Prologue

‘They’ versus ‘we’: J. Nehru’s perspective

I am alarmed when I see – not only in this country but in other great countries, too – how anxious people are to shape others according to their own image or likeness, and to impose on them their particular way of living. We are welcome to our way of living, but why impose it on others? This applies equally to national and international fields. In fact, there would be more peace in the world if people were to desist from imposing their way of living on other people and countries. I am not at all sure which is the better way of living, the tribal or our own. In some respects, I am quite certain theirs is better. Therefore, it is grossly presumptuous on our part to approach them with an air of superiority, to tell them how to behave or what to do and what not to do. There is no point in trying to make of them a second-rate copy of ourselves.

(J. Nehru, quoted in M. Raza and A. Ahmad 1990: 64)

‘They’ versus ‘we’: the anthropologist’s perspective

Plate 1: Before the harvest

Rice field in the village of Tarana, Mayurbhanj District, Odisha, India (October 2009)

Notes from a Ho village in Odisha

Village life begins early in tribal Middle India: occasionally at 4 a.m., seldom later than 5 a.m., women sometimes getting up a little earlier than men and children. Cows are led out of their sheds and fed. Other cattle will be taken care of later; there seems to be an order. In winter, when it is bitterly cold, fires are lit outside, often by young boys, and expertly fed with rice straw, never

allowing flames to leap up and burn high. Neighbours – at least those who are on speaking terms, but in any case beyond the bounds of what in the West is considered a nuclear family, male and female, young and old, squat around the fires warming their hands and feet. Watching the dark transform into dawn, they talk each other into the day long before sunrise at around 6:15, by which time everybody is already busy. Carried along and safely seated on the hips of their elder siblings (an identity which is not to be understood in terms of blood relationship), infant boys and girls grow into social maturity, self-confidence, and the principle of seniority. Other daily chores, such as sweeping, fetching water from the well, doing the dishes, cleaning the sheds, purifying the courtyard and the adjoining footpaths with cow dung, and cutting up vegetables are seen to in known and separate ways by males, females, and also children. Whenever and wherever people see or meet others, while on their way to the well, across the rice fields, to the jungle, or to the market, they will speak to each other, even if only briefly and even if 'only' enquiring about the way. Almost never will anybody slow down for this. People never pass silently, wordlessly, and if they do, most certainly there is a reason.[1]

During the harvest as well, villagers are busy leading their individual lives collectively. Landowners may either work on their own fields or, especially if the land has not been divided among brothers and officially so registered, help each other. Also, while some villagers will work on someone else's land as part of an exchange of reciprocal assistance, others, as day labourers, will be paid in kind or in cash. After the harvest, which may stretch into the middle of January, but ends before *mokor sankranti*, hard work continues on the threshing floor until the rice is safely stored inside the houses in big rice-bundles. If sufficient rice is there and leisure time, women prepare and – proudly displaying their well-accomplished mastery as hosts - share their homemade rice-beer (*diyan*), but not indiscriminately with everybody. Very young children are also welcome to drink their portion, and most accept willingly, even demanding it, as a matter of fact. Kinsmen, though not invited, turn up for a break, and while enjoying amazing amounts – at least so it seems to the observing anthropologist - exchange their news and views, have a good laugh together, and discuss the agenda of the days to come. In groups, never individually, necessary items such as firewood, leaves, roots, fruit, and toothbrushes are collected from the jungle, which may take the major part of a day. For those who stay behind, life will mainly take place outside and around the house, except during the monsoon period between the months of July and September. The inside of a Ho house serves as a storage room for rice and other household items, the most valuable of which are kept inside the *adin*, the sacred space of every Ho household, which is separated by a wall. To sleep in this protected vicinity makes for good dreams, which are shared first thing in the morning. Children and their age mates in a hamlet and beyond consider each other siblings who grow up together, and the whole village keeps a responsible eye on them. Not all children attend school. Many do so irregularly, not infrequently running away from it. I have never observed a child being scolded for this, and this was surely not a sign of parental indifference or neglect. Then there are other children, male and female, slightly older, who are not Ho, who are from non–tribal communities that have lived with the Ho for centuries, and who herd the Ho's cattle.

Beyond this kind of village life which is patterned and organized, though not by an outside administration or an outside political centre, and which is realised in face-to-face relationships that are active, public, collective, social, and visible, there is an invisible realm which is no less important, no less active, no less public, and for that matter no less real for the Ho.

1 I have often observed that silence in interaction has a purpose and social significance, e.g., in the case of unresolved quarrels and conflicts or as a kind of social punishment.

Most activities are rice-related and in that way ancestor-oriented, as rice and ancestry are notionally closely interrelated for the Ho. Ancestors are an omnipresent category. The living are well aware that they owe everything to their ancestors, who cleared the jungle, who cultivated the land, who built the houses, who fought all different kinds of attempts at trespassing into their territory and their universe. Ho ancestors are known to be in constant interaction with the living as well as with the spiritual world and Sinbonga, their God who created the world and the Ho. Ancestors' bodies are buried close to the living, either right in the courtyards in front of the houses or behind them, under huge tamarind trees that offer shade to the big, flat burial stones and the people who sit on them seeking refuge from the heat. Ancestors' souls continue to stay with the living. They are given shelter within the *adin*, that protected part of the house where they are safe from any defiling gaze. Here rice is also stored, often complemented by an egg symbolically added. On specific occasions, meals are cooked here. It is an area that I was never allowed to enter, because entrance is strictly reserved for "the people of one rice pot" (*miyad mandi chaturenko*), as the Ho refer to their specific network of kin relations. Relatives by marriage are excluded as a matter of principle. Ancestors pass on their names to the newly born, who only after the naming ceremony acquire a social identity, a quality they lack before the ceremony. A woman after marriage may enter her husband's *adin* only after having been introduced to her husband's ancestors in a proper ritual. The Ho are convinced that ancestors insist on being properly taken care of. This includes the regular performance of animal sacrifices in the rice fields to ensure the continuous fertility of the land and to honour the dead. Commensality includes the ancestors of the household daily. However small the quantities they are offered may be, the ancestors are – as a generic category – invited and served first whenever someone is eating or drinking. In this way, every household actively and effectively contributes to the well-being of its members and that of the whole village. Epidemics, diseases, and other misfortunes are understood as the result of mistakes that living humans have made and that have angered the ancestors, usually imagined as protective, and need to be atoned for. In their specific ways, the dead in Ho country are as real and alive as the living.

Plate 2: Before the harvest

Cornfield in the village of Kirchfelde,[2] *Uckermark District, Brandenburg, Germany (September 2010)*

Notes from a German village in Brandenburg

The landscape is hilly and spectacularly beautiful, not too dissimilar from the area in Boja Sai described above, and the houses are surrounded by fields of enormous size, on which, however, maize and millet are grown. As far as village life is concerned, well, there is hardly any: a few old people are still there, leading their individual lives inside their houses most of the time. Young families and most young people have left. There are hardly any children or animals but for the occasional cat or dog, no job opportunities, no shops, no butcher, no baker, no school. The nearest larger town where people can do their shopping is fourteen kilometres away. Some houses are empty; some have been rented out to people from outside who show up irregularly on the weekends to enjoy the peaceful environment, especially during summer. The small church, a historic building dating from the fifteenth century, was utterly run down not long ago and only recently restored by a group of enthusiasts coming mainly from outside. In order to inject some life into an otherwise neglected area, perhaps once every two or three weeks some cultural event of fine quality in the church is advertised. People from outside will perform before a very small audience, mainly from outside, a highlight of two hours or so for some in the village. This was the only social interaction beyond the individual household that I was able to observe during the three weeks that I stayed there. Otherwise, communication with the outside world is mediated by television, with the villagers restricted to the passive receiving end; there are probably as many television sets as there are houses. Towards the end of September, the harvest is collected by a single man over the course of three full days, with the help of a gigantic tractor. It takes another two days to have the land

2 After returning from fieldwork I found a retreat in Kirchfelde, a small village 80 km north of Berlin to work on my thesis. The social and cultural differences between the two settings – the various villages which had been the sites of my fieldwork in Odisha, and the other one in the Uckermark/ Brandenburg/ Germany - are telling, despite some obviously striking similarities, not least those of the habitat.

ploughed by another machine and one more day to sow rape and have it worked into the soil by still another machine. The harvest will be used as pig fodder or biodiesel or maybe even for human consumption – villagers do not know exactly and are not particularly interested to find out, since land, harvest, and machinery alike are owned by people from outside.
In Kirchfelde there are more containers for household rubbish than there are households. In Boja Sai there are neither rubbish containers nor rubbish collection. But then – apart from organic refuse – there is no rubbish in the first place.

[...]

7 Two portraits as conclusion

This last chapter differs from the preceding ones in its methodological approach, perspective, and presentation. Instead of highlighting, generalizing, and comparing relevant arguments and results in a conventional conclusion, it will offer a conclusion with a difference.
In analogy to the epigraph above, this chapter is meant to put together the tribal society that has been taken apart in the preceding chapters. So the portraits of the two protagonists that follow do not aim in any way at offering a comprehensive and ordered or systematic picture. But they do aim at presenting dimensions of the subjective-individual and the social-collective and combining both. If Durkheim (1976: 107) is right that the social body of any society enforces its culture-specific givens on the individual, this is a powerful statement about an objective process independent of an individual person's free will and awareness of this process and despite the individual's possibly being convinced of the opposite. So, following Durkheim, there is no nonsocial sphere apart from, beyond, or outside this process, and any individual life will be impacted by prevailing social values, norms, and rules – if in varying degrees. Certainly, Durkheim's statement is not aimed at mechanically defining social beings as cultural clones. It should be complemented rather than contradicted by Weber's notion of *agency*, which in contrast focusses on the individual working out strategies to make sense of and disposing of options to lead a meaningful life – within a given framework (Weber 1976: 1). These strategies and options, though culturally and socially informed, may display enormous variations and a high degree of individuation, and they will always tell a story that is larger and more comprehensive than an isolated private life.

Two individual protagonists, one Ho, one Santal, have been singled out and will be portrayed here within the sociocultural setting of the region of research to illustrate this dialectic: to show the social encapsulated within the private and to simultaneously reveal the individual construction of meaning-making within social, collective, or communal performances. Also, the idea of portraying 'authentic', that is, real-life protagonists is to unsystematically and fragmentarily bring together, as happens in real life, institutions, issues, and aspects that had to be taken apart in this book for analytical reasons: marriage and affinity, kinship and ritual relations, precedence and seniority, ancestors and the spirit world, land and inheritance, sacrifice and ritual, purity and reciprocity. If tribal values and norms, as I argue, exist in their specificity as well as in their interrelatedness, they must matter and be alive notwithstanding contradictions and strategic distortions of different kinds at the empirical level where individuals plan and live their lives.

Portrait of a Ho: S. Kondangkel, *munda* and landowner

*Hard work, rituals (*bongako*), and witchcraft*

"I believe in hard work rather than in spirits, sacrifices, and rituals (*bongako*)." This is what S. Kondangkel, henceforth referred to as Sadurgon, answered in December 2012 when asked whether he, too, was about to perform a particular paddy ritual (*ked bonga*), as Ho and Santal households in the area did on the occasion of the final harvesting of the paddy plant (*baba*) in the fields, before the threshing on the threshing floor (*kolom*) would begin.

Of course, I had gotten to know Sadurgon as a hard worker, and I knew from Dhan that Ho believe "that hard work makes the crops grow" (Dhan 1962: 24). Still, his answer came as an unexpected statement, since I had myself participated in rituals regularly performed in the courtyard of Sadurgon's house every year by members of the Gau community. In rituals such as *ote ili* and *gau o:l* (see plates 15 and 19) the *diuri* of the Gau had been respectfully assisted by Sadurgon. Also, on the vigil of *ba porob*, one of the major village feasts that is addressed to the village deities, a ritual called *gram bonga* or *guri: bonga* (*guri:* - cowdung; to clean with cow dung) is performed in his courtyard and presided over by the local Ho shaman (*dewa*) and his men. A white cock, one goat (*boda* - uncastrated he-goat), one red and one black chicken, two pigeons, and one duck are sacrificed inside a walled enclosure facing east. This is the sacrificial site (*sare*) that is attached to the back of Sadurgon's house and thus protected from potentially defiling gazes from outside. The *sare* is strictly used for ritual purposes only.

