrier Elwin (1941).

¹⁷ The high place of Adivasi women also set them apart from the more civilized societies. Among the Mandla Gonds whom Elwin knew best of all, the woman was “the real ruler of the house.” As for Baigas, a “woman generally chooses their husbands and changes him at will; she may dance in public; she may take her wares to the bazaar and open her own shop.. she may drink or smoke in her husband's presence” (Elwin, 1939). She was subjected to early child bearing she was married when she was mature, if the marriage was a failure, she had the right of divorce, if her husband died she could remarry, and she could inherit property. “As a companion she is humorous and interesting; as a wife devoted; as a mother, heroic in the service of her children (Dube, 1964) – freedoms all generally denied to caste Hindu women. Here Baigas were no exception for most tribal societies. This, apparently, was a feminism almost fully realized. The adivasi practice tended to confirm the position of woman. Where in Europe sex was regarded as the man's privilege and woman's duty; among Adivasis sex was more often the man's obligation and a woman's right (Guha, 1996).

statistics of crime in the forests, which was reported annually by the Revenue and Forest Department. The writings of Saldanha (1986) detail the British taking power in Thana, central India. They were confused about the variety of land revenue systems on the one hand, and about “gang robberies” by the Adivasi *jhumaiyas* (shifting cultivators) on the other. The British, therefore, set themselves the task of suppressing the gang robbers as well as evolving a uniform land settlement¹⁸ for the district as a whole. This takes me to the task of unraveling what led to the creation of gang robbers. Such cannot be extracted from this particular account but by a systematic analysis of the chronicle of the marginalization and domination of Adivasi shifting cultivators, hunters and gatherers, and waged or attached laborers.

The Adivasi narratives of deprivation and protests have shown that almost everything is involved in a battle over the control of and access to resources. When attempts to negotiate were repeatedly ignored, the Adivasi embraced quasi-legal channels to protest against the laws and destabilize the state’s attempt to monopolize the forests (see also de Certeau, 1988). In Jagdalpur (now Chhattisgarh), the Maria and Mutai tribes protested by going on hunger strikes, cutting telegraph lines, blocking roads, burning police and forest outposts, looting markets, and killing police officers and merchants to draw the king’s attention towards the exploitation of the powerful classes. Their tactics relied on favorable location and time. They operated at opportune moments and presumably waited for better control over the entire terrain. When these semi-violent attempts to draw the king’s attention failed, they sought more violent confrontationist pathways. The British forced the Baigas into plow cultivation by repeatedly destroying their crops. If the Baigas fled to escape this ruthless campaign, they were hunted down and forced to work as laborers to collect forest species or fell trees. The Baigas were forcibly resettled on lands not conducive to timber cultivation. The Baigas evaded taxes and continued to practice shifting cultivation as a form of passive retaliation against government policies. Different tactics were used by Adivasis to resist colonial attempts to discipline and transform them, some active or overt and some passive, semi-violent or covert¹⁹.

In the 1930s, the Saoras of Ganjam district resisted the extortions of settled agriculturalists and state attempts to check axe cultivation. Saoras ignored the policies and continued with *jhum* cultivation on the plots that were designated as reserved. With dauntless optimism they cleared the forests and sowed the seeds. When men were arrested, women continued to cultivate. After the men were released, they chopped down the forests again for the next crop. When repeated arrests were unsuccessful, the forest department uprooted their crops (Elwin, 1945, 154-157). Several of the *fituris* (small uprisings) were related to the forced

¹⁸ Such strategies were also adopted to maintain stability in abstract space.

¹⁹ Various insidious strategies were used by the colonial state and the native powerful classes to demean and counter Adivasi resistance. The British aimed to crush Adivasi pride, autonomy, and identity by forcibly assimilating Adivasis with powerful cultivating castes, constantly tracking down Adivasi leaders, torturing and humiliating those who resisted the laws, and finally killing them and confiscating their lands (Aiyappan, 1948).

detachment of the Adivasis from the forests. The Rampa rebellion of 1879 to 1880 in A.P. happened in response to new restrictions on Adivasi rights to forests and to brew liquor. Adivasis complained bitterly against the threats and cooptation by the colonizers. They declared that “as they could not live they might as well kill the constables and die” (Arnold, 1982). The rebels, led by a chieftain Tammam Dora, attacked and burned police stations and killed the constables as an act of ritual sacrifice. Although Dora was shot in June 1880, the revolt spread to other areas where jhum had been stopped by force. It took several hundred policemen and ten armed companies to suppress the revolt in November 1880.

Adas (1981) highlights that dissatisfied groups seek to attenuate their hardships and express their discontent through sectarian withdrawal or other activities that minimize challenges to clashes with their oppressors. According to Scott (1990, 1985), everyday resistance places serious limits on the capacity to extract resources from the oppressed even in circumstances when dominant classes enjoy an overwhelming advantage in coercive power. But Scott goes even further in insisting that the presence of such struggles in everyday life proves that the dominant classes, in most societies, are unable to exert any form of cultural domination over the subordinate. The subordinate are in his view able to ‘penetrate’ the ideology and ‘demystify’ it, effectively exposing it as a sham. Scott explicitly draws from Gramsci (1975) for his notions of hegemony impressed upon the subordinate by the dominant classes. Although subaltern studies have brought resistance to center stage in historical work and have highlighted the ability of the dominated to formulate an insurgent and autonomous self-consciousness, they have nevertheless dramatized the moments of tensions between the dominant and the dominated. Such focus can preclude an appreciation of the everydayness of struggles and the productiveness of resistance, as subalternists conceptualize the subordinate as essentially accepting the dictates of power, that when subordinates do not articulate an autonomous culture, they fall under the spell of hegemonic rituals and ideologies (Guha, 1983, 1985; Haynes and Praskash, 1991; de Kock, 1992).

