8 Ho Ways of Dying and their Language of Mourning

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Introduction

This chapter is about the Ho, one of the 100 ethnic categories living in the middle Indian states of Jharkhand and Odisha. The ethnographic observations presented here are the result of fieldtrips between 2006 and 2012. Fieldwork was mainly done in and around the Chaibasa area of Singhbhum/Jharkhand and in the north-western tip of Mayurbhanj/Odisha near Rairanpur.

Right from the beginning of the fieldwork when a Ho house was observed, the continued presence of the dead in the everyday lives of the living was felt. Ho ancestors in their pure essence are spatially really close to the living—sheltered literally under the same roof where they are routinely and ritually treated on a daily basis. The field trips included participation in several first and secondary funerals, where the Ho mourning their dead and coping with the universal bio-physiological phenomenon of death in their culture-specific ways were observed.

In this respect the issue of death itself becomes a topic of discussion. Anthropology as the study of Man in a Lévi-Straussian sense has been identified as Entropology, the study of processes of disintegration, of transformation, of death (Lévi-Strauss 1970: 367). In fact, an 'Anthropology of Death' (Fabian 1973) has evolved with its comparative approaches and cross-cultural analysis (Hertz 1907, Bloch 1982 and 1988, Parry 1986, Alex 2008) that will be referred to in this chapter, as 'death throws into relief the most important cultural values by which people live their lives' (Huntington and Metcalf 1979:5). The chapter ethnographically focusses on these cultural values as they come to the fore in the Ho's relationship with their dead.

Embedded anthropologically, the argument will run as follows: Ho society is a specific type of a 'holistic society' (Dumont 1986: 279) assuming the unity of the cosmos and a universal order permeating the

entire cosmos. The dead in Ho society remain included in this universal order and continue to be ritually treated as constitutive elements of this cosmic unity. Ho death rituals illustrate the social character of death that is indigenously conceived of as a process of transformation of those affected by it and an initiation of the dead into a social (after-)life as ancestors. Ancestors are vested with authority, agency and powers. Ho mortuary rites construe relations of dependence, interdependence and solidarity. They contribute to the collective making of meaning by creating and reproducing a dynamic web of collaboration among the living and between the living and the dead. Death related issues in Ho society thus reveal quintessential insights into core values touching upon and informing the Ho concept of the person and Ho understandings of what (death as constituent component of) life is about.

The essay consists of six sections. Following the Introduction, the second section introduces the Ho as a distinct category within the socio-cultural setting of tribal middle India. The third section gives the ethnographic description of a casualty in my immediate vicinity revealing the choreography of the living mourning their dead in the course of a first burial. The concept of the relations between the living and the dead and the transformation of a dead Ho into a protective ancestor—person will be dealt in the fourth section is followed up by discussing notions of death and the dead in broader anthropological terms and contrasting understandings of death 'here' and elsewhere in cross-cultural perspective in the fifth section. The paper will be rounded off by ethnographic notes on what Ho call an 'untimely, sudden death' and the consequences for a deceased person's soul resulting from this diagnosis in the final section.

The Ho: a distinct category in central-eastern India

The majority of the more than one million Ho live in the Kolhan, a region on the Chota Nagpur Plateau reaching south-easterly into the southern parts of Jharkhand, Singhbhum and Dhalbhum areas, into adjacent parts of northern Odisha and also into West Bengal.[2]

Ho see themselves as Adivasi or first settlers who in the course of their history have migrated into this region coming from the north and north-west. Their understanding and evaluation of historical facts is based in mythology, and the cultural memory of the history of Ho settlement is recreated in yearly rituals.[3] 'Ho' carries the meaning 'man, husband' and quite generally 'a Ho person' (Deeney 2005: 154). Identification of 'Ho' and 'man' contrasts with the term *diku* which sums up everything that is classified

as the outside, the other and which comprises all notions and concepts foreign and alien to the Ho cosmos.

Ho in their self-perception are a tribal category. However, this is a term and a concept that seems and has seemed more relevant for social anthropologists attempting at constituting a meaningful difference between the category of tribe and the category of caste. It also seems to be a meaningful category for the Indian administration trying to have all Indian tribes listed, uplifted, modernized, and civilized.[4] Somehow for the Ho that I have met the category of 'tribe' was relevant only insofar as it would aptly and concisely underpin their insistence on their being different from everything and everybody they consider *diku*, especially Hindus from the plains, more generally and as a matter of principle and definition everybody who is a non-Ho (like myself, for example[5]). The dichotomy Ho-*diku* is a cultural distinction reflecting a graded concept of inclusion and exclusion. 'A *diku* is an outsider, someone who does not belong to the "land of the forest" (*buru disum*), who does not speak a tribal language, and does not have a clan graveyard' (Verardo 2003: 26). For the very same reasons Santal, often neighbours of the Ho and sometimes more numerous than the Ho population in this area, are by definition clearly considered non-Ho and a separate tribal category, but not *diku*. Likewise, there are members of non – tribal categories who have been living together with the tribal Ho for ages and who are also not considered *diku*. They are usually landless and of inferior status. By being functionally distinctive and professionally specific these service groups are conceptually part of the indigenous communities and physically part of Ho villages. They share cultural norms with the Ho and they speak Ho. When referring to their conceptual opposite '*diku*', Ho would proudly claim to be members of the Ho tribe. Otherwise they relate to themselves as Ho and speak their mother tongue Ho, although many of them have a good command over languages like Odia, Hindi or Santali.[6]

Many Ho make their physical and spiritual living within the framework of settled agriculture and the collecting of forest produce from the jungle. Dry rice is cultivated as the main crop. Regular attention and irrigation is given to gardening. As landowners the Ho's status is high. The complex of central ideas and values is different from that of the Hindus of the plains in fundamental ways. For example, even though both categories adhere to ideas of the transmigration of the soul and to notions of ritual purity and impurity, the underlying concepts are semantically non-identical. The tribal concept of reincarnation differs from that of Brahmanic Hinduism, which is tied to individual *karma* and consequently allows for individual mobility after death. Also, the *varna* model as frame

of reference is absent. The tribal construction of the soul differs qualitatively from both Christian notions about it as well as those alive in 'mainstream' Hindu caste society.[7]

An individual Ho finds himself in a social web of relations of which the membership of one of by now more than 132 *kilis* or clans is of paramount importance. Exogamous patrilateral Ho clans—and also those of the Santal with whom they co-reside and interact in their villages for that matter—are socially organized beyond the Hindu system of castes, temples, gods and goddesses. However, the Ho do have their own spirit world to which also *Sinbonga*, their creator god as well as their ancestors belong. With all of these, Ho are interrelated in a system of reciprocal exchanges. In ritual offerings at the household and village level their protection is being demanded and guaranteed; in this process their very existence is publicly constituted, symbolically institutionalized and materially integrated into the sphere of the living. It is shocking to the *diku* or Hindus *of the plains* that Ho tend to eat any kind of meat, drink a lot of alcohol and do so publicly—seemingly without any self-consciousness about it. They avoid milk, they marry *outside* their clans, and they bury their dead instead of burning them and perform a second burial—to mention just a few differences.

Statistics

The overall number of all tribal people living in South Asia may be 80–100 million. No other country in the world is home to tribal communities as large as those in India.[8] They have been listed in a schedule of the Indian Constitution as Scheduled Tribes (ST). According to the Census of India 2001 they constitute 8.2 per cent of the Indian population. In these schedules more artificial categories such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Other Backward Classes (OBC) have been invented in a formal politico-administrative procedure separating what has been interpreted as a kind of symbiosis elsewhere[9] cross-cutting those jural frontiers. The official label is one of 'protective discrimination' accompanied by financial subsidies and benefits for those so classified—and an issue of public discourse for that matter. Those Ho and Santal that have been scheduled by the government as being ethnically or culturally different for reasons that are not given or known live in the same villages as those that have been 'neglected' or forgotten by the (scheduling) system. Among those that have been omitted are members of castes who refer to themselves and who are referred to by others as 'General' which means that they have *not* been pigeonholed into the categories ST, SC, or OBC. In Manbir, during the fieldwork in 2006, these 'General' constituted 32

per cent of the village population. Their title was Mahakud in most cases. They were not considered Ho by the Ho community and did not consider themselves Ho, 'yet' they spoke Ho as their mother tongue or used it as a *lingua franca* (they easily switched to Hindi when they had visitors from Jharkhand). They performed rituals very much in the Ho way as chapter three will show. Their houses inside were structured very much like Ho houses consisting of one large room and, separated from it by a wall, a smaller portion: the *adin* or kitchen. Like Ho people they produced and loved to drink and share their rice-beer, they ate meat, though not beef.

Tribal society and status

The symbiosis of tribal and non-tribal categories in middle India does not aim at assimilation and creating a society of equals. Members of different categories conceive of themselves as separate, yet involved and interrelated in many ways and as such not excluded from the societal pattern of the hills and plateaux. Hierarchical status distinctions are kept alive within a practised, accepted, transparent and known social division of labour between these different categories according to principles and criteria of purity and pollution. This division of labour is characterized by the members of the ST and the OBC functioning as patrons and the members of the SC functioning as their clients, i.e. specialists at village level such as petty traders, cattle herders, blacksmiths, musicians, and craftsmen. Ho people say that since times immemorial they have been jointly migrating: 'we have asked them to come with us and to work for us. In former times they were poor. Now they are often richer than we are.' These differences or inequalities—according to the western understanding of personal freedom and unlimited possibilities of the individual—are considered a given to be continued, a given that is based in history and sanctioned by their ancestors' demands. For this reason, the Ho and the other inhabitants of the hilly regions and plateaux of central-eastern India as a *tribal society* along with Pfeffer (1997). In mixed villages they live side by side in ordered, well-structured conviviality that does not ask for, but does not exclude intermarriage as a matter of principle either. Of this tribal society, this is the argument, also *caste* members—sometimes compared to *Sudras*—are a constitutive and inclusive part. Despite their being Hindus they are and conceive of themselves as being different from the Hindus of the plains as indicated above. The whole set up in this region is perhaps held together by Ho (and Santal) values and ideas constituting the overall *tribal* world. These function as the dominant model and are expressed in a number of ways. So, for instance, death rituals are performed in ways

that are informed by—yet not identical with—the familiar Ho choreography of treating their dead.

The last argument shall be proved in the next paragraph which is about a case of death in very close vicinity. A woman of the category 'General' had died in the middle of the night. Her title was Mahakud. Although as 'General' the members of the household were not Ho, the dead woman's son had become the son-in-law to Giridari Bage, the Ho *munda* or village head of Manbir, who is in charge of everything of a secular nature and whose daughter had married into the category 'General'.[10] This was an accepted and public thing to do, obviously, or so I thought. I had been informed about the fact of the marriage in quite a matter-of-fact way by both G. Bage and his wife. Whenever they went to see their daughter they ordered an Ambassador, a rare sight in the village and a big thing. Also, I saw him turn up regularly at our neighbour's to have a cup or two of rice-beer and a little chat. However, the couple did not live patrivirilocally, but in Bhubaneswar, and one day when I enquired into the pedigree of G. Bage and asked about the names of his grandchildren, I was told that as the children were not Ho, he would not know their names. So although the marriage was a well-known fact in Manbir and there was no awkwardness whatsoever about the fact as such, there were probably consequences for behaving beyond the pale.

Death in Manbir: from my field notes[11]

Manbir, Mayurbhanj, Northern Odisha, India. 22 February 2006, 3:30 a.m.: *Death at our neighbour's house: nana buri*[12] *dies.*

Death has come close. At about 3.30 a.m. we hear the sudden and loud wailing of our neighbours.[13] She is a widow living next door together with her four children. Her husband died last year. Now her mother-in-law, her *hanar* or husband's mother has died.[14] It is the same kind of wailing that by now is familiar to me from the Ho way of mourning their dead: a standardized arrangement of minims, crotchets, and quavers within the range of a fourth, a set intonation and rhythm repeated time and again. A small kerosene lamp is lit. It is dark—seven nights after full moon. Within minutes villagers arrive: men, women, and children. As soon as they set foot inside the courtyard only the women—in the blink of an eye—start their ritual wailing holding their arms crossed behind their heads. Instantaneous, excessive and deafening. After paying a brief visit to the dead inside her room the male villagers squat down along the *pindigi*[15] talking to each other or just watching. After having left the room of the deceased the women stop wailing—as sudden as they started it.

They assemble in a corner of the courtyard, separate from the men, with our neighbour being one among many involved and concerned. Children are running around, playing, and laughing. Nobody seems to mind. Whenever a female newcomer arrives the wailing starts afresh and is immediately answered by the wailing of our neighbours. Of the entire Ho community of Manbir, an elderly Ho widow and her son standing and watching, eyewitnesses to the scene, but not participating actively, also not in the ritual wailing. There seems to be a familiar script, and everybody seems to know their roles and acts accordingly.