When I learnt about the prominent role that young boys are assigned in *ked bonga*, I wondered whether the absence of a son (of his own and of his elder brother's wife who lives on his compound) was the reason for Sadurgon's being so reticent about the ritual. In this particular paddy ritual (*ked bonga*), the rice mother (*baba enga*) is honoured. She is invoked as the original source from which all paddy is believed to have come. She is personified in the last sheaves of rice stalks that are left in the centre of each rice field while all the paddy around them is harvested. In support, the rice stalks are tied to a branch for *baba enga* to lean against. Ho people say that in the act of harvesting, *baba enga* gets killed and hurt. Eventually, in order to propitiate her and make good all the maltreatment that she has had to endure, the last sheaves of rice stalks are ritually cut, and *baba enga* is ceremoniously carried home to the threshing floor (*kolom*). This is done towards dusk by one of the sons or grandsons of the landowner (*gusiya*). He carries *baba enga*, that is, the stalks, on his head, while other children, boys and girls, escort them in a queue. They are, however, unaccompanied by adults, who are not involved in this part of the ritual. On their arrival, the boy and *baba enga* are ritually greeted (*jowar*) near the threshing floor. Constructed as representing *baba enga*, the boy has his feet washed and his legs anointed with oil up to his knees by the *female* head of the household (*owa:rini:*). By approaching *baba enga* with an air of respect, the participants also implicitly honour and propitiate Sinbonga, who gave *baba enga* to the world of the living as a gift when he created the earth. No other or separate offering or sacrifice is made to the rice mother, however, which documents that *baba enga* is not assigned the definite status of a spirit (*bonga*). Towards the end of the ritual, *baba enga* is asked to forgive any disrespect shown to her and to guarantee future fertility and the growth of the rice grains to be sown in the months to come.

Plate 3: ***Ked bonga***

Baba enga, *the rice mother, is personified in the last sheaves of the paddy stalks that are left in the centre of each rice field. While all the paddy around her is harvested, she holds onto a branch, before she is ceremoniously led to the threshing floor.*

Symbolically, rice grains referred to in the course of this ritual are also personified. They are constructed as offspring of their mother (*baba enga*) and consequently called *babako* (plural of *baba*). This is not only a striking phonetic parallel to *balako*, the term to denote a Ho's affines, but also a conceptual one, since the category of *balako* represents a key value and symbolically guarantees the continuity of Ho society as such. The association of *babako* and *balako*, of course, exists in the anthropologist's mind only. For Santal and some more sophisticated Ho, *baba enga* is identified as Lakshmi, who, even if considered an alien (*diku*) goddess, after all is a goddess. Linguistically this ritual, which is also termed *baba keya ader* (calling back the rice [mother]), is related to the *umbul keya ader* ritual in which the soul (*umbul* – shadow; soul) after a person's death is ceremoniously called back into the sacred part of the kitchen (*adin*) in order to be ritually taken care of there. Notions of life, continuity, and reproduction link both rituals – conceptually and linguistically – and reveal at the same time in terms of reciprocity that only if proper ritual treatment is offered can the continuation of life and reproduction be expected.

"You know, Eva," Sadurgon had confided in me in 2010, "Ho people may be innocent and pure, but sometimes they know so little; they are so ignorant, and they have forgotten so much about our Ho traditions." Was there a note of despair in his voice? "They easily believe what others tell them. That is why many believe in witchcraft and witches. I think this is blind faith, and there is no proof for it. I believe only in what can be proved. So I believe in our Ho spirits and deities."

Sadurgon

Sadurgon is a Ho, a husband and a father, a village headman (*munda*), someone who owns land, a house, and cattle (*gusiya*), who is a cultivator of his own fields (*taso ho*), and who sometimes works for wages (*nalatani:*); he is my younger brother *(undi*) and has become a friend (*juri*). I met him for the first time in January 2006 when he was asked to mediate a discussion of some significance concerning a widow's and her four young children's future following the first burial of her husband. He invited me to participate. Ever since then, I could rely on him as an informant and, if his scarce time allowed, as an assistant. I became his *aji* (elder sister), and he and my husband were *teya* (elder sister's husband–wife's younger brother) to each other, which is a joking relationship. Sadurgon's clan (*kili*) is Kondangkel, whose members claim and are acknowledged, also by non-Ho, to be senior, a status ascribed to the *munurenko*, the descendants of the original settlers of a village, and one of the founding clans of Tarana, including Gara Sai. It was their forefathers who cleared the jungle in that area. This high status is not a passive attribute attached to a person once and for all. Indeed, it needs to be re-enacted, maintained, deserved, and actively achieved by performing one's publicly known social duties: "It has been enjoined on us as first settlers since time immemorial to exercise our duties as ritual guide (*diuri*) and headman (*munda*)," Sadurgon explained. Sadurgon's sphere of responsibility, of course, is not an administrative unit as outlined above or listed in the written records of the village council. It is the secular and ritual space that is recognized by the villagers, within which and beyond whose boundaries they organize and structure their kinship and marriage relations. As a member of his *miyad mandi chaturenko*, his relations reach well beyond Gara Sai.

Sadurgon is an educated person, although he himself would never admit to that. He can speak and write Hindi, English, and Odiya, he can understand and converse in Santali, and, of course, he is fluent in Ho. One day I went to see him at 5:30 a.m. in his courtyard, as he used to say, "This is a good time to meet because I am not yet working in the rice fields." He was reading a book about Ho traditions written in Waran Chiti, a script that was invented for the Ho language by Lako Bodra. Many usually well-informed Ho people whom I met in that area were either unfamiliar with it or uninterested. Those who had heard about it labelled it as the business of some intellectuals in the Chaibasa area. It was certainly none of their business. Sadurgon, however, wrote down the whole alphabet for me in Waran Chiti without the slightest difficulty.

As a wage labourer (*nalatani*:) he had been in Gujarat, Kashmir, and Bhutan for extended periods of his life. Here he picked up his English. In 2008 he worked underground with dynamite and other explosives in the course of a construction scheme for the Indian railway in Kashmir. He earned more than 4,000 rupees a month, which equalled 156 rupees a day and was more than double the official minimum wage for unskilled labour at that time. But, he said, he worked twelve hours a day. He was interested in and informed about the sociopolitical situation outside Ho society. He also knew about the legalization and institutionalization of the *manki-munda* system in Jharkhand, euphemistically asserted to have been designed to give the tribal population a legal voice. But Sadurgon warned against the danger of *manki* and *munda* turning corrupt, losing their independence, integrity, and tribal identity by accepting government salaries for fulfilling their customary obligations. He knew that it was government policy to seek tribal support for tribal land alienation and that economic progress in terms of mining the mineral-rich areas in Jharkhand often spelt destruction of the sacred landscape of tribals and a status at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. He was aware of the determination of the Indian government to assimilate members of

the Scheduled Tribes into the Indian Hindu mainstream. More than anything else, perhaps, he knew about and had himself been exposed to mainstream India's contempt for the tribal world and its values.

Sadurgon did not drink rice-beer (*diyan*), usually a must in Ho society – especially for a ritual elder – and he did not smoke, typically another cultural must for males in ritual situations. But he did not proselytize about this. He did not avoid rice-beer in order to distance himself ideologically from his Ho fellow-villagers. Verardo (2003b) makes exactly this point about conceptual disintegration expressed in contrasting attitudes towards the jungle, ancestors, and the consumption of rice-beer as markers of Ho-ness. She writes that those Ho who began to feel ashamed of these core Ho values and label them as backward and primitive would turn into Munda, that is, swap Ho clan membership for Munda caste membership. They would begin to cremate their dead instead of burying them; they would change their marriage patterns and their commensality rules; they would stop eating meat and drinking any kind of alcohol.

If a ritual situation within the compound of his house so demanded, Sadurgon saw to it that rice-beer was there. Some people, though to me amazingly few, were regularly and heavily drunk, which led to their neglecting their duties and their families at times. What Sadurgon deplored was the weakness of mind, the lack of socially adequate behaviour, rather than the lack of physical control. But he would not despise others for drinking or make them feel ashamed. Maybe it was also because of this attitude that Sadurgon was a respected man.

*The protagonist as village headman (***munda***)*

Sadurgon became *munda* of Gara Sai when he was still young, inexperienced, and ignorant, as he says. "Too many of our elders who knew have died." One of the knowledgeable elders was his father, who had taught and passed on the office of *munda* to his elder brother, who then died quite unexpectedly, while Sadurgon was away in Bhutan, and long before his time. As a matter of cultural logic, it then became Sadurgon's turn despite his age, "because the villagers insisted."
When asked about his duties as a *munda*, Sadurgon explained: "I don't act as *munda*, you know. Nowadays the law has changed. The government does not recognize these institutions in Odisha. There is the village council (*panchayat*) that is in charge. So acting as *diuri*, *munda*, or *sadar* [the headman of a confederation of villages, who in Jharkhand is called *manki*] is not a legally recognized activity." This may be a politically correct statement, but it tells only part of Sadurgon's ambivalent story, because, as I realized in the course of my fieldwork, he did act as *munda* but was downplaying his role, as becomes a village elder in Ho society. Also, when in 2010 a *diuri* for the Ho community of a neighbouring hamlet needed to be elected by invoking the pantheon of Ho deities, it was Sadurgon who opened and moderated the meeting of all male representatives at the *akara*, a site within a village where males discuss village politics. "Well, people continue to come to me seeking my advice. They address and keep approaching me as their *munda*. And if people ask you for help, you comply with their demands, don't you?" When my perception had developed the necessary sensitivity, I became aware that someone's wishes were quite often interpreted as demands, almost commands, that were obeyed where possible, thus constituting and strengthening a net of reciprocal social obligations, often within a known kinship framework.

***The protagonist as landowner* (gusiya) *and cultivator of his fields* (taso ho)**

As a *gusiya* Sadurgon owns and lives in a house that was built by his great-grandfather's father, his FFFF, in Gara Sai. He claims to have been told so by his father. Even though this house has sheltered generations of *munda*, it is not any different in size, style, and structure from other villagers' houses. It is constructed according to similar principles, which are kinship principles above and beyond architectural or aesthetic reasons, which are not neglected. What I mean is that in Ho society, brothers live together all their lives. After marriage, their wives will move in, too. Residence is virilocal. As his grandfather had a (younger) brother, another house was built facing the first and sharing the same courtyard. And, of course, with two houses constituting two independent yet interrelated working units, there are two separate threshing floors (*kolom*), a number of separate hearths, and separate *adin*. Sadurgon's grandfather's younger brother (FFyB) had three sons, all of whom married. There was sufficient land for all within their *miyad mandi chaturenko* (illustrated in figure 17) and enough space for more houses to be built around the rice fields in nearby hamlets. These are not always easily recognizable as independent hamlets, which in fact not all of them are, since many of them are socially interrelated, as this narration also shows. So Kondangkel brothers – and their forefathers (*ham hoko–dum hoko*) – could continue living and working together on ancestral land cleared by the Kondangkel.

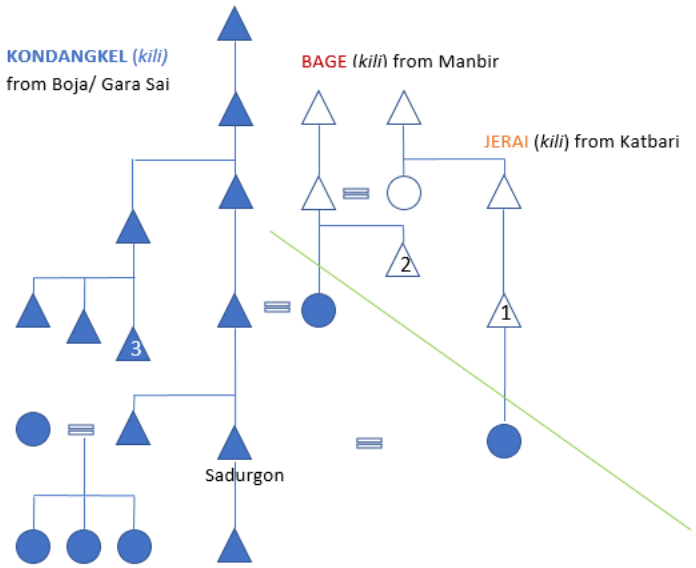

Figure 1: Sadurgon's *miyad mandi chaturenko*

The members of Sadurgon's mmc *are represented by solid blue circles for female members and solid blue triangles for male members. Persons 1 and 2 are Sadurgon's* honyar *(WF) and* mamu *(MB). Neither belongs to his* mmc*, but they are the two main people with whom he discusses relevant family matters such as marrying a second wife. Person 3 is Sadurgon's* kaka*, his FyB, whose two elder brothers died long ago. It is between Sadurgon and his* kaka *from Boja Sai that ritual interaction and economic collaboration are very close.*

Sadurgon was born and grew up in Gara Sai. He lives with his wife in the house in which he was born and in which his elder brother used to live with his wife. Sadurgon is *iril* to his elder brother's wife, who is his *hili*, which is a joking relationship. According to Ho customary reasoning, after Sadurgon's elder brother's death his wife and her three daughters were entitled to continue living

there, which they do. Everything that a husband owns is passed on to his wife after his death, but whatever a wife owns is passed on in the case of her death to her sons – her male children only.

As a *gusiya* of cattle Sadurgon owns two bullocks for ploughing and threshing, eighteen or more goats for sacrificing, sale, and consumption, and a number of chicks and hens for the same purposes. Each different category of livestock is housed in its own permanent and separate shed, sometimes as spacious as the houses for the human beings and immediately attached to those houses, sharing the same roof, which, however, turns from one of tiles over the human houses into one of thatched grass over the animal sheds.

As a *gusiya* of land Sadurgon owns 7.41 acres that are registered in his own name and those of his father and brother but are not separated or divided in the land register. This is a common Ho practice, and quite generally Ho will avoid the written, legal partitioning of corporate land. An official paper folded, signed, and stamped many times shows that Sadurgon yearly pays 16.45 rupees instead of 39 rupees in property taxes according to Schedule XIV. “Government discount for BPL [Below Poverty Line] people,” Sadurgon jokes.

As a cultivator (*taso ho*) Sadurgon works in his own rice fields and helps in the rice fields of the members of his *mandi chaturenko* also living in Gara Sai, Boja Sai, and the vicinity. This cultivation work is linked to the original ancestors of the specific *mandi chaturenko*, whose membership is continually re-established in such corporate activities. In terms of status, this kind of work is qualitatively different from wage labour, which always means work for others and as such is considered polluting though not always avoidable. Giving help (*denga em*), however, is not considered impure, since it is work done reciprocally among notional equals as a matter of principle, and as such it is never paid. Sadurgon grows rice and, after the rice harvest, a cultivated pulse (*kansari*), linseed (*unchi*), and a kind of field pea (*kalae*). But his specific situation is difficult, as there are no brothers with whom he can organize mutual help right in front of his house door, as it were. His *hili* is busy working in her rice fields, meaning those of her deceased husband, herding the cattle, getting firewood from the jungle, and doing the cooking on the hearths assigned to her household. There is a division of duties between her and her *iril* fixing separate and shared responsibilities and an internal division of land. Sadurgon and his wife cannot do without wage labourers, whom they employ and pay daily, sometimes in kind, sometimes in money.

Death, polygyny, and the continuity of ancestral land

Sadurgon encountered death early in his life. Both parents died when he was a young boy. His father had no brothers in the sense of *mid lai:ren* (born of *one* mother). His two elder sisters (FeZ) had married into the Alda *kili* and lived in Jharkhand with their husbands. In reference and address Sadurgon called their offspring *sango* (FeZD, FeZS).

Sadurgon’s own elder brother died at perhaps the age of thirty-five, he thinks, and his elder sister when she was about fourteen or fifteen, when he was still small. He is uncertain of their absolute biological age and does not recollect the exact year, but he recollects their ages in relation to his in terms of seniority. In both cases medical doctors had been involved and had come to their home, so he is acquainted with healing concepts beyond the indigenous ones. “There is a paper with all the details in the *adin*,” he said.

Sadurgon lost his only son in July 2011. He had shown symptoms of some undiagnosed neurophysiological malfunctioning (my diagnosis) ever since 2006. By 2009/2010 his situation had progressively deteriorated. He had become paralyzed and needed permanent care. Both parents took turns. By then Sadurgon was deeply worried, and so was I.[3] Sadurgon's son was my younger brother's son, *homon*, to me – was that a relationship term or a living relation? Were my responsibilities abstract and academic or real? When I returned in 2012, the death of Sadurgon's son was one of the first pieces of news that reached me.

In the two preceding years, when consulting and making sense of my field notes, I had begun to realize in hindsight on how many different planes and in how many different ways Sadurgon had been active on behalf of his son without my being aware of it at the time.[4] While performing different kinds of rituals addressed to different kinds of spirits was his ritual duty as the ritual head of the house and the secular head of the village, this was not unrelated to taking care of his son. All the steps were negotiated within the frame of kinship and the ritual specialists of Gara Sai. This seems more than a model of extreme interpersonal solidarity, which it may also be. In the concept of a Ho person defined as a social category, an individual opens up into the outside, comprised of the collectivity of his *mandi chaturenko*, the cosmos of influential spirits, ancestors, deities, and the residential site of his hamlet. The successful treatment of a disease or a diseased person requires all components to be considered adequately on the household and village levels.

Tellingly, this was revealed in a *bonga*[5] called *red topa* (burying of medicine), in the course of which medicine was administered or rather buried (*topa*) in the soil of the hamlet at five different spots where different spirits were invoked along the ritual boundary surrounding Gara Sai, which until then had not been known to me. That way a ritual fence was constituted around the village in order to ward off malign spirits and evil influences. The *bonga* was not directed towards Sadurgon's son as an autonomous individual, but towards a human being as someone related to an encompassing social whole. The ritual itself was witnessed and accompanied by eighteen male Ho representing the complete ritual village. It was carried out by five male village specialists chosen for their divining qualifications. Women and children were not present and not supposed to watch – save for the female anthropologist under Sadurgon's special protection. The procedure took thirty-five minutes, from 10:30 p.m. to 11:05 p.m. during the new moon in March 2010. It was a duty to be performed by known actors in known ways developed through trial and error. There was nothing secret or mysterious about it. I was informed about the names and specific qualities of the sixteen spirits and deities, all of them male,[6] that were invoked in the course of the rituals, about the ingredients of the medicine administered to the village, which I was allowed to photograph, and about the *bichar* (judgment; to pass judgment) procedure the night before.

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3 So far, I had been the anthropologist observing from a relative distance, although in the course of six years I had become emotionally involved. However, this chapter's focus is on Sadurgon and is meant to remain there -and not on the state of the anthropologist's mixed feelings. For this reason, these are not enlarged upon here. At the same time, it goes without saying that an anthropologist's necessarily subjective perception, interpretation and selection of data will bear on the representation of the protagonist's portrait. (see also Reichel 2014b: 32-46). Having said this, an anthropologist's understanding of her/his responsibilities (and his/her confusion about them) does affect her/his research in the field, but this will not be discussed here.

4 One way of supporting his son was not to commit himself to be my permanent assistant although he appreciated my work and began seriously considering writing a book on Ho traditions himself – in *Waran Chiti*.

5 Actually, these were at least three interrelated *bonga*. Here only one part of *red topa* will be given.

6 *Pat* in Ho denotes "a *guru bonga* type of spirit, usually found in mountains and called upon by shamans for help in discerning what spirit is causing some sickness, etc." (Deeney 2005: 284). The distinction between *bonga* and *pat* has been given above.

As a sort of complementary measure Sadurgon had made an appointment with the medical doctor in the nearest town, only to find out that the doctor had left for a conference. His assistant asked him to go to Cuttack for an X-ray and then charged 100 rupees for this consultation. The trip to the doctor had been an ordeal for the son. Sadurgon, however, paid and did not complain. He then asked me to get in touch with a renowned hospital in Jamshedpur. When I did, the receptionist remarked, in a very friendly, very clear way, "You'll see. We may make an appointment, no problem, but he will not come. Tribals don't come." She was right; in the end, he did not go. But it was not at all an easy decision. He discussed it beforehand with his son's *mamu*, his wife's brother – as matters of disease are as a matter of course also kinship matters. How to get his son there, who was going to accompany and stay with him, where to stay, how to prepare the meals, and how to pay. By no means was money the main concern. Sadurgon gave his son costly, special food that had been recommended to him; he gave him medication. He kept trying to find out the cause of the disease – inside and outside the physical boundaries of his son's body. In Ho reasoning there is strong causal thinking: no effect without cause. Were relations, were spirits negatively affecting his son? Were they adversely affecting the whole hamlet and had chosen to punish his son? Sadurgon had become a wage labourer outside Ho territory in order to cover the expenses for his son. He is aware that this might have offended his ancestors. In other words, he himself might have offended the ancestors, who were now punishing his son for it. In that way, he might be the source of their anger and the cause of his son's disease. Maybe he had imported some pollution from outside, and he considered it his duty to purify the dwelling site and become purified himself.[7] He had been in touch with medical doctors, he had had meals prepared and eaten outside his home – all this was possibly polluting behaviour. Ancestors, whenever annoyed, need to be propitiated. This is the job of the shaman (*dewa*). He was sent for, not only once, not always the same one. After a *bonga* Sadurgon was always quite optimistic. "The correct thing has been done. Everything will be all right now." In between the *bonga* he carefully watched his son for a few days. If he could not observe any improvement, he would try something else, he would try someone else. He also tried a Ho *dewa* who claimed to be in touch with Hindu gods and goddesses and thus be extraordinarily powerful. During all this time Sadurgon's son was fed, washed, and anointed regularly; he was spoken to and entertained; he lay on a bed on the threshing floor in the shade surrounded by *baba*, ancestors, and people working; his maternal uncle (*mamu*) came to visit frequently – after all, it was a three-hour ride on his bicycle one way.

In December 2012, I talked with Sadurgon about his future. What would happen to his land now that his son had died and that his *hili* has no sons? He was prepared for that question. "I think of marrying a second time. I have already spoken to my wife, my father-in-law, and my *mamu* about it. They all agree." What about the process of finding a second wife? "I will leave that to my relatives according to Ho customary law. They will look. I am not doing that myself. If I have another son, he will take all of the land." Of course, he is very interested in what advice his *teya*, my husband, has for him.

When we returned to the field in 2014, we were of course very interested in catching up on the situation. "No," said Sadurgon, "I have not married. You know, my wife has agreed, my *honyar*

7 This was not really exceptional. Other Ho, who had been outside Ho territory for the same purpose of earning money, had to undergo purification rituals on their return, too. One Ho told me he was almost treated as an outcast by his own brothers (*hagako*). He was not allowed to touch the *mandi chatu*, and commensality was interrupted. He had to make special offerings to his ancestors in order to become re-integrated into his clan.

[father-in-law], too, but, you know, there may be so much quarrelling, so much haggling. The situation may become really nasty."

In a comparable situation, many years after the death of his only son, my male *saki* from Pathan Sai had made the decision to adopt a young man, one of his younger brothers' sons. That way the land would remain within the *mmc*. My *saki*'s younger brother had already agreed to the adoption; his son did not yet know about it. But he helped to completely renovate my *saki*'s house, which would become his house following the adoption. Sadurgon, on the other hand, a lot younger than my *saki*, did not seem to be impatient with the situation. His *kaka*'s son (*kaka*: position 3 in figure 17), about ten years old, might be an option for a possible adoption, but it is one that has not yet been mentioned.

Plate 4: Negotiating life: Sadurgon and his *teya*

Teya - *a self-reciprocal relationship between WyB and eZH.*

Epilogue

January 31, 2018. For the first time in more than ten years, Sadurgon answers the phone. Obviously, a cell tower has been built near his hamlet of Gara Sai. The news we received after two years' absence from the field:
Your *saki* has passed away. Last year's harvest was excellent. *En sirma doe: sumukikeda* (that year there was abundance/plenty/prosperity)! No, he hasn't married another time. Yes, he is still hoping for a son. No, he is not worried about his land. It will surely remain within his *miyad mandi chaturenko*. He mentions his *kaka* (FyB) from Boja Sai and his *kaka*'s son. "When are you coming?"

Portrait of a Santal: G. Hansda in his domestic environment

While I was initially intent on doing fieldwork exclusively among Ho people in order not to dissipate my efforts and get distracted, my staying with a Santal family in a Santal hamlet for many months over many years meant that I came to observe local life there intensely, though unsystematically and not seeking to continuously participate in it actively for the sake of research. Unexpectedly, then, I found myself right in the midst of Ho-Santal interrelatedness – only to learn that this is a lived empirical reality rather than an exception to the sociocultural fabric of Middle India. I learned that the *saki* relation (see chapter 6) not only connected my (female) Ho *saki* and me as two individuals but cut across tribal boundaries by relating the households of my Ho *saki*, G. Hansda, and other Santal people (see figures 4–7 and 13). I also learned that the concept of brother clans (see chapter 3) included Santal clans, and I found that the construct of a Santal *gusti* that I will outline in this chapter was indigenously explained to me in terms of the Ho's *miyad mandi chaturenko* (see chapter 3).
G. Hansda, henceforth called Guru, was known in the region as a learned person, a tribal who had been outside in the *diku* world, who had experience of how to deal with *diku* people, and who had decided to leave that world and return to his tribal 'brothers'. He was frequently consulted, including by Ho people when they needed support in their interactions with local *diku* representatives such as the police, the forest department, teachers, the bank, and local government institutions.

Gradually, I would become included in the Santal web of kinship. The head of the household, Guru, volunteered as my assistant and classified himself as my son (*babu*), which not only transformed me into his classificatory mother (*ma*) and his wife into my daughter-in-law (*kimin*) but also transformed me into the 'mother' of several adult males previously unknown to me and into the *hanar* (mother-in-law) of a number of female villagers who introduced themselves as my *kimin*. I realized it was high time that I made sense of the relational chaos, as it appeared to me at the outset, of people living or temporarily staying as immediate neighbours in several houses in a closed compound and cooperating in what were to me nontransparent ways. The result is given in the following sections of this chapter. It is based on the empirical data I continuously collected over more than a decade, and still, this data may be incomplete or may have changed.

The portrait centres around Guru and, as seen from his and other Santal consultants' perspectives, aspects of Santal sociocultural life that have been discussed earlier for the Ho: the localized corporate grouping called *gusti* as a key element of Santal social organization, the empirical dimension of selected relationship terms in the context of seniority, and (the case of Guru's runaway) marriage.

Gusti, alerenko, mit orak hor - miyad mandi chaturenko?

Solidarity and ritual and economic collaboration within the localized corporate grouping of the *miyad mandi chaturenko* (*mmc*) have been discussed in some detail in chapter 3 for the Ho community in the research area. Interestingly, Santal informants there made use of the Ho term to denote a specific Santal social unit within and related to one of the twelve Santal clans (*paris*). Figure 18 portrays Guru Hansda's *gusti*, whose members are all linked to or members of the Hansda *paris*. These units are corporate in character, although they may be locally dispersed. Synonymously

with *mmc* I was given the terms *gusti* and *alehor/alerenko* (Santali/Ho: our people) or, in a mix of Santali and Ho, *mid owa: hor* (the people of one 'house'). This term is to be distinguished from *orak hor/owa:renko* (Santali/Ho: the people of the house) which refers to those – including the dead – who live in a concrete house defined and conceived of in a physical sense. In this limited sense, Santal people in the research area, however, preferred to speak of *hagako* (brothers) or (also) *alerenko*. *Gusti* was explained to me as a localized group of people whose genealogical ties are remembered for three generations, maybe four. This is a relevant piece of information, as the dead male members are commemorated by name in rituals performed at the household level by the most senior member in his role as ritual guide (Dhano in figure 18) – or his son should his father fail to do so. Wives and unmarried daughters are included in this unit, the distinction being that daughters are born into their father's *gusti* and will leave it on marriage, while wives only adopt full membership by being fully married, which may be a process taking some years. In Guru's case, the process took thirteen years between his elopement in 1996 and the final ceremony of inviting the village and putting vermillion on his wife's head in 2009. Only after the final step of a wedding has been completed is a Santal wife allowed to enter the sacred corner (*bhitar*) of her husband's house and to be buried in her husband's ancestral territory.

Schulte-Droesch, who has recently completed fieldwork among Santal people in Dhalbhum, identifies the "people of one house" (Santali: *mit orak hor*) as *gusti* and defines both, following Leach, as a "local line" (Leach 1971: 57; Schulte-Droesch 2018: 106, 112–20). The members consider each other notionally united by the idea of a "common origin in one house in the past […] reflected in the fact that today members of one *gusti* have the right to enter each other's ancestral shrine (*bhitar*)" (Schulte-Droesch 2018: 119).[8] Eligibility to enter each other's *adin* (sacred part of a Ho house) has also been emphasized in this book as a key determinant indicating and presupposing a Ho's membership in a specific *mmc* including all those who may claim a common origin traced back to a common, if putative forefather – plus their wives and unmarried daughters. In that respect, the Ho's *mmc* has not been classified here as a "local line", in accordance with Leach's restrictive focus on males only.

Due to the characteristics that I was given, I assume that the categories 'people of one house' (*mit orak hor* in Santali) and 'people of one rice pot' (*miyad mandi chaturenko* in Ho) are rooted in analogous concepts of relatedness and genealogical depth and refer to corresponding parallel social institutions in this area. I do not argue that these traits reveal sufficient family resemblances to assume *identical* social institutions among Ho and Santal, because apart from recording the pedigree of the locally dispersed segments of Guru Hansda's *gusti* in Tarana, Tatanagar, Rairanpur, and Lucknow (see figure 18), I have not explored this social unit in more depth. Also, Leach's construct of the "local descent group" or "local line" includes the co-resident *males* of three genealogically related generations of members of localized corporate groups of the same clan, but the respective wives are excluded in the formation of a "local line" as Leach defines it. Following that definition, a Santal *gusti* in my understanding cannot be identified as a "local line," since

8 Offering rich ethnographic material, Schulte-Droesch presents *gusti* as a named unit and its members united in common sacrificial action meeting regularly for that purpose. Both characteristics are shown in her book to be relevant identity markers. Both were not confirmed to me by Santal consultants in my research area. Also, those Santal rituals such as *sohrae*, *magh*, and the cattle ritual (*uri: bonga*) that I participated in, were rituals at the level of the hamlet and not restricted to the boundaries as marked by membership in a specific *gusti*. Neither was a name for the particular *gusti* offered to me nor a narrative about the name's origin as Schulte-Droesch reports from East Singhbhum. For the Ho, names and myths about the origin of the names (see chapter 4) are assigned to those *categories* that I have called *subclans* (see chapter 3), while the corporate *group* of people united within an *mmc* remains unnamed. Schulte-Droesch presents *gusti* as both a group and a category.

women would be excluded. Rather, *gusti* as it was explained to me can possibly be identified with the Ho's *mmc* in that married women and unmarried daughters are included.

Plate 5: A Santal house for 'the people of the house' (*orak hor*)

Orak hor *constitute one segment within a larger corporate social unit called* gusti *or 'the people of one house' (*mit orak hor*).*

The physical house in its social environment

Guru lives with his wife and two sons in a fairly large mud house of about a hundred square metres (twenty metres long, five metres wide; see plate 27) in a Santal hamlet which is part of the village of Tarana near Jamda.[9] The house was built by Guru's grandfather Antu. It opens north into a courtyard (*racha:*) which is approximately the same size as the house and is fenced in (*bakai*) towards the road. Typically, houses and courtyards behind the houses are shaded and sheltered by huge trees, mainly tamarind trees (*jojo daru*), mango trees (*uli daru*), and village bamboo (*hatu mad*). Running water is supplied twice a day for an hour via pipes for those who pay for the installation. The pipe can be spotted in plate 27 at the foot of the lush green bushes. In addition, a well offers unlimited water to all and, for women, the possibility to exchange news and discuss relevant matters.

Like most other work related to building, repairing, renovating, and decorating a Santal house (except for making tiles and roofing the house), building fences is a job done by women. Social life is centred in the courtyard: it is here where guests are welcomed, children play, and meals are prepared and eaten, with people often eating separately from each other. Paddy is boiled (*tiki baba*) on one of several hearths and spread on the ground to dry (*tasi*) before being husked (*run*). Chicks are continuously and patiently scolded (*simko har*) when they eat more than their share of the paddy. In the evening, at least in the dry season, Santal like to socialize and relax over a bowl or more of rice-beer while sitting in the courtyard or on the *pindigi*, a kind of roofed veranda running around Santal (and Ho) houses (see plate 28). At night in the dry season, men more often than women or children sleep outside in the courtyard beneath the starry sky. Some have a mosquito net and use it as such. The courtyard is brushed immaculately clean at dawn and regularly purified with a mixture of cow dung and water (*guri:*). While the muezzin is heard at 5:00 a.m. sharp, it is usually a few minutes later that the people of the house (*orak hor*) will wake to the sound of the broom as the female head of the household (*owa:rini:*) begins to sweep.

9 For locations see chapter 2, maps 5 and 6.

Opposite the long side of the house and enclosing the courtyard is the cattle shed. It is used to house a pair of bullocks and plenty of chickens and as a storage room for bicycles and rope beds (*karkom*), which are offered to all visitors dropping by and which otherwise accommodate drying vegetables and dishes and people taking a nap. The cattle shed also stores sacks filled with differently coloured soil. In the company of a group of women from Santal Sai, Guru's wife has carried these sacks home on her head (*dupil*) from various distant parts of the jungle. Such an expedition may take up to three days. When the women return they are giggling, gossiping, and singing – and they are physically exhausted. My *kimin* would not get up for two or three days, lying as if in a coma and in between complaining about a severe headache. But, of course, she – and the other women – would go again. I could neither move nor lift any of the sacks, not even a tiny bit. Going to the jungle for this purpose is usually done every or every second year to have the houses regularly repaired and beautified before *magh*, which is the Santal equivalent of the Ho's *mage* feast. Sometimes, the layers of many years covering the walls of a house are knocked off completely before a new coating made manually from pulverized mud and water is applied and painted anew, often in an utterly different fashion. As with Ho houses, this work is done exclusively by women. But while Ho houses are as solid as Santal houses, they look rather plain and uniform from outside. The outside of the main part of the house is usually coloured white with black around the bottom, and sophisticated patterns show perhaps on the floor inside the house, if at all. In contrast, Santal women are known for their skill and creativity in ornamenting the outside walls of their houses, turning them into idiosyncratic handmade masterpieces.

Plate 6: Paying tribute to female Santal skills

*A house where former exterior layers have been knocked off completely in order to plaster the walls anew (1). Soil is manually pulverized by working it through a sieve before mixing it with water and kneading it into a smooth material (2). Before the veranda (*pindigi*) is coloured, it is plastered (*jalom*) and straightened with smooth wet mud (3). A Santal house worked on without any mechanical assistance to obtain the dead straight lines (4). Various patterns and designs handmade by Santal women (5–8.) A typical Ho house with white, unpatterned, windowless walls, a dark-coloured and fully roofed veranda, and burial stones in the courtyard (9).*

Behind the cattle shed is the threshing floor (*kolom*), which out of respect for the rice mother (*baba enga*) may never be entered with shoes on, and an attached garden. The *kolom* is about the size of the courtyard. This was large enough in 2009 to store the paddy stacks piled up there waiting to be threshed (*hasa*). The harvest was so rich that it lasted for almost two years, which was most welcome, as in 2010, due to a severe drought in the region, the harvest was poor.

The house itself has one undivided, roofed living space, with the *bhitar*, the sacred corner, in the east, not separated from the rest of the large room by a wall as the Ho's *adin* is. Here the valuables of the people of the house are stored, and attention is paid to the forefathers. Attached to the house are another two rooms sheltered by the same roof. The three-roomed house is part of a compound

with three other equally large houses right adjacent to Guru's where three of his younger brothers and their families are living. Their houses are built around the three sides of another courtyard that the human and animal members of the three houses share and that opens on the west, on its fourth side, behind another threshing floor, towards the rice fields, the grazing grounds for the cattle, and the hills.

Diku paiti *(government jobs)*

The dirt road in front of Guru's house runs through the hamlet from north to south. It was built only in 2008. A new government scheme had offered work related to building roads through the villages. Guru was one of the contractors. His work was *jagar paiti* (talking work) and getting the labour force organized. For his wife and other women of the hamlet, it was hard physical labour and paid work which was done in groups for a few hours (*nala paiti*) every day. After a day's or a week's labour, women were paid in cash according to the time or working hours needed to complete the work. Only since 2016 have things changed. Day labourers are now paid according to the volume (*tika paiti*) of heavy soil dug out, irrespective of the time they need to do that. One person is supposed to be able to earn 226 rupees in eight hours by digging a ten-by-ten-foot square to a depth of 7.5 inches. This is classified as unskilled labour offered to BPL people in the region for a hundred days per year. Relatively speaking, the pay as such is not too bad, considering that strong young male persons are used to working for as little as 50 rupees a day, despite the official minimum wage being 75 rupees for unskilled labour and 150 rupees for skilled labour. Throughout all my years of fieldwork, I saw young men waiting next to the road between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m. to be picked up by some lorry and driven to some unknown building site and some unknown boss. By 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. they would be transported back and receive their day's pay. This is referred to as *nala asul* (to support, e.g., one's family by day labour). Maybe they would work somewhere else for someone else the next day and be paid by yet another *diku* employer: alienated capitalist wage labour (*nala paiti*) trespassing on tribal terrain.[10] But at least they were paid for the work they did, and this on the very day itself.

So, while the idea of earning some extra money was generally welcome, the conditions since 2016, euphemistically characterized as modernization, were not, for two reasons: while government contractors preferred to employ single persons to work for eight hours a day, tribal people preferred to work no more than two to three hours a day and in groups, especially at the time of harvest, but also when the harvest work was completed. On the whole, though, contractors – usually *diku* people from outside – were quite unprepared to offer or allow such part-time jobs. In any case,

10 *Nala paiti* is to be distinguished from the concept *achu* (to employ someone to do some work). My *kimin's* neighbour's work who produces the soil to repair the house and who plasters the walls with it (as shown in plate 28/ 2nd photo) falls in the category *achu.* In exchange for her work she will not be given money. She will be reciprocated in kind such as a pair of earrings (for doing the *pindigi)* or a saree (for plastering the courtyard - *jalom*). Both *nala* and *achu* are concepts related to work done *for others* outside one's *mmc, gusti, hagako, alerenko*.

Within these social units, notions of *asul* (to help, to support) or *denga* (help) prevail. When in the preparation of *mage* and *ba porob* my *kaki-ma* from Boja Sai had no *ramba* (sacrificial pulse) it would not do to buy this from the local market. As the ancestors to whom *ramba* is offered in sacrifice would expect to be served pulses that have grown on ancestral ground the arrangement of *denga em* (help) in this case was as follows: my *kaki-ma* was given the necessary amount of pulses by someone *within* her *mmc* and in exchange spent a day's work harvesting one of that person's rice fields (see Prologue). *Asul* (to help, to support) was explained to me in yet another context among members of the same *mmc*: some of Sadurgon's chicken had caught some disease, and my *kaki-ma* offered to shelter those not yet infected by it. The food for his chicken was *chauli* (husked, home-grown paddy) and supplied by S.

modernization was accompanied by bureaucracy. Henceforth, people had to submit a written application to be given work. When eventually their application was considered, after several weeks or more, the agricultural season and cultivation work might have begun, leaving no spare time to do extra work for extra money. Also, since 2016 wages are no longer paid in cash but transferred into individual accounts set up for that purpose in a bank in Jamda. While nobody offered positive feedback concerning this practice, many deplored its demoralizing effect. People have access to their accounts only two days a week. It not too seldom happens, I was told, that people have to queue up and wait long hours, only to find the counter closed for the rest of the day when it was their turn or closing down for the clerk's extended lunch break. On such days, then, people will not receive their salary for work already done, and they will also miss out on another day's work. People are utterly frustrated by this experience that they are exposed to without their consent. Some complained that in March they were still waiting for their pay earned in January.

The structure of a Santal gusti

The data concerning the 'people of one house' (*gusti/ mit orak hor*) as arranged in figure 18 were collected and checked in collaboration with Guru and counterchecked with Dhano's eldest son Ragu (both generation 0), who assisted his aged father in the rituals performed at the household level. Since in some of these rituals the names of the dead members of the *gusti* are regularly called out, he seemed a most reliable source, whereas I have never observed Guru involved in performing any ritual.

Generation +3: Bima is recognized by the male persons of Guru's generation (0) as their common forefather. He is said to have acquired but not cleared in his lifetime the cultivable land in Tarana that they cultivate today. At that time Ho people had been in the area for a long time, were recognized as constituting the dominant category there, and in terms of precedence enjoyed a high status as first settlers (*munu: hoko*). Santal people in the region of research readily subscribe to that assumption (see chapter 1).

Bima had three sons and two daughters, all of whom are remembered by name. No further information is given about Bima's brother Dhano, whose name is passed down in every alternate generation. The same logic applies in the case of Bima (+3), whose name was given to Guru's father (+1) and the elder of Guru's two sons (-1). His second son (-1) was given the name of the boy's mother's father (+1).[11] Thus alternating generations become identified by the names of forefathers being repeated systematically. Bima's elder daughter died unmarried. She thus remains a member of her father's *gusti* and is remembered in ritual. Her younger sister married. As a consequence, she adopted her husband's *gusti* and left her natal one. Although this happened two generations ago, as seen from generation 0, she is remembered by name in the pedigree, as is the village that she married into. Bima's youngest son K. was married but had no children. As mentioned above, the chart is incomplete in some respects. Daughter's names were always given, while wives' names almost as a rule were not. As wives, they belong to their husbands' *gusti* and, if fully married at death, will be remembered in rituals at the household level. Their namelessness perhaps indicates that they are collectively referred to and that only men are named in ritual. At least, this is the case among the Ho (Deeney 2008: 41; Reichel 2009: 91). On the other hand, the

11 Judging from those Ho and Santal pedigrees that I took in the field I can confirm as a rule that a first son is given the name of his FF. That the second son is named after his MF is a matter of negotiation I was told.

chart is also ‘overcomplete’ in other respects, as in terms of *gusti* one of Bima’s daughters would no longer be reckoned a member *after* her marriage.

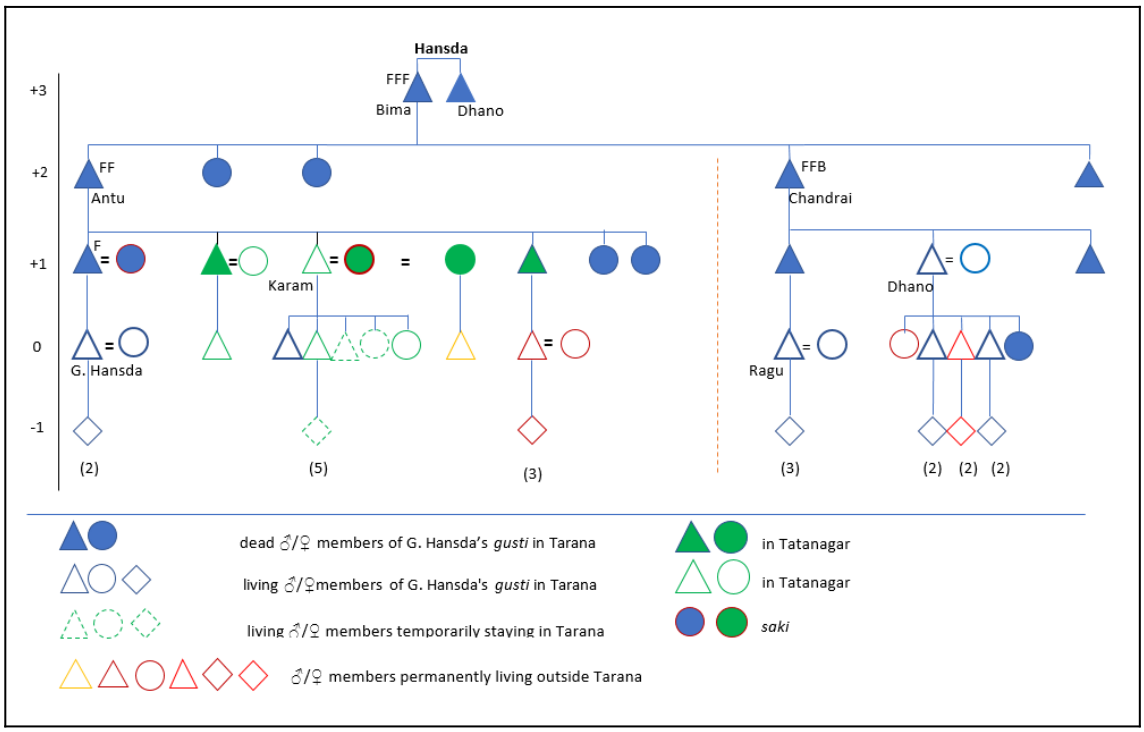

Figure 2: G. Hansda’s *gusti*

Generation +2: Guru's grandfather Antu (FF) was the eldest of the three brothers. Within the *gusti* seniority is passed down the generations as a structuring principle ordering the relations among its male members. As a consequence, Guru's father Bima (F) is considered elder brother (*bau*) to his three younger brothers and also to Chandrai’s (FFB) three sons. Following the same logic of interrelatedness to this day, Guru is reckoned elder brother (*bau*) to all (ten) male persons of his *gusti* within his generation (0), irrespective of their absolute ages, of which they are not aware.

Following the death of their youngest brother, Antu (FF) and Chandrai (FFB) split up the land that they had inherited from their father Bima. While ritual interaction continued, economic collaboration between the two sides ended (indicated by the vertical orange line), although the ‘brothers’ kept living right next to each other in Tarana. In the process of splitting up the land Antu (FF) was left with twenty-seven acres which he eventually divided into four shares (*hatin*) for his four sons (+1), without the division being officially registered by the local *panchayat* to this day. Registration is usually avoided in order to continue jointly cultivating the land corporately. Proceeding like this reflects a key feature of Santal and Ho people’s relation to their land to the extent that the term ‘brothers’ (Ho: *hagako*; Santali: *alerenko*) in certain contexts may become coterminous with *mid ote hapatinrenko* (the people so related that if one of them dies, the land will be divided among the others) and *mid mayom hapatinko* (those who reciprocally share one blood). These are Ho terms. The infix *-pa-* in *ha-pa-tinko* expresses mutuality and reciprocity. The concept implied in these terms has been elaborated for Ho people in chapter 3, and in the research area it is talked about by Santal people discussing Santal affairs by resorting to the identical Ho expressions.

Generation +1: In the generation of Guru's father (F) economic collaboration between the two sides (Antu and Chandrai) had come to an end, but, of course, it continued among Antu's sons and among Chandrai's sons. Each side had its own threshing floor (*kolom*) and its separate hearths.

Chandrai's three sons remained in Tarana and cultivated their respective shares of land corporately. Dhano (of generation +1) and his wife live in their eldest son's house. They are both actively involved in the economic activities of the household. Dhano is also respected by Guru from the other side as the eldest "who knows all," thus highlighting the principle of seniority as a superior value linking the two sides of the pedigree in the absence of economic collaboration. As the only brother in his generation living in Tarana and in the absence of Karam (green triangle, +1), who lives in Tata, Dhano is in charge of performing the rituals at the household level. Whenever he is not available or too ill, his eldest son replaces him as ritual guide. Apart from this, Dhano's son is a much-requested shaman (*dewa*). In the second *saki* ceremony, which took place in Tarana and which was argued in chapter 6 to primarily be a female affair, it was Dhano's wife Salgae who was the female witness and who led me through the ceremony. She is the eldest member of the *gusti* alive in Tarana. Before she became active in her role as witness, she made sure that I understood that she was *dai* (older sister/woman) to me, and I *mai* (young girl) to her. It was the distinction in relative age that mattered, not the absolute age difference, with her being perhaps a little over sixty, and me a little under sixty. As this shows, the principle of seniority contributes to structuring social relations as well as ritual life within the *gusti* and beyond tribal boundaries.

On Antu's (FF) side after splitting up the land, things developed quite differently for his offspring in generation +1, his four sons and two daughters. For reasons not further explained, Guru's father (+1) made a living by working in the steel plant in Rourkela, where Guru was born. He grew up as an only son and received his education at St. Xavier's High School in Lupungutu near Chaibasa.[12] Three of his father's brothers migrated to Jamshedpur, today Tatanagar, and remained there (green triangles in figure 18). Two of them died there. Karam (+1) continues to live in Tatanagar, as do two of his sons and one unmarried daughter. One of Guru's father's younger sisters (+1) married virilocally but is remembered by name and village. She left the *gusti*, as Santal cultural logic has it, and is buried in her husband's territory. Sauri, his father's other younger sister, remained unmarried. She is *hatom* (FyZ) to Guru, but Santal and Ho people in the region prefer the term *ji* (Ho) or *jhi* (Santali) instead of *hatom*.

Since her four elder brothers were in Rourkela and Tatanagar and her elder sister married in Ulidih, Sauri remained in Tarana and took care of everything. She must have been an amazing woman. Guru raves even today about the efficiency of his *jhi*. She looked after Guru's severely ill mother, the house, the animals, and those twenty-seven acres of land that though assigned to four brothers had remained undivided and needed to be cultivated. Today someone owning and cultivating twenty acres or more is considered a rich person, while someone owning ten acres is said to have sufficient land, and someone who has five or fewer acres is considered poor. So Sauri had plenty of land and plenty of work. Obviously, she managed it extremely well until she died. She is buried in the shade of a tree near a tank close to the fields she cultivated. Guru had difficulty finding the burial stone commemorating her, as it is inconspicuously small and hardly visible – quite unlike the Ho's eye-catching flat burial stones. The sociality of the Ho's dead, lived out inside the *adin*, is permanently

12 St. Xavier addresses tribal children and is run by the Jesuits. Deeney (see chapter 2) was one of Guru's teachers and headmaster for seven years.

present, as are the *sasan diri* (burial stones) collectively covering the ground of the courtyard or the burial site.

Karam (+1) from Tata had two wives. His first wife – elder sister to his second wife – turned out to have been *saki* to Guru's mother (blue and green circles, both red-rimmed), by identification also to me, and to my Ho *saki* from Pathan Sai (see chapter 6). Karam has addressed me as *saki* ever since we first met – instead of *hili* (eBW), which constitutes another logical option. Obviously, the *saki* relation (and its concept of implied equality?) ranks superior.

Generation 0: After his *jhi*'s (FyZ) death in Tarana, with his father's three younger brothers (FyB, *kaka*) living in Tatanagar, Guru decided to settle in Tarana, get married there, and take over. Fluent in English, Hindi, Odiya, Ho, and Santali and with some knowledge of Sanskrit and Pali, he left his teaching job in Rourkela after a history of humiliations that he was exposed to as a tribal person. This was an experience that he has never forgotten.

In his generation (0) and within his *gusti* Guru is elder brother (*bau*) to all of his five *kaka*'s (FyB) sons. On his or rather his grandfather Antu's side of figure 18 they are the individuals identified as living in Tata, in Chaibasa (orange-rimmed triangle), and in Rairanpur (red-rimmed triangle/circle), leaving no male person his age to support him in getting the cultivation work done. For this reason, one of Karam's (+1) sons decided in 2015 to move from Tata to Tarana for good (blue-rimmed triangle). Physically unfit to do hard manual labour and work in the fields due to illness, he is eager to offer support and be useful to his people. He occasionally works as a local contractor and is an efficient organizer. He was able to buy a tractor which may be hired out by others in the vicinity. The subsidies that he was entitled to as a BPL person, though, were cancelled, as happens to everybody who owns any kind of a four-wheeled vehicle (or a motorbike or a *pakka* house with three or more rooms).

The main work in the fields, however, was done by one of his brothers and his unmarried sister (green triangle and circle, dotted rim). Over the years they were always there for long periods until the work was done: helping in the house with the cooking, getting firewood from the jungle, and busy with the rice-related work at home and in the fields during the harvesting and the sowing season. These two were extremely hardworking, dynamic, and very pleasant people indeed.

Once, after a hard day's work in the fields, Ch. (green triangle, dotted rim) collapsed and fell into a coma-like state, in which he remained for two continuous days (*goe: anjed* - to become unconscious). For long periods, his body was rigid. He did not wake up once in this time and did not respond to any address from outside. This passive state was interrupted by energetic phases in which he was wildly delirious, mumbling incomprehensibly, screaming as if he was fighting his way through a different world. With his eyes wide open and yet not reacting to anything around him, he murmured mantras in tone and intonation quite similar to those sung by the ritual guide (Santali: *naeke*) and his men during the village festivals in the sacred grove. While Guru could not have cared less, it fell to Ch.'s *hili* (eBW), Guru's wife, to keep vigil at the side of her *iril* (HyB) day and night. As mentioned above, the *hili-iril* relation is a joking relationship.[13] She shook him, sang to him, shouted at him, whispered to him, told him stories and jokes, caressed his face, threw water

13 see above chapters 3,5,6. Guru reported another situation in which his wife had fallen victim to continued sexual harassment by a co-villager with whom she was in a (classificatory) *iril-hili* relation. Guru commented that the joking character of this relation may have contributed to bringing about the problematic situation. This judgment hints at the possibility that the *iril-hili* relation as such is one that is not free of sexual connotations and possibly even allowing for or even inviting sexual behaviour.

on him, slapped his cheeks repeatedly and fiercely, massaged his feet, legs, and arms intensely and patiently, covered him with a blanket, and unsuccessfully offered him food and water. After two long days, he returned to his senses, got up from his bed, and immediately started joking with his *hili* as before.[14] She welcomed him back into life by scrutinizing his head closely, delousing him (*siku*) skilfully, and expertly pulling out single white hairs from his otherwise thick black hair. He then resumed work as intensely as before his collapse. While I was amazed at the suddenness of both collapse and recovery in this and other cases, nobody else was.

On Chandrai's (+2) side there are – apart from Dhano and his wife (+1) – four brothers (generation 0), one of whom lives permanently in Lucknow and only very seldom comes for a visit (Chandrai, red-rimmed triangle). But he is known to have two sons and be married to a woman of the Soren *paris/kili*. The other three brothers and Dhano constitute an active branch of economic and ritual interaction, organizing their collaboration independently of Guru's side. They live with their families in the complex of three houses immediately adjacent to Guru's house, as mentioned at the outset of this section.

When I first met Guru in 2006, I was impressed by the beauty and size of his house and the extent of the cultivable land that I thought was assigned to him. He was one of the few in the hamlet to grow basmati, which was sold in the market for a good price, as he emphasized. He could even afford to refuse an offer by the mobile-phone company BSNL, which was interested in acquiring a plot of land in order to place a cell tower there. At that time, I did not understand why he was classed as poor and belonged to the category BPL. Only when I began collecting data about Guru Hansda's *gusti* in and after 2010 did things begin to connect. I learnt that those undivided twenty-seven acres were administered and managed by Guru, not owned by him. Instead, they were assigned to Guru's father's three brothers (+1) and their offspring (generation 0), independent of their physical absence from Tarana.

The same holds true for the 'house' in a physical and social sense. I learnt that the offspring of his father's three brothers and Karam as the only living person in that generation (+1) on Antu's side are entitled to use the house whenever they want, live there for good and may claim access to the land and its products. Guru, fond of dramatizing things, theatrically emphasized that his father's brothers' six sons and their wives and children would not even have to ask beforehand if they decided to move to Tarana! From one day to the next, they can come and stay and stay on! Wouldn't the place be totally cramped then? Eventually, in fact, in 2010, the male representatives of the village community jointly decided in one of their nightly meetings on the *akara* (the village's meeting and dancing ground) to give priority to extended living space to be attached to Guru's house should government money be offered to the community of Santal Sai to be spent for that purpose.[15]

So the corporate ownership of the 'house' constitutes a joint venture indeed, related to a multitude of people – according to figure 18, more than twenty individuals on Antu's side. As a social unit within Guru Hansda's *gusti*, it is composed of the four distinct 'houses' of Guru's father and his father's three brothers. This division of the unit is known in the hamlet, recognized, recollected, and

14 Their enjoying each other's company so outspokenly and in public without any attempt at hiding its intimate character encouraged me to enquire Guru how he felt about his wife joking so intensely and continuously with her *iril*. Well, it is an *iril-hili* relationship, he answered, so what can one do?

15 This extension was attached to the front of the house in 2012 occupying that space that had formerly sheltered the cattle by a thatched roof (see plate 27). In 2016, another room was to be attached to the back side of the house looking west.

publicly confirmed in ritual at village level. On the occasion of the cattle sacrifice (*uri: bonga*)[16] the sacrificial meat of one cow and one ox is redistributed in equal shares to the exact number of Santal 'houses' in the hamlet, thus reproducing the Santal community of Santal Sai in its entirety and equalizing in ritual its component elements: the ritual guide (*naeke*), the secular headman (*majhi*), and the cultivators and landowners, those present and those absent. The leaf cups containing an identical number of pieces of sacrificial raw meat are examined several times to make sure the number, size, and composition are correct. Guru receives two shares for the two households (*orak hor*, people of the house) that he represents: his own and that of his FyB Karam from Tatanagar (see figure 18 and Schulte-Droesch 2018: 121).

Economic collaboration is strong within Guru's half of his *gusti*, though it does not primarily take the form of corporate fieldwork. Rather, sacks full of husked paddy and firewood are transported to Tata, from where kitchen utensils, a pressure cooker, plastic chairs, and a television set are sent in return. Village bamboo is cut for building purposes and transported to Rairanpur by those of the *gusti* who permanently live there, which is reciprocated in kind by clothes for the children staying in Tarana. A major part of the cultivation work is done in Tarana by family members coming temporarily from Tata for that purpose, but they cannot manage it all by themselves. Guru never lifted a finger once. Those who were aware of this complained, at the same time that – as younger brothers – they were not in a position to give orders to an elder brother. Additional helpers needed to be recruited (*achu* - to employ) to do the cultivation work, for which they were paid from the money received by selling paddy and vegetables in the local markets and by the occasional paperwork that Guru was asked to help with. In 2010, males could expect to receive 70 rupees a day for work done in the fields, women 50. For two oxen needed to plough the soil and the manpower to see the work done, 120 rupees was the price for four hours.

The young children of generation -1 from Tata live in Tarana either permanently or for long periods. Some attend classes in the local school or stay in the hostel until they run off to return home, where they are scolded but never sent back. The fluidity and variability of these arrangements on the compound, involving more than ten active young children and notionally and economically connecting people from several dispersed localities, account for the situation which initially seemed so chaotic and nontransparent to me. Apart from those who came to visit and stayed for extended chats in the daytime, up to eight persons and often more quite regularly lived, worked, ate, and stayed overnight at Guru's place, though not always the same persons.

On Guru's FFB's side of the *gusti*, economic collaboration was structurally not too dissimilar in that most of the crop and soil cultivation and animal husbandry was managed by Dhano's eldest son, Dhano himself, and their competent wives only, while Ragu was busy for the larger part of the day doing semiskilled work on a construction site, and Dhano's younger son Bisa did unskilled work as a messenger. As a result, complementary paid labour was a regular mandatory feature to cope with the amount of cultivation work, although both Ragu and Bisa were busy in the fields, too, as soon as they returned home from their wage labour.

The unity of the *gusti* as depicted in figure 18 is primarily tied to and rooted in the corporately owned land in Santal Sai and comes alive in ritual at the household level, performed by Dhano as

16 In more than ten years that I spent in the area I have been able to observe the cattle *bonga* only once at full moon in December 2009. Informants were quite hesitant to pass on any knowledge concerning this specific ritual which was surrounded by an air of conspiracy. It was agreed that it was considered illegal and should the police find out about a cow and an ox battered to death by two men whose names were kept a secret all the men of the hamlet would be severely punished.

the eldest in his role as ritual guide or by his son. Among Ho people I have nowhere come across a situation characterized to such a degree by outsourcing cultivation work to paid labour (*nala paiti* - work for wages) as a rule. In the five localities where I did fieldwork (Manbir, Boja Sai, Gara Sai, Pathan Sai, and Jamda; see maps 4 and 5), Ho landowners were fully involved in corporate cultivation work on their own fields and those of the localized segment within their *mmc* or in their at times large gardens.[17]

Relationship terms and behaviour

In the previous section, aspects of a *hili-iril* (eBW-HyB) relation were examined in terms of its character as a joking relation between a woman and a man and the empirical behaviour related to it. Next, two more same-sex relationships within Guru's domestic environment will be looked into. The *dada-undi* and the self-reciprocal *teya* relations are between two male individuals, the first nonjoking in character, the second joking, although the same two persons are concerned. The final relationship to be highlighted here is a respect relation between two females, for which I will discuss the notion of respect and how it affects the relationship.

dada *(eB)*–teya *(eZH)*

Guru reported an empirical situation illustrating how specific relationship terms may become an issue of negotiation between two male persons of the same generation.
Guru grew up in a neighbourhood where he had become used to addressing a girl of his generation as his elder sister (*dai*, eZ). He was her younger brother (*undi* - yB). A *dai-undi* relation is typically one within the same generation, and Santal people, just like Ho people in the area, prefer the term *dai* instead of *aji*. When eventually the girl married a man of the Hansda clan, the question arose for the two men of how to define and verbalize the potential and the risks implied in the relation between them which had come into existence as a result of the marriage. They saw two options. One was to establish a reciprocal *teya* relation (eZH-WyB), which is a joking relationship. The other option was a *dada-undi* (eB-yB) relationship. In the *dada-undi* construction Guru would maintain the principle of seniority by addressing his elder sister's husband after her marriage as *dada*. Obviously, seniority is considered a relevant element. Also, since the husband was from the Hansda clan, Guru felt towards him as a 'brother' in the first place, more precisely as an elder brother, as he would address all male Santal of his generation as his younger or elder 'brothers'. Thus the definition of the relationship between the two males became a matter of negotiation.

His *dada-teya* then suggested a solution that Guru Hansda agreed to. When he met his elder sister (*dai*) and her husband at his *dai*'s (natal) place, they would address each other reciprocally as *teya* (eZH-WyB). When they met at the husband's place, Guru would address his eZH as *dada*, which is often preferred to using the term *bau* with the same meaning (eB). Hence, as the couple would live at the husband's place, in line with Santal women marrying virilocally, Guru would address his eZH as *dada* most of the time.

The explanation given was as follows: as *dada* his eZH would feel secure and would not have to expect any complications (*muskil* – difficult; difficulty; to meet difficulties). No risk was to be feared, and he would be safe from any unexpected demands. As *dada* he could rely on being paid

17 G. Bage, *munda* in Manbir, spent a lot of time in his garden where he was tending 50 lemon trees.

respect. A reciprocal *teya* relation, however, is fundamentally different in the behaviour implied. A *teya* relation is a joking relation. As a result, despite its containing an element of seniority, seniority does not constitute the determining feature, as the age distinction within this particular relation is equalized. While the joking becomes the dominant characteristic, such a relation is about more than just having fun or jesting with each other (*argae* - a jest; to jest; joke; *argae: apargae* - mutual jesting; a joking relationship).[18] A *teya* relation implies the obligation to comply with any of your *teya*'s demands. A *teya* may feel free to demand just anything, and even if something is demanded in jest, the demand should never be refused. This is the obligation implied in the relation, which contributes to its erratic character, as one never knows what one may be jokingly asked to give. Hence, in subtle ways a *teya* relation is not free of risks. It may involve social obligations and formal requirements that cannot be clearly defined in advance. Guru gave a concrete and yet unspecific example from his own experience to illustrate the point:

In his wife's natal village, all those of his generation to whom his wife was and remains after marriage related as elder sister (*dai*) have reciprocally become related to him as *teya*. This otherwise dormant relationship is brought to life on each visit that Guru and his wife pay to her parents in Bagrai Sai (see map 5). This happens not infrequently, as Santal and Ho people tend to entertain and maintain close relations between a wife and her parents also after marriage. On any such visit to his in-laws' place, something that as a rule will attract more in-laws (Santali: *perako*), neighbours, friends, and also his *teya*, one of their demands could be "You have taken / we have given you our sister in marriage; now, please give us your sister." Knowing that he has no sister in the sense of *mid lai:ren* (born of the same mother), they still might make the demand, jokingly, obliging him to look for a classificatory sister in exchange. For that reason, Guru explained, he would never stay late in his wife's village and would leave as early as possible. At home, he would be on safe ground in that respect: no *teya* waiting for him in Santal Sai. *Teya* usually live elsewhere, outside: they are affinal relations acquired via a man's or a woman's elder sisters (who marry outside) or, for a man (only), via his wife's natal hamlet, which is also outside – most of the time.

The *undi-dada* relation as elaborated here is a computable kin relation signalling safe ground,[19] while the reciprocal *teya* relation is a joking relation between affinally related persons, erratic and not risk-free. The examples given show that where choice is possible in terms of terminology, relationships and relationship terms may be negotiated, and flexible solutions may be reached.

hanar *(HM)*–kimin *(SW)*

The relation between a husband's mother, *hanar* (or his elder sister, *aji-hanar*) and her son's wife (or a younger brother's wife), *kimin*, is a respect relation which has been linguistically characterized by expressions such as *man-manatin* (respect; *manatin* - to obey; to observe; to respect; obedience, respect) or *man-mapan* (a generic term for respect, including mutual respect).[20] Neither Ho nor

18 *argae*: is often collocated with *baiyo*: (D. S. Purty, personal communication). *baiyo*: "(passive participial form) with whom something is allowed, e.g. one with whom one has a joking relationship and therefore one with whom one could dance, etc." (Deeney 2005: 24). The passive form of *baiyo:* emphasizes that jesting is an action that is done on you, that happens to you, that cannot be escaped (personal communication with D. S. Purty).
Bouez (1985: 63) instead of *apargae:* gives a pronounced form of jesting as *belen* - "to playfully clown around [e.g. wrestling] with someone. Often used in the recip. *bepelen*" (Deeney 2005: 37) which I have not heard in the context of a joking relation in my research area further north.

19 Tensions arising among 'brothers' due to hierarchically connoted age distinctions have been discussed in chapter 3.

Santal people ever used these abstract nouns in the research area, nor does Bouez, who defines the relation *hanar-kimin* as characterized by “conflit, hostilité” (Bouez 1985: 65).
Conflict and hostility may be inappropriate characteristics in my empirical case, but surely there was a fairly strong note of respect, formality, obedience, and a certain distance involved in the relation between Guru's wife and me, as the two of us were *kimin-hanar* to each other. I was initially quite unaware of the expected behaviour implied in this specific relationship at the time I was given the gift of entering into it. As soon as Guru had decided to become my assistant and my son, his wife became my *kimin*, and I her husband’s mother, *hanar*. Unlike in the *dada-teya* situation above, there was nothing to negotiate in this case, although I tried hard. The structural distance implied in the respect relation had a negative impact on the quality of our daily collaboration in the long run in my understanding and contributed to my looking for another place to stay, although my *kimin* was a very pleasant and active person who had a fine sense of humour. The following scene will illustrate how my wrong and inadequate behaviour as *hanar* kept irritating my *kimin.*

Several times I had asked my *kimin* to take me with her to harvest the basmati paddy (*baba ir* - to reap; to cut with a sickle; to harvest) and to teach me how to do it properly, how to use the sickle (*datarom*), but to no avail. Only when I asked her in what I considered a polite and modest tone why she continuously evaded my offer to assist (*denga em*) did she state a clear position, without any shyness. She was friendly and polite as usual, but also determined. Due to our relation, she explained, it was impossible for her to allow me to work. As *hanar* I should not ask questions, I should not help her, I should not speak to her in a modest tone or in a soft voice. All of this was out of place within a *kimin-hanar* relation. As my *kimin* she was the one to do the work; I as her *hanar* should give the orders, and this in a harsh voice. Her husband’s mother would have done exactly that, and their relationship had been a really good one. She then suggested I begin by practicing the proper tone. I was supposed to order her to do something. I tried hard, several times, yet so reluctantly that my performance must have been awfully poor. It was utterly contrary to my idea of how people should communicate with each other, and my *kimin* was not at all happy with my effort. “You know,” she said, “when you speak in that harsh voice and in that tone, I will become frightened. I will fear you (*boro*). Then I will obey (*manatin*), and I will say to you in a low voice: yes, *ma*.”[21] Guru confirmed that a mother gives orders and sees to it that they are carried out; she does not politely ask. According to Guru, his wife is a good mother to her son, because “he fears her.”

Fear (*boro*) is an element embedded in a more comprehensive and lived concept among Ho and Santal people that in my perception has overall positive connotations within certain relationships involving age differences of one generation, like that between parents and their children. It is considered a necessary element in order to acquire, learn, and internalize a desired behaviour such as obedience or respect and also contributes to gaining knowledge[22] or developing desired insights, such as that it never pays to rebel against the principle of seniority by not obeying one’s elders. When my *kimin* scolded or slapped her sons (six and eight years old), which happened not

20 These terms were given to me by D. S. Purty 2010 (personal communication). Deeney 2005 has the denotations of the terms, but does not translate any of them as respect or avoidance relation.

21 see chapter 6 for a person's soft or low voice as suprasegmental feature and its phonemic quality.

22 *Ada* - to experience; to feel; *adana* is the reflexive form suffixing *-ana* to the verb root *ada* denoting "to experience for oneself, to know" (Deeney 1991: 22; 2002: 77).
Similarly, *eto* carries the meaning "to teach, to know", while the reflexive form *eton* suffixing -n, literally means "to learn" in the sense of "to teach oneself".

infrequently, she was hardly in an angry mood, furious about what they had done or ill-tempered in any way observable to me. She showed the behaviour expected in specific situations, which was explained to me as teaching (*eto*), not as punishing (*saja*) her sons. The contradistinction of teaching and punishing had been explained to me by analogy during *sohrae* (in Ho: *karika*),[23] a feast celebrated in honour of the cattle of the house. On that occasion, during new moon (*mulu:*), a tall wooden post (*kuntu*) was set up in front of Guru's house in the middle of the dirt road (plate 27). Two cows were tied to the post. Before being fed, caressed, and having their horns anointed with oil, they had to pass through an ordeal. They were teased, hit, kicked, and scolded while simultaneously the onlookers cajoled them into walking around the pole in a disciplined way. This the cows initially and forcefully refused to do. They went wild, which was expected, but they could not escape. It was a violent, physical affair which continued until after quite some time the cows gave in and behaved. While observing the cattle trying to break away from the post, those present commented on the scenario agitatedly, confidently, and expertly, as if they were fully aware and in control of the process, its choreography, and its meaning.

Towards the end of this rite, my *kimin* breathed out with a loud sigh[24] and said *na:do adanako* (now they know/understand/have learned). In other comments, I made out repeated expressions such as *patarsin* and *itu-muli*. Deeney defines *patarsin* as “to slap or scold so as to make one smart (physically or in spirit)” (2005: 284) and *itu-muli* (ibid.: 168) as “to train; to discipline (*itu* is used mainly of training an animal [e.g. a bullock for ploughing], figuratively it may be used of training a person; *muli* - ‘straight’ also has a figurative meaning of straightening out someone morally, setting him on a straight path).” *Saja-muli* is yet another term-cum-concept denoting “by punishing to straighten someone out (correct someone’s behaviour)” (ibid.: 323). These terms, I argue, linguistically coincide with Ho and Santal people’s convictions and attitudes when interacting within a known and unquestioned concept. In this, the focus is on the desired result. The means to achieve this result and people’s unshaken confidence in their ability to bring it about are not questioned.[25]

Runaway marriage

In a runaway marriage you run away, but you don’t just run anywhere! There are steps to follow, rules to observe, and this in a strict order!

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23 *Sohrae* is a Santal feast. It is known to Ho people, but not celebrated by them. In the research area, however, *karika-sorae* was celebrated in Jamda by the (dominant) *Bage kili* of the Ho community there– though during full moon (*ponai*).

24 This sigh of relief in my interpretation relates to the fact that the ritual or some superior order had been obeyed (*bonga manatin*) rather than the empirical people responsible for the set-up of the arrangement. When at the end of the first *saki* ceremony I was oiling my *saki*'s legs, arms, and hair my *saki* gave a similarly pronounced sigh of relief signalling: all is well now, the right thing has been done.

25 I will refrain here from commenting on the link between slapping, teasing, and provoking a child (or animal) and the assumption of being able to correct, 'straightening out' or improve someone's behaviour that way. In my perhaps limited (Western) insight of matters psychological or psychiatric this comes close to what is conventionally and critically classed as *double bind*. The awareness that the Ho's language accommodates this very link or concept in its vocabulary positively and is no biased interpretation arbitrarily impressed from outside rather came as a shock to me.
In the absence of the "impossible fiction of the idea of a universal child" (Montgomery 2009: 1) an analysis of concepts coming to the fore in Ho 'childhood' within a comprehensive and comparative Anthropology of Childhood (Lancy 2008) will surely be worth considering in depth. The essay on *Concepts of Children and Childhood* (*see* appendix) is my preliminary attempt at tracing notions and concepts of young Ho persons guided towards maturity in the sociocultural context of tribal Middle India.

(G. Hansda when discussing with me a form of marriage, like his own, in which the couple elopes by mutual consent; Tarana, Odisha, 2016)

We have grown a flower. We have watered it. We have given it attention. So now that it is in blossom, we surely want a price for it when we give it to you.
(Ch. Purty commencing in the Ho's veiled language the bridewealth negotiations during a fully arranged marriage, bapala andi, *in which he mediated the demands of the bridal side. This formalized negotiation is absent in a runaway marriage.)*

There are various ways of getting married that are distinguished in the research area by Ho and Santal alike, as follows: *Bapala andi* is a fully arranged marriage including bridewealth (*gonon*) to be given to the bride's side, a mediator or go-between (*dutam*), preliminary arrangements and activities, and a feast usually held at the house of the groom. *Diku andi* is an arranged marriage held at the bride's house and officiated by a Brahmin. *Sasan andi* is a marriage that comes about by a boy putting a wet *sasan* mixture on a girl, thus claiming her as his wife. *Sasan andi* is the only way of getting married that I never observed, but in 2012 I came across *opor-tipi:* (marriage by capture; reciprocal of *or-ti:* - to pull by the hand), which refers to a boy bringing a girl to his village without her previous consent. Like many other Ho and Santal persons' empirical marriages, Guru's marriage was an elopement by mutual consent, more commonly referred to as *nir andi* (runaway marriage) than as *kepeya andi* (*keya* - to call or invite; *kepeya,* reciprocal - to call and invite one another), which is an expression that Deeney provides.[26]
The following report sheds light on a very brief moment extracted from the drawn-out process of getting married. It is about Guru engineering the initial steps, the few hours at night of physically abducting his wife and formally introducing her into the social web of his village. It is in large part Guru's narration and presented from his perspective. From other runaway marriages that I was lucky enough to participate in and observe (this step never takes more than a night and is never announced beforehand), I can confirm the standardized structure that comes to the fore in Guru's presentation. Guru eloped with his wife in 1996 (his information), and the final step in order to be recognized as a fully married couple was performed in 2009 (my participant observation).[27]

When Guru decided to leave Rourkela (see above), settle in Santal Sai, and find a wife there, his father had already died, and his mother was seriously ill, although she was well enough to be the first to be informed by her son about his wish to marry and whom, to give him permission to go ahead by himself, and to eventually welcome his wife and introduce her into the secular and ritual affairs of the house. So he had to do without the parental support a Santal or Ho may usually rely on when intent on getting married.

The second person to be informed about the girl and his plan of eloping with her was his *nana buri*, a classificatory grandmother with whom he entertained a joking relationship. She lived not too far away from his future wife's parents' house and in the same hamlet. She was prepared to conspire with him. He bribed her, he said, by promising her a *saree* and a *sim* (chicken) if she complied with his request to act as his matchmaker (*dutam*), which she did. He talked his idea over with her on a

26 *Kepeya* - "of a man and woman, to arrange a marriage by mutual consent (a 'love-marriage'); to elope" (Deeney 2005: 202). Although I have no statistical data on the matter those who volunteered to talk about their run-away marriages - always with a smile in their faces - conveyed the impression that this kind of marriage is quite common and, in their perception, the most numerous.

27 In fact, Guru requested me (as his mother) to be in charge of the final ceremony, as his own mother had died in the meantime. This was my duty, I was told (and not asked politely).

Thursday and announced his planned elopement for two days later. In the meantime, she was supposed to think things over, get in touch with his future wife, make the necessary arrangements, and organize and prepare extra food for Saturday evening.

An appointment was arranged for Saturday evening in his future wife's natal hamlet, but not at her parents' house. The *dutam* surprised him by suggesting to him to elope not with his prospective wife but instead with her elder sister, who was to be married first.[28] He refused and insisted, he said, on his original choice, knowing that this was absolutely beyond the pale. This news was then broken to his future wife. Guru had to wait for four endless hours, as he melodramatically complained. The worst hours in his life! He was accompanied by Ragu, eldest son of Dhano (see figure 18).[29] His future wife remained inside the house to negotiate and contemplate the situation with her two girlfriends and the *dutam.* She finally agreed to the elopement and to accompany her husband-to-be to his house in Santal Sai. It was one o'clock in the morning. Her parents were not informed. "I have stolen my wife, so it was a case of theft (*kumbu* - to steal; a thief; theft). And the proper time for thieves to move around is the night," Guru said, and he again emphasized, "It took her four hours to consent to being stolen!"

Tellingly, a jeep had been hired beforehand, which took the group to Santal Sai: Guru, his one-man escort, the mediator, his bride and her two friends, and the driver. From the very beginning, this type of getting married also revealed a structured and collective character. The bride had her head completely covered by a *saree*. She had to stay in the courtyard and wait. She was not allowed to enter the house. The headman of Santal Sai, the *majhi*, was to be informed first about the elopement. The *majhi* then requested two of his helpers (*dakuwakin*)[30] to immediately inform the villagers, as is their duty, also in the middle of the night. Shortly afterwards, the villagers assembled in the courtyard of the house, where Guru and his mother lived. Sitting informally on the ground of the courtyard, men were offered cigarettes and tobacco. The first person to be served was, of course, the *majhi*. Obviously, this nighttime meeting was of great significance and an indispensable part of the script dictating the chronology of how to graft a collective and social character onto a seemingly individual matter. It revealed the standardized tripartite structure of such get-togethers: first the participants socialize informally, chatting, drinking, and smoking, which is followed by serious, often formalized talk (*jagar*) concerning the purpose of the meeting. When the couple have thus become reintegrated into the community in their new status, there will again be extended socializing, dancing, singing, and drumming.

Introducing the second step with an air of gravity, still outside in the yard, the *majhi* told Guru and his bride to sit in front of him. Taking turns, he addressed both of them. She was to state her name, her parents' name, the name of her father's *paris/kili*, the name of her natal village's *majhi*, and whether she had been forced or had come of her own accord. These are some of the questions and answers as Guru remembers them:

- Question (addressing the bride): For what purpose have you come?

28 In Ho marriage negotiations veiled language is resorted to. Of two or more sisters the older or oldest is referred to as *suba sakam* (low leaf: the lower leaves coming out first), the youngest one as *sirma sakam (sirma* - sky), and a sister between (*tala)* them in age would be *tala sakam.*

29 The wives of Guru and Ragu, Guru's younger brother, are those two sisters (*mid lai:ren* - born of one womb). Figure 18 does not show that in these two marriages the principle of seniority has been violated: Guru., elder brother to Ragu, is married to the younger sister, while Ragu as younger brother is married to the elder sister.

30 This is the Ho expression, *jog-manjhi* is the Santali term.

- Answer (expected and given): I have come to find my house.
- Question: Have you brought gold or other valuables?
- Answer: No.
- Question: Have you jumped across an *ari* (an embankment) before?
- Answer (expected and given): No.
- Question (addressing Guru): Were your horns (horns of an animal, *dirin*) broken previously? The *majhi* is actually asking here in the veiled language that is usual during marriage negotiations whether either of them had had sexual intercourse before.
- Answer (expected and given): No.
- Question (addressing the two female friends accompanying the bride): Are you from the same village?
- Answer (expected and given): Yes.

This chronology sounds rather trite, as it does not reflect the humorous mood and welcoming atmosphere that usually prevails in such a situation, at least as I experienced it several times. The questions raised above have always been asked, but expressed in a language that is deliberately circumstantial and metaphorical without being cumbersome. Also, the villagers participate actively in interrogating the couple and jokingly tease them.
When the *majhi* confirmed aloud that the *paris* of Guru and his bride, Hansda and Kisku, were compatible in marriage, some old women instantly got up and began to sing and dance three rounds around the courtyard in an counterclockwise direction, and men played *dama-duman* (a collective noun for drums).

It was the mediator's turn next to tie Guru's shirt and his wife's *saree* into a knot and tell them never to untie this knot in their lives. Tied together, Guru prompted his wife for the next relevant act: she was to *jowar* everybody present in the courtyard. That way she would learn and was expected to remember who was who, how to address her new *owa:renko* (people of the house), and how she and the other villagers (*haturenko*) had become related to each other as a result of her marrying into the hamlet. For example, all male persons who were elder than the groom (his elder 'brothers') were expected from now on to address her not by name but by relationship term. Doing otherwise would be considered a sign of disrespect, as Guru's wife had become *kimin* to them (yBW). The *jowar* rite was a lengthy procedure and the final part of the standardized and formalized second step. Guru's wife repeatedly confirmed the relevance of this unique method of including her in the relational tapestry of the hamlet.

After this, singing, dancing, and drumming resumed in the courtyard while Guru and his wife were ceremoniously called inside the house by his mother in a rite called *tiril-tarob* (generic term for fruit trees that grow close to each other). Only towards dawn did the courtyard empty. Married life had begun for my *kimin* at her husband's place.

Two days later, the *majhi* and his two helpers went to Bagrai Sai to inform the parents about the theft of their daughter, that she was found in Santal Sai, and that she was safe. "No need to go to the police! A goat has been grazing on our ground and has been eating our grass, so we have tied her. Come and see if the goat that we have found is yours!" Before this was communicated to the parents in person, the group – without Guru – went to see the *majhi* of Bagrai Sai first. Along with him, they formed the delegation to break the news to the parents and discuss the next steps. A result of the discussion was that the blacksmith (*kamar*) was ordered to make an iron bracelet (*med*

sakom) for my *kimin*, for which he was paid eleven rupees and given two *poyla* (measuring vessel) or roughly one kilogram of rice. Fixing the bracelet around her wrist confirmed the marriage two days later in yet another significant step – one of many more to come. Apart from the bracelet being a visible and public sign of being married, it meant more importantly that in the case of her death, from then on she was no longer eligible to be buried in her parents' burial ground in her natal hamlet. Also, without being married fully she was not eligible to be buried in her husband's *gusti*'s territory, as mentioned above. From 1996 to 2009 she was a woman in between: no longer a member of her father's *gusti*, not yet a full member of her husband's. This also meant that in all those years she was not allowed to enter the sacred part of the house, neither to clean it nor to paint it; she did not have access to the valuables of the house stored there but had to ask one of her sons instead. She was also not allowed to prepare *bonga diyan* for *sohrae*, which needed to be prepared in the *bhitar*, but had to call her *gungu* (HyBS) from Tata, who at that time was roughly ten years old, for that purpose. Should she have happened to die in those years in between, Guu would have had to apply *sinduri* (vermillion) to the face of her dead body, thus including her in his *gusti* for good and making her eligible to be buried in her husband's ancestral ground. It would also make his sons eligible to get married themselves one day, because, Guru exclaimed, how can our sons get married if their parents haven't been fully married? He added that the last phase of getting married implied inviting the village for a proper *jom-nu* (a feast, literally 'eat-drink') which may cost as much as twenty thousand rupees. This feast in which hospitality and generosity are displayed constitutes a social obligation and the final step in the process of getting married.

When in 2016 another runaway marriage in Santal Sai was underway in the middle of the night right next door to Guru's house, I heard the *dakuwa* give notice to the villagers late in the evening. Soon after, a crowd of women, men, and children excitedly assembled in the courtyard of the culprit's parents. In fact, news of the expected event had spread in the course of the day, and people were in a hilarious mood, looking forward to dancing, singing, and men drumming. Loudspeakers hired well in advance provided deafening Santal dance music all through the night, until ten in the morning when the loudspeakers had to be returned. In the morning, however, only the young children continued dancing, practising what they had learned the night before, while the adults resumed their daily chores.

Plate 7: After the elopement

Secular village life is resumed. Some children continue dancing until the loudspeakers placed between the pillars of the veranda have to be returned (Santal Sai, 2016).

Epilogue

February 11, 2018. After two years' absence from the field, we make a phone call. For the first time in more than ten years, Guru answers the phone. Obviously, a cell tower has been built near Santal Sai. In 2016, Guru had moved with his wife and two sons to the outskirts of Rairanpur (see map 4), where the boys attended school. The house where they lived was a *diku* building amidst other *diku* buildings. But Guru was very concerned about his sons' educational future. In the meantime, his younger brothers from Tata (see above and figure 18) were running the household in Santal Sai and busy doing the harvest work. Collaboration within 'the people of one house' (*mit orak hor, alerenko, gusti*) – as usual.
The news in February, 2018: "Your *saki* has passed away. Last year's harvest was excellent. We have all returned to Santal Sai. The boys go to school in Rairanpur by bus every day. They are naughty, but they do very well in school."

The news in August, 2019: "Maskal [Guru's eldest son] has passed his exams successfully. He wants to study science. When are you coming, *ma*?"

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