I understand power instead as ‘strategic games,’ as outlined by Foucault. Foucault effectively captures the ubiquitous feature of human interaction, insofar as it signifies structuring the possible field of action of others. This argument can be linked to ideological manipulation or rational argumentation, moral advice or economic exploitation, but it does not necessarily mean that power is exercised against the interest of the other part of a power relationship; nor does it signify that “to determine the conduct of others” is intrinsically “bad” (Foucault, 1977, 1978, 1980). For example, although the hunters and gatherers lacked organization, some of them nevertheless were apt in working around the rigid forest and game laws. Furthermore, I argue here that hegemony was never really accomplished once and for all. Self-discipline made little sense within the network of limited colonizer expectations and ambitions that forced the Adivasi insertion into heterogeneous

and fissured commercialized spaces. However, the Adivasis never fully embodied colonial European modernism.

Although Foucault's analysis of power is compelling, I nevertheless have discomforts in accepting his analysis in its entirety. Resistance remains a field hardly tapped by Foucault or as fully developed as his analysis of power. Additionally, in order to secure his objective that power is productive, he sets out to purge all the elements of power that are associated with negativity and repression. This has two significant consequences. First, he displaces the question of the state because he posits that Marxism exhibits a narrowly state-centered view of power as inescapably bound up with the equation of class power and repression. Second, the tendency to view law as an adjunct of sovereignty and centralized coercion leads him to dislocate or expel law from any significant role in modern forms of domination (for details see Hunt and Wickham, 1994). The result of this analysis leaves his readers with no means of accounting for the globalization of power. Foucault himself falls in the trap of holding a reductionist view of power as 'all-productive' by staying away from problematizing the historical patterns and specific manifestations of power relations and by not acknowledging Marx's own discussion on (state/economic) power (Marx 1867). Santos (1985 in Hunt and Wickham, 1994) argues that Foucault simply goes too far in stressing the dispersion and fragmentation of power and that this results in a lack of attention to the way in which hierarchical patterns in forms of power emerge and then change into different configurations. The Adivasi anti-colonial (everyday) resistance shows repression ostensibly in state agendas, which were more than disciplining the subject through the creation of surveilled abstract spaces. This demonstrates the need for a refined discussion of power strategy, the techniques of rule, and governmentality.

Conclusion

All over the country at different times, the slogans of Adivasi protests have emphasised rights to access nature (*'Jangal Zamin Azad Hai'* – "Forests and lands are free gifts of nature") (Bhaviskar, 1995). The unwillingness to give up shifting cultivation was most apparent in the case of the Baigas, who believed that they were born as "kings of the jungle", linking the natural environment and agricultural practice with their ancestry. Although retaliations were short lived, they nevertheless reinforced the Adivasi nature-culture linkages, which had symbolic and economic importance. The cycle of passive and active Adivasi resistance is shown in Adivasi petitions, fasting, and chanting songs or slogans, as well as frequent efforts in detaining pilgrims, burning police outposts and British-made goods, cutting telegraph lines, and plundering markets and merchants. Adivasi resistance makes a phenomenal contribution to a new conceptualization of power, emphasizing the diffusion of power throughout society. The sequence of techniques that were applied by the British treated the Adivasis both as objects and instruments of exploitative power, which created a platform for insurgencies,

passive resistance, mimicry and repugnance towards the colonial laws and strategies. The domination of commerce, observation, recording of trees, training of the Adivasis as laborers, disbanding of their groups and similar techniques of surveillance and control aimed to produce docile abstract bodies. The colonial techniques of domination operated through rigid norms. They defined attributes of obedient bodies and directed them against the traditional Adivasi practices, such as untidiness, disobedience, insolence and lack of loyalty. The demands of the Adivasis were considered to come from laziness. If they rejected abstract space and time organization, they were regarded as dishonest and lacking in self-discipline. If they escaped from the intolerable conditions, they were deemed to lack loyalty.

Through a close reading of governmental reports, narratives, pamphlets and manuals in which the British warned one another of Adivasi arts of resistance, I have offered in the above discussion a record of spatial and temporal practices involved in resistance. Resistance, it turns out, is not external to power or merely a result of its application. However, since power marginalizes, silences and excludes the voices of the subordinate, we always begin to hear the silenced voices again through the voices of resistance. Scott (1985) reiterates the Foucaultian ideas of 'plurality of resistance' by conceptualizing mundane forms of resistance, as he argues that resistance consists of anonymous, disguised, opportunistic, cautious, compromised and unorganized micro-practices. These forms of power are often more productive, safer than and potentially just as oppositional as the 'grander gestures' more commonly accepted as 'legitimate resistance' (for details see Butz, 2007).

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