At 11 a.m. the cot with *nana buri* on it is carried outside her room and put inside the courtyard, the body completely covered by some cloth, her head pointing southwards, and her feet northwards. Ho usually sleep their heads pointing eastwards. As soon as someone has died, however, the cot is moved around, so the head will be in a southward direction, the feet in a northward position. This will also be the position of the body inside the grave. The same has been done here. By now the yard is quite crowded—roughly 60 people have turned up. The villagers gather around the cot at once. The wailing is resumed, this time very loud, almost fiercely, and including the children, girls and boys alike; again arms are crossed behind their necks, again tears roll down their cheeks. . . . It took several hours and elaborate procedures until the body was buried the very same day in the late afternoon. Of many more important details only a few more shall be mentioned. The cloth is pulled back from the body, the blouse is torn open and the body lies naked. The bottom part of the corpse remains covered throughout the purification procedures that follow. All the bangles are broken and fall to the ground; the necklace is torn and left on the cot. The body is rubbed with turmeric and oil.[16] This is done expertly, routinely, and publicly by a male person[17] accompanied by continuous and urgent comments of those observing thus ensuring that everything is done just exactly right—at least this impression is conveyed to me. Coins are put on the dead person's forehead, her eyes, cheeks, throat and lips. Her belongings, a blanket, two blouses, a white saree, are wrapped up in a bundle and put on the cot, her head is bedded on rice. Rice is put into her right hand and passes several times through the open palms of those family members who squat close to each other next to the cot and who hold up their hands. A child of the category grandchild or *jaitadi*, is lifted across the cot and the body seven times. More oil, rice, leaves of the sal tree,[18] *karkad* or toothbrushes which are tender twigs from the saltree, vermillion powder or *sinduri*[19] and rice are offered and left with the dead; her body is covered with a number of used and newly bought sarees. Eventually the cot is carried by six male persons

towards the burial site of the 'General' accompanied by everybody present; however, women and girls—apart from the anthropologist—will soon stay back and return at the boundary of the village, a materially unmarked and to me invisible line. The burial party does not follow the shortest path. They walk towards the nearby river Balisudra instead and criss-cross it seven times on their way to the burial ground which is quite apart from the Muslim as well as the Ho burial sites. Vivid discussions are being led throughout the process. Having arrived at the site the men will work hard for another three hours to dig the grave, while young boys of the category *jaitadi* or grandchild take turns in fanning the body with a twig from a mango tree from below the cot. Finally the body is taken off the cot and lowered into the grave. It will rest there, the head turned towards west. The bed is broken and left inside the grave which is finally being covered by earth. There is no burial stone[20] as is the Ho tradition, and there will be no burial stone later.

That day the community well is only randomly used. Usually it is a very busy place. Coincidence? A number of obligatory death rituals and ceremonies will follow in the days, weeks and months to come. *Diri dulsunum*[21] is fixed for 3 March, day 9 after (the physical) death.

Diri Dulsunum is part of the Ho mortuary rites and constitutes what has been called the second burial since Hertz (1907). This is an obligatory institution which takes place weeks, months or sometimes years later and which may last up to three days. On the occasion of this secondary burial *bala* or affines 'who are generically referred to by this term' (Yorke 1976: 88) and *haga* (agnatic category) 'meet, celebrate (*jomnu*: eat and drink), dance, and pour oil on the burial stone' (Reichel 2009: 95). This is an ordered, structured, and ritual performance, however, and not a 'creatively' morbid get-together of equally affected mourning individuals. For the affines temporary huts will be erected where these will stay, sleep, cook and perform food exchanges with other affines. These huts are built apart and at some distance from the dwelling site of the members of the agnatic category. This may be interpreted as a clear demonstration of how *bala* and *haga* are interrelated in a kind of complementary opposition.[22] The liminal phase of the participants' social pollution due to their having materially or notionally been in touch with death comes to an end and 'normal' life is resumed—for the living and the dead. The deceased has been transformed into a marriageable person yet again participating in affinal exchanges, however in a new mode after death. In this context it is interesting to realize that at least in this region members of the category 'General' relate as non-tribal non-Ho to this part of their death rituals by the identical Ho term *diri dulsunum*, although clearly no

flat slab of stone is used. By oil and turmeric being applied in the rituals a deceased and a marriageable person are treated equally. As such she conceptually belongs and remains part of a collective or socio-cultural system. By being dead she is not just gone, she has not simply ceased to exist. She was a socio-cultural being before death; she remains a socio-cultural being after death. A familiar, well-known change from one phase into another one, both implying sociality, has been performed.

The metaphor of marriage hints at a transition. This transition which consists in the participants' reintegration into society in the course of the second burial is also communicated in the language of marriage. United by their identical language of ritual it may be argued that Ho and 'General' share central value—ideas about life and death—despite distinctions at the empirical level. It may also be argued that in this region where 'General' individuals keep narrating histories of their migration into this area, they became Ho-ized in a number of ways.

Relations between the living and the dead: The Ho and their ancestors

Every Ho is assumed to eventually transform into an ancestor of her or his living descendants after death unless in the case of a 'sudden' or 'violent' death as shown in chapter 6. Ancestors will remain members of their *miyad mandi chaturenko*[23] or 'people of one rice pot', including those 'descended patrilineally from a known or putative common male ancestor [which] is reckoned as far back as people can remember, e.g. 4 or 5 generations' (Deeney 2005: 242) and in-marrying wives, but excluding out-marrying daughters and sisters. *Miyad mandi chaturenko* represents a distinct socio-ritual Ho unit. It is a culture-specific consanguine Ho kin construct that expresses the unity and oneness (*miyad*) of its living and dead members (*-renko*) in a metaphor of commensality (*mandi chatu*: the earthen pot in which rice—and rice-beer—is prepared). *Miyad* carries the meanings 'to be one with; to become one with; to be united with; to have sexual intercourse' (Deeney 2005: 250). This concept of oneness keeps being regenerated at different levels. By daily feeding the collectivity of their ancestors before starting to eat themselves Ho people reciprocate and re-enact this oneness in intimate communion. Commensality and the exchange of food is 'us-centric', because eating together demonstrates that people 'are one' or 'become one' in the process as the status and symbolic transition of in-marrying wives will show. By initiating and continuing commensality relatedness and social cohesion—among the living and among the living and the dead—is lived out and continued. The

ritual and structural unity of *miyad mandi chaturenko* is documented and becomes publicly visible at the death of one of its members. Then the 'people of one rice-pot', however locally dispersed they may live and irrespective of whether the funerary ceremonies have been attended or not, transform into 'those who reciprocally throw out their rice-pots' (*mandi chatu epera:ko*).

Membership of this institution is not a formal, but an active one—for both, the living and the dead.

Ancestors remain obliged towards the living. In addition, there are extra duties waiting for them, such as being in charge of the ritual purity of the household(s). They are supposed to continually interact with the spirit world in a more direct way than was possible before, because having died they have become spirits themselves. They are also assumed to be able to interact with Sinbonga, their God who has created the world and the Ho. Ancestors are said to be able to communicate with the living, and they are attributed a certain agency. Ancestors constitute an active, omnipresent, basically positive, and constructive category in a Ho life. This is balanced by the living knowing that ancestors will most certainly have built the houses which the living inhabit and which may be 100 years old and older; these have cleared the jungle and then cultivated the (ancestral) land that the living nowadays use and pass on to later generations within the *miyad mandi chaturenko.* Rice is notionally related to ancestors in manifold ways (cf. Vitebsky 1993). Ho personify rice as *baba enga* or, literally, rice mother when referring to its original source Mother Earth. By non-vegetarian sacrifices ancestors will also have appeased those gods, goddesses and spirits who are believed to have resided in the trees that needed to be cut in the process of clearing. The living will continue to regularly sacrifice in the fields on their behalf. Although the newly 'acquired' gods and goddesses have been invited to migrate together with the Ho, some are assumed to still linger around their former dwelling sites and thus need to be attended to, addressed, and fed as an obligation within a system of divine gift exchange.

The bodies of the dead are buried near the houses of the living: inside the courtyard, behind the houses, often close to the threshing ground, in the shade below the tamarind trees and within the village boundary.[24] Graves are covered by a *sasan diri* or large slab of stone[25] that needs to be chosen and carried along from the jungle. This can be an affair of a complete day, and as a norm each household should be represented by one male in this stone-getting party, all males representing the whole village. 'I can punish any household in case they fail to turn up', the *munda* or head of the village told. On these stones—after the burial rites

have been performed—people will sit and talk, drink rice-beer, laugh, whisper, and gossip, kill and debone animals for meals and sacrifices, make rice-flour; children will play on them, the anthropologist and her assistant will sit there working on translations, rice is being husked. It seems that these stones turn into a locus of the social, of life and are no more associated with death, grief, and ancestors. These are being treated with the utmost respect—within the *adin* which is the specific separate kitchen of the Ho inside their houses. The *adin* is the sacred compartment, somewhat hidden behind a wall and to be entered through a rather narrow opening. Here surplus rice is stored and sometimes eggs are kept, on the occasion of the annual festivals meals are also cooked here. It is that part of the house that is strictly prohibited to enter—in order not to pollute it. Only members of the *miyad chaturenko* are allowed there—male and female. A daughter, when visiting after marriage, is still welcome to enter, but not her husband.

Ancestral bodies are left to decay inside the grave and will remain there for good. While the overall physical body including flesh and bones is treated as immobile matter, the soul or *rowa* (also carrying the meaning of 'shade') is conceived as mobile and immortal. In the phase of a lengthy and troublesome transition the souls are expected to transform by working themselves through necessary and complex purification rituals. This is assumed to be accomplished in cooperation with as well as separate from the living. During the first burial there is a ritual called *umbul ader* or *keya ader* in the course of which the souls are being accompanied towards the *adin* where they are invited to dwell with their fellow soul-shades or ancestors. It happens, though, that souls sometimes tend to cling to the physical body and find it hard or impossible to join the party trying to guide them in a procession from the grave to their final abode. In these cases the souls are spoken to, argued with, implored, pushed, screamed at, intimidated, and also softly seduced by the living, and all this is done in intense, familiar utterances and actions. The language of mourning is standardized and yet[26] highly emotional. While observing and participating in a number of such rituals I gained the idea that a Ho *rowa* or soul is attributed all the resources, competences, and qualities of a living human—apart from its material physical being. The concept of an immaterial non-physical existence seems to be constructed in analogy to that of the living. When eventually the soul of a dead person has stood the test and arrived at the *adin* they will be attended to, they will be nourished and talked to, and they enjoy a high status.

There are ritual phases in the Hos' lives in which ancestors are particularly closely related to the living. A newly born baby, for example,

will not only need to establish a relationship to the living, but also to its ancestors. It is from an ancestor that a child will receive its name. Only after the naming ceremony children will acquire their social identity. Before that they are considered incomplete[27] and do not count as a person in the Maussian sense. Another example are Ho women who grow up with their father's or patrilineal ancestors and who after marriage will adopt their husband's *kili's* or clan's name and ancestors. It is only after a specific ritual in the course of which they are being introduced to their husband's ancestors, that they are given permission to enter their husband's *adin* and touch the *mandi chatu* or rice pot, in which the common meal is cooked. Also in the case of migrating somewhere else the living will see to it that their ancestors accompany them and do not feel neglected by performing special *bongas* or rituals for them on the way. Due to these rituals the living become socially and permanently merged with the dead, and it is in these rituals that the ancestors' purity is brought about. Impurity is conceived of as contagious and thus dangerous—for the living and the dead.

Any death is considered polluting for everybody involved in it.[28] And, there are ways of dying that are considered polluting to the effect that the souls of those concerned will be permanently denied access to the respective *adin* and their ancestors. Ho diagnose the death of a person as particularly 'violent', 'sudden', or 'bewildering' in the cases that a woman dies during delivery, that a child dies before the naming ceremony has been completed, in the case of an infectious disease, of murder and suicide, and in the case that someone has been killed by an animal (snake or leopard). Unlike Parry (1994) suggests for northern India, Ho do not make a principled distinction between what he calls a 'good' and a 'bad' death, since the Ho consider any kind of death as 'bad', i.e. violent, untimely, or unnatural. What they do distinguish, however, are specific manners of dying such as those mentioned above that to them reflect a diagnostic quality bearing on the ritual treatment of the deceased person's soul and future fate. This distinction is a matter of classification, not a moral statement or negative assessment. Just as the various ways of dying are differentiated, so are the ways in which the respective bodies plus the separation of the souls from the physical bodies are ritually differentiated. All those considered to have suffered a 'deviating' death, will be categorized and addressed as *bongas* or spirits, since they do not qualify to turn into an ancestor and to be reborn in their descendants.

In Ho there is no term denoting ancestors. Instead, they are addressed and referred to as *ham hoko, dum hoko* or old men, sleeping men. Hence they are conceptualized in analogy to human beings: they are hungry and

thirsty and require proper ritual treatment. This is considered the duty as well as the responsibility of the living. If these duties are performed adequately—one never knows, so it is a constant topic of discussion to ensure nothing has been forgotten—ancestors are expected to reciprocally protect the living in every respect in a kind of gift exchange: from diseases, death, and other kinds of discomfort. Due to this notional interdependence ancestors are habitually included in everyday life right 'down' to the sphere of commensality—on the level of the homestead and that of the village as well. When it comes to having a meal everybody, young and old, will offer a few grains of the cooked rice or *mandi*, a few drops of whatever is there to be drunk, rice-beer, or water, onto the floor. This gift is meant for the ancestors. Blood sacrifices in the fields, in the course of which different kinds of animals are ritually slaughtered in the midst of their rice-fields, are offered to the ancestors[29] and meant to guarantee the fertility of the crops and a good harvest.[30] These gifts on the village level are also part of the ritual-symbolic food. According to the cultural logic of (divine) gift exchange as practised by the Ho the *burying* of the dead in the land that was cleared by their ancestors may be interpreted as a sacrifice directed to their ancestors in a reciprocal circle of *'do ut des'*. Yorke writes: 'Kinship, ancestors and land may be considered separate analytical categories, but for the Ho they are different aspects of the same reality' (1976: 126).

The Ho that I met are convinced that their ancestors will turn angry and dangerous in case they are neglected, ignored or not treated adequately. It is assumed that ancestors may effect diseases, epidemics, and even death when angry, hungry, or thirsty. Linguistically the process of 'falling ill', 'becoming ill' or 'dying' in Ho is expressed in the passive voice by an intransitive verb. This implies that the specific condition of a *patiens* is being caused by an *agens* acting or taking effect from outside. The meaning or more correct translation would come fairly close to 'I am died', 'somebody (else) dies me', or also 'I am being killed, eaten, seized, grabbed, etc.' In our (Indo-European) language the process of dying cannot be expressed in the passive voice, whereas in Ho it can only be expressed in the passive voice, i.e. on the part of those dying. The Ho say that—after death—ancestors do transform into a grammatically active, causal agent: by help of transitive verbs they are conceived as 'eating' the living, as 'drinking their blood', as 'grabbing them', etc.[31] This is particularly true for the souls in the case of a 'bad' death. The logic is as follows. In all walks of Ho life a clear relation between cause and effect is taken for granted. No effect without cause. So if someone falls ill or dies, illness and death are understood as effects to which the causes

should, need and can be traced. Often the cause is assumed in the 'wrong' human behaviour of actors who themselves need not necessarily be aware of the consequences of their doings. For this reason in lengthy, painful and sometimes unsuccessful consultations people try to remember and understand what it was that went wrong. In many, not only in difficult cases, Ho seek the services of those ritual specialists or shamans that in Ho are called *dewa*. They will perform a ritual or *bonga* in order to find out and pacify those spirits that may have caused the harm. However, in this process the living are no passive victims of the negative agency of spirits or their ancestors. They are active and pragmatic, they test what is suggested to them by the shaman or *dewa*, dispense with what does not work out, discuss publicly and negotiate what best to be done, try another *dewa*, etc.

On death and the dead in anthropological perspective

It will have become obvious by now that the concept of death and the ontological state of the dead in Ho society is fundamentally different from our Western ideas about it. What may be similar in a case of death—perhaps, if at all—is that the very responses are 'felt' by those affected to be unquestionably 'normal', 'natural', 'authentic', 'rational', 'making sense', and 'taken for granted'. If, however, fundamentally *different patterns* of responses are seen as fundamentally natural ('such is our culture', my Ho informants said), this so-called 'naturalness' will not convey insights into the character of what actually is going on, but rather socio-cultural specifics constituting and shaping the base of the diversity of people's behaviour.

The study of the nature of death within a given social context has played a prominent role in the field of anthropology since its beginning as an academic discipline. It seems established by now that death and people's relations with their dead reveal deep-rooted convictions about the concept of a person, of society, of what life is about. Within an 'Anthropology of Death' substantial literature has been produced on this topic set in its historical and social context and perspective. Among many others due ancestral and anthropological reverence should be paid to Frazer (1890), Hertz (1907/1960), van Gennep (1909/1960), M. Bloch (1988), Parry (1986), and Fabian (1973). Although these authors' loci of interest may differ, the following statement may hold true for all of them: responses toward the 'organic event' (Hertz 1960: 27) are not identical worldwide, they are universally not the same. At the same time they are never arbitrary or accidental. They are loaded with meaning, and

symbolic. Just as the participants' individual behaviour, so the emotions involved in the process of mourning differ tremendously. The thesis of 'inner states as universals' has already been counter-argued by R. Needham in 1981. So, I argue, that if in my culture someone cries at a relative's funeral, that person's behaviour, tears, and emotions will neither be 'naturally' informed nor identical with the behaviour, tears, and emotions of, let's say, a Ho. Why? Weeping is always a weeping about something, and this 'about' is something culturally translated and because of this culture-specifically different.

Death—'here' and elsewhere

Our language betrays our basic notions and us: we talk about the *moment* of death, the h*our* of death, and generally of death happening in an *instant*. Scientific encyclopaedias offer as the lexical denotation below the entry 'death': 'the end of life'. Conceptually death signifies the negation of life, its final point as it were. So life and death are considered opposites, two fundamentally different categories separated by an obvious and clear-cut boundary. Despite the pitfalls of unjustified generalizations one might argue that for western minds death occurs within an instant. It is seen as a natural, i.e. a biological event; the point of time in which it happens can be objectively traced by objective instruments and scientific methods. Legal, medical, and neurological givens are to be paid attention to, and accordingly professional specialists are involved in the process of dying, either taking on full responsibility or sharing it with relatives. Thus death and dying remain within the realm of the intrafamilial or individual context. The Christian concept of death will likewise offer a reward for good deeds or punishment for sins committed in a life time to the souls who after one's last breath are supposed to immediately appear before their judge. However, also within the frame of this Christian concept there is no structure providing for a meaningful period of transition. Anyway, within the shortest possible period of time the corpse is being withdrawn from its social context—for hygienic reasons. The process of mourning and grieving becomes individualized, intrapersonal and intra-familial. In particular there are Bloch and Parry (1982), who highlight the relation between the Western concept of the person, the in-dividuum, the in-divisible, and our concept of death as well as our ways of dealing with the dead. In our kind of society an individual is considered to be the smallest, complete unit implying soul, body, bones, flesh, and blood. Clear, well-defined and sharp boundaries between this individual and any other individual are assumed as a matter-of-fact. This individual commands

respect and status. Bloch says: 'In our logic, when an in-dividuum dies, the whole person dies' (1988: 3). I argue that in Western individualized societies a linear worldview and view of linear progress prevails. This linearity of 'our' rational reasoning is also reflected in a deep seated conviction of the irreversibility of the chronological order of birth–life–death. So, as a clearly fixed boundary is conceptualized around the 'elementary man: both a biological being and a thinking subject' (Dumont 1970: 9), *one* burial will finalize things of a very final nature. According to this cultural logic *one* burial will do.[32]

Distinguishing between the notions of *in-dividual* and *dividual* is important for our topic insofar as this concept refers to the empirical single being as embedded in a web of a social whole, to which in so-called holistic societies the highest social esteem is attributed. In dying it is not exclusively and not even primarily the body of an empirical being that is affected, but the body of the social whole, if the metaphor be allowed, or the category to which this being was attached and an integral constituent of. It is this social whole that is affected in the case of death and will respond and interact as a whole. Hertz (1960) interprets death explicitly as an attack on the social order of the social whole. It would be the idea behind elaborate burial rituals to restore this social order. In the case of the Ho the second burial or *diri dulsunum* is supposed to accomplish and complete this process. In societies with a cyclical worldview, and there is reason to assume that the Ho tribal society belongs here, too, death itself becomes part of a cyclical process, more specifically a cyclical process of renewal.[33] It was Hertz who in his study about death has focussed on the concept of a structured transition, of the transformation(s) of corpse, soul and mourners and the meaning of the second burial. And it was van Gennep's contribution, based on the findings of Hertz, to work out a tripartite structure of all rituals of transition including death rituals. These consist of a number of semantically related, structurally separate phases which I was able to observe among the Ho when participating in several death rituals—first burials as well as second burials.[34] I could also observe that each phase is, again, subdivided into several rituals of different duration of several days. The choreography of the first two phases aims at reinstalling the state of social purity of all those involved and defiled—of the soul or shade of the deceased and of relatives and ancestors, and this is reflected in the one term comprising all the different rituals of these two phases, which is *sabsi*.[35] The third phase relates to Hertz's second burial or van Gennep's postliminal phase, in which 'the soul is integrated into the world of the dead, and the mourners are re-

integrated into society'. All in all, very short and contrary to our Western notions of death, but true for a great many cultures and also that of the Ho: death is no final point in time, but a transition or a birth into a new phase, in the course of which all actors involved will acquire a new social identity. Death is considered a transition from the visible, real world into an invisible, equally real world. Death does not occur in one instant, but is a process, a process of renewal. The after-death world is modelled on the social world of the living and is differentiated as such. Death is neither conceived as a negation nor as an end of life; it is its continuity in a different shape. The symbolism of death rituals for those eligible for transforming into ancestors is expressed in metaphors of biological and spiritual fertility, of sexuality and growth.

However, in the case of a 'sudden, violent' death the souls of the dead have to do without the sociality of their ancestors, without the protection of and inside the *adin* and the communicative care—to avoid terms such as veneration or worship—of the living. It is by their particular way of dying that the souls are conceptualized as individual and unpredictably harmful in differently diverse ways. Simultaneously those souls remain in a state of need and dependant on the living. That way they also remain part of the same cultural system. This is what the next paragraph is about.

Sunai Kondangkel: ethnography of a 'bad' death

During my fieldwork 2009/2010 I stayed in the Jamda area of Mayurbhanj near Rairanpur. With respect to the tribal population this area is mainly inhabited by Ho and Santal, and very few Munda live also there. In order to improve my language performance in Ho I luckily succeeded towards the end of 2009 in moving to Boja Sai, which is a pure Ho hamlet in the very same area. All its inhabitants are members of the Kondangkel *kili* or clan, but they do not belong to one and the same *miyad chaturenko* or people of the same rice-pot (see above). My younger classificatory brother there was Sadurgon Kondangkel, the *munda* or village elder living in an adjacent hamlet, Gara Sai.[36] He had helped me find this place to stay with his classificatory mother who had become my mother that way. It took me quite some time and was a real strain on my hosts' nerves until it was confirmed that she was the FFBySyW[37] to my younger brother who addressed her as *kaki* or father's younger brother's wife[38] just as I was supposed to do being his elder sister. On the other hand I was not only addressed by my mother as *mai* or 'young girl', but also treated as such.[39]

Of her five children Sunai was the eldest of her four daughters. In 2006 she was bitten in a toe by a snake and died a few days later. At that time the girl was 16 years old.

Shortly after I had moved in the big metal box that contained all the family valuables and that was kept inside the *adin* was opened by my *kaki* and its contents presented to me. Of this daughter there were a few photographs inside—a portrait, photos showing her in school uniform, together with her sisters, and together with her school mates. There were also her earrings which my *kaki* put into my palms and made me admire them. Weren't they the most beautiful earrings? She was very wordy about these earrings, and she used to wear them on special occasions, when she was singing and dancing herself. It was for the first time then that my *kaki* informed me about her daughter and her death. In the course of my stay I was told this story time and again—and always in an almost identical, clear, matter-of-fact way, non-sentimental and emotional at the same time. Two photos showing the daughter hung on the outside wall of the house above the entrance. Two teachers had been present for the funeral—this piece of information was also conveyed to me several times.

That Sunai's death had been classified as a 'bad' death[40] and what the consequences of this were, I realized only in the morning of 14 January and coincidentally. It was the time of new moon, the rice harvest and necessary follow-up work had been completed, and huge lumps of brown sugar cane were sold in the streets and bazaars. On the occasion of *Mokor Porob*, the '*Makar Sankranti* feast of the Hindus held about January 14th [see also *diku* porob]' (Deeney 2005: 253) popped rice or *ata* and *lad* or sweet bread are homemade. This was done at night in the cowshed half of which had been whitened for this purpose, and the fireplace there was used for the first time. The food was prepared solely by the 13-year-old daughter and the 10-year-old son, no adults were around (apart from me) or assisting. And they had finished their work before dawn.[41] While busy with the usual daily chores in the kitchen after that, I coincidentally overheard my *kaki* address her ancestors[42] in the *adin*:

'I am offering/giving to you[43] *lad* of Mokor Porob. Today is Mokor Porob. I am giving you all *lad* of *Mokor Porob*. Today is *Mokor Porob*. *Ham hoko, dum hoko*, I have not seen all of you. I do not know how many you are. This *lad* here, divide it and give each his share. This is how I am performing the *bonga*.'[44]

Having said that she disappeared outside. As I saw in each of her hands a portion of *ata* and *lad* filled into a leaf cup I followed her and

observed this: behind the house there were about ten tall tamarind and mango trees below which, in the shade, a number of burial stones of enormous size lay. Right next to these stones was the *kolom* or threshing ground behind which, further away from the house, there was a tall bamboo tree. Houses, trees, gravestones, and threshing ground were surrounded by a fence running around most of Boja Sai and beyond which were the rice-fields. Now my *kaki* stood below this bamboo tree and addressed that very daughter who had been bitten by a snake. She did not address her as ancestress (*ham ho-dum ho*),[45] she did not call her by name either, but referred to her as *beti*, which is Hindi for 'daughter'.[46] This is what she said:

My daughter's soul has been called to this site and is still lingering around. That daughter's soul has been called to this site. I am offering/giving *ata* and *lad* on behalf of that daughter on the occasion of *Mokor Sankranti*. This is what I am giving her. That soul has not been called inside the house. It has been called to this site.

Next to the bamboo tree there was another burial stone separated from the other stones by the threshing ground and very near the enclosing fence, but still inside of it. Eventually I realized that this was my *kaki's* deceased daughter's grave. Contrary to the other graves covered by those massive slabs of stone or *sasan diri* lying flat on the ground, this grave was lavishly maintained. Instead of a flat *sasan diri* covering the body there was a terraced cement construction sealing ground and body below. And, additionally, it had an upright burial stone informing about the girl's data (name, year of birth and death) in Oriya and English chiselled into the surface of the stone. I have never seen a double construction like this anywhere else in the area. My *kaki* had also planted a tree next to the grave which she would also regularly water to make sure that her daughter be comfortable in the shade. Concerning her daughter's soul, however, my *kaki* was convinced that it was floating and dwelling among the branches of the bamboo tree. I was also told with an air of pride that her daughter's cloths had neither been burned nor left inside the grave to cover the body (as would be the usual Ho way). They had been handed over to a river instead. This was expressed by the term *atu* meaning 'to place something in flowing water so that it is carried away' (Deeney 2005: 18). Many people had participated in this ritual, she added, among whom were two of her teachers.[47] Inside the courtyard a ceremony had been performed. The daughter's body had been covered by a great many *sarees*, also newly bought ones. 'She will not be cold,' my

kaki informed me. On the occasion of the following two seasonal feasts *Mage Porob*[48] and *Ba Porob*[49] the offerings were repeated in the same order and the same way.

By having been bitten by a snake my *kaki's* daughter's death was classified as a 'bad' death. Her on-going dependence on the living was revealed in the ritual and gustatory treatment by my *kaki*. She and the ancestors were materially given identical offerings; however, the ancestors were addressed differently, they were being served first and at a different location. Due to the identical gift in the course of the ritual, I argue, Sunai remains conceptually related to her ancestors. She is ceremoniously and materially taken care of, yet simultaneously a symbolic difference is established and made visible. The classification of a particular kind of death as a 'bad' death is a mental assessment, a matter of evaluation. It is not a moral statement. It is not a matter of devaluation. It is an instance calling for action.

Conclusion

The focus of the essay was on death related matters as they unfolded before the authoress in the course of her fieldwork among the Ho of Odisha and Jharkhand between 2006 and 2012. The field of death was singled out for a number of reasons. First: there are earlier and highly informative publications on the Ho. Most of these are concentrating on legal, historical, demographic, administrative, economic, ecological, religious, linguistic, or sociological aspects. None of these was written, however, from and in an anthropological perspective. Second, apart from J. Deeney who had lived among the Ho for more than 60 years since 1949, who had been a keen observer of Ho culture and a scholar of the Ho language, two more contemporary monographs on the Ho were accessible that were based on long-term participant observation. One deals primarily with the politico-economic domain (Yorke 1976), the other one with processes of Sanskritization and de-Sankritization, of transforming Ho tribal identity into one of caste membership and instances of a reversal of this process (Verardo 2003). In both *individual behaviour* in its social context figures as the central category to be observed, described, discussed, and analysed. Third, for the reason that both monographs have not been published, the descriptive ethnographic parts in this paper have attempted at conveying in greater detail a kind of graphic introduction into the world(view) of the Ho centring and revolving around themselves. For this purpose death and mourning have been a most apt focus for this paper as in this central notions and values

of Ho cosmology are condensed as well as expressed and as such to be observed. There is a clearly structured multifaceted convivium of Ho, Santal and Munda, of patrons and clients, of the living and the dead, of the sacred and the secular, of equals and non-equals. In Ho death rituals anthropological issues come to the fore such as the concept of the person lending itself to reveal that dying in Ho country is considered a cultural affair and burying and mourning a social, non-individual matter beyond biological givens. It has also been touched upon in this article how the Ho by sub-classifying death[50] are able to keep those who have suffered a 'deviant' death at a distance and apart from the living, but to keep them for the time being—empirically, visibly, publicly, materially, and notionally.

Notes

1. Lewis speaks of a Ho population of 15,00,000 in 2003 (2009: 377–93). Anderson, Head of the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages in Salem/Oregon/ USA, points out that the Munda group of languages of the Austroasiatic family of which Ho is one language is spoken by almost 10 million people within central and eastern India (2007: 7; 2008: 2–3). FormularbeginnFormularende
2. Of course, there are Ho outside the three states of Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal. Individual Ho keep working in the tea plantations in Assam, go to Gujarat and as far as Kashmir for the sake of wage labour or to Jharkhand to work there in the mines. According to my informants, they do not constitute any kind of organized diaspora in these regions. Coming back, however, is not always an easy job since they will have to undergo a number of severe purification rituals in order to get rid of the pollution acquired outside their Ho villages.
3. The proper Ho term of this ritual is *'disum amin—disum nam'* (*disum*: country, territory; *amin*: to acquire by clearing, [e.g. to acquire a piece of cultivable land by cutting all trees, etc.]; *nam*: to get, receive): to acquire the right of land and cultivating it by clearing the jungle. This right of cultivating is reciprocally linked with the obligation to keep worshipping the autochthonous gods related to this territory, since local and territorial deities are considered to be and remain highly influential by the Ho.
   All matters of vocabulary in this chapter have been checked with Deeney 2005.
4. Ratha (2009: 314) points to the fact that '[I]n the Census of India of 1872 and later the regular decennial Census initiated in 1881, the Indian population was divided into two "social types", tribes and castes, by which time the term "tribe" was already in vogue in Europe to designate non-European communities of Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas.' For this reason Ratha also says that a nasty air of evolutionism lingers around the term

'tribe', for which 'no Indian language had a word in its vocabulary synonymous with the English word "tribe"' (2009: 318). In his dictionary of 2005 Deeney gives—below the entry jati—the following denotations: 'race; tribe; caste; type, kind' (Deeney 2005: 177). Surely, the term 'tribe' is of Latin origin. Nowadays it seems that jati functions as a generic term instead for all the implied connotations (historical, colonial, post-colonial, evolutionary etc.) and, thus, has probably become an even more sensitive issue.

5. It was quite a process and a matter of public Ho commitment to assist me in turning into a social being, i.e. into a Ho. This involved my becoming a member of the Purty *kili* or clan and *saki* or namesake of the local *munda*'s wife or secular village head. The *saki* relationship is a ritual friendship. In my case it contributed to the Ho making cultural sense of an anthropologist of sorts determined to stay among them by including her into their social web of relations and transforming her initial state of *diku*. In fact, quite of their own accord, they constructed me into a Ho whose ancestors had left Ho *disum* long ago, who had forgotten about her own culture and who had finally returned to learn from scratch. This example is given as it reveals that the social scenario is characterized by different degrees of 'other-ness'.
6. 'Ho is used vigorously in the Ho communities and there is a positive attitude towards its use, despite the use of Oriya, Hindi, or even Santali by the Ho in a limited set of appropriate domains' (Anderson 2007: 7–8).
7. For differences between Ho notions of rebirth and Christian concepts of the soul see chapter 5. For details concerning the after-death fate of a tribal soul see Pfeffer (2009: 242).
8. Cf. Pfeffer (2009: 263).
9. For this patchwork kind of society Pfeffer has coined the term tribal society with its focus well beyond an individual tribe (Pfeffer 1997). For a description and an assessment of the tribal issue in middle India in more detail see Areeparampil 2002, Das Gupta 2011, Reichel (2009: 17–26; 72 f.), Skoda 2006.
10. This marriage arrangement may reflect the following cultural twist: the status of the wife-givers ranks higher than that of the wife-receivers in the tribal value system of middle India, whereas in north India, for example, wife-receivers are in a permanent state of superiority over wife-givers. Accordingly, each of the two parties might consider themselves to rank higher in *this* case—that is if future field work can prove that daughters of the category 'General' are supposed to be married hypergamously in an otherwise dominant tribal context.
11. The major part of this paragraph is based on my fieldwork among the Ho and has partly been published in Reichel (2009: 8f).
12. *'nana:* grandmother (paternal or maternal, sometimes used as vocative, also *jiyan*)'; *'buri*: old' in Deeney (2005: 54, 261).
13. Houses are usually quite close to each other. Between our house and that of our neighbour there was a distance of about 25 metres.

14. The information given to me in Ho was that 'our grandmother (has died) [*sic*]': *abuwa:* (our; the colon here is phonemic) *nana buri* (address and reference term for grandmother, cf. above).
    If in a conversation three and more people are involved there are ways in Ho to indicate whether the person that one talks to is meant to be included in what is said or not. This is done by two different possessive pronouns to express 'our': (1) *aleya:* is the first person plural excluding the person addressed, (2) *abuwa:* is the first person plural including the person addressed. So in this case I was included in the web of social relations.
15. *pindigi*: a Ho word to denote a small veranda-type elevation built around or in front of a Ho house.
16. *sasan sunum*: turmeric and oil mixed for this purpose
17. At that time, six weeks after the beginning of my fieldwork, I was too shy to enquire into the relationship between this man and the dead.
18. *sarjom daru* (Shorea robusta). This tree is considered a holy tree. From its leaves cups and plates are made during rituals, and *ba porob* or the flower festival, one of the major annual festivals, takes place when its flowers blossom. Each *desauli*, the sacred grove, is supposed to have at least one sal tree.
19. *sinduri*: 'vermillion, red lead; to apply the same (e.g. in some action of divining or at time of marriage)' (Deeney 2005: 344). See later for turmeric, oil, and *sinduri* as symbols of marriage within the context of death.
20. *sasan diri*: 'a large stone put flat over a grave (as distinct from bid-diri, a standing memorial stone)' (Deeney 2005: 331).
21. 'Pouring oil on the (burial) stone'. Actually, quite towards the beginning of the second burial, oil and turmeric rice is poured on the burial stone slabs. This is done by women only.
22. I was once invited to a second burial and given a temporary hut in the area allocated to the *bala*, although beforehand I had been told that I would belong to the agnatic category by my being related to my *saki* due to our ritual kinship. In fact, every hut displayed in Odia on a piece of cardboard the kinship relationship (term) to the deceased, e.g. *mamun* or Mother's Brother, and the village that the visiting party came from. In my hut the sign read *haga* and Borlin as my natal village. Positioning a *haga* on a site reserved for *bala* indicated to me that for the Ho kinship is a process rather than a state, an affair of degrees rather than something essentially fixed, a matter of becoming rather than being (for good).
23. This term is a specific Ho concept or category of some consequences which has been discussed in Deeney 2008, Pfeffer 1997: 24, Reichel 2009: 72f, 108f, Yorke 1976.
24. It may and will be a different story in the case of a 'bad' death. Interestingly, the case of the 'General' above has revealed that they bury their dead outside the village boundary as a rule.

25. The setting of the stone is being done on an uneven day as counted from the day of (physical) death. It takes place as one ritual among many, all displaying a necessary element within the tripartite structure of death rituals which have been described in more detail in Reichel (2009: 95f).
26. Of course, this contrast indicated by 'yet' is the contrast 'felt' by the authoress coming from a Western individualized background. Cf. Vitebsky (1993) on the difference between emotions as interior versus exterior social qualities.
27. Cf. Sahlins (2008: 101).
28. This may take drastic forms: my assistant, a Santal, for example, had accompanied me to a neighbouring village to participate in the burial procedures of the Ho *diuri* or village priest there. I had taken the obligatory bath in the *banda* or tank together with the whole female party. This purification ritual or *sabsi* is being performed after the deceased's widow had fixed her dead husband's soul tied to his hoe in the ground of the tank. My assistant never joined in this public activity when it was the males' turn to have their bath. They did that locally separate from the women, but still at the same tank. So when we came home his wife enquired if he had had a proper bath, and when he denied she insisted on his getting rid of his death pollution first before she was prepared to have him enter the courtyard of her—and his—house. At that time it was winter, it was pitch dark, it was quite cold, and the next tank was far away. So my assistant implored me to fetch a bucket of (cold) water. I had to douse him several times, until he was utterly soaking wet and allowed inside.
29. These sacrifices in the field are different from those addressed to the 'autochthonous' gods and goddesses and discussed in Chapter 1.
30. Mary Douglas is quoted as relating blood-shed and life-giving in Berger (2007: 13).
31. Cf. Vitebsky (1993: 14, 214) makes a very similar grammatical and semantic point as concerns the Sora, another ethnic category of Middle Eastern India, and their language which is a language of the Munda branch of the Austroasiatic language family such as Ho and Santali.
32. For differences between Hindu, Ho and Christian concepts of death and reincarnation see Chapter 1, fn. 7.
33. Of course, this is a gross generalization, as in such societies there are linear elements, too. However, the focus here is on the cyclical quality as people in such societies, this is the argument, are exposed to and rooted in recurring cