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Einladung zum Vortrag

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Divine Kingship in Odisha

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Freitag, 25. Jänner 2013, 14h c.t.

Seminarraum 1,
Institut für Südasiens-, Tibet- und Buddhismuskunde,
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Odisha is an ideal field for the study of divine kingship. The Jagannath cult of Puri in Odisha, which is well known as a Hindu cult at the pan-Indian level, provides a key to unraveling the history and mystery of divine kingship. Jagannath is God and He is the King. Odisha therefore is known as the “Land of Jagannath” (*Jagannāth deś*). The king in Puri is His deputy only: he is His main servant. But he is also addressed as “lord” (*iśvara*) and referred to as *ihākura rājā*. In sum, the Jagannath cult is a royal cult and at the same time the people’s cult.

In the hinterlands of Odisha too, the tribal people (like the Dongria Kondh) do have elaborate practices of divine kingship. In their case the context is different, but the spirit is the same. The tribal people worship their ancestors as gods; they observe commemoration ceremonies for their ancestors. For them, the ancestor gods are the most important gods. Among certain tribal communities, the mythical ancestors are regarded as both gods and kings. In these communities the people continue to venerate the king as a god in some form or other, and often the past king’s insignia are worshipped in their village shrines. The main community cults are thus considered as kingly cults, and the people are sentimentally attached to these cults even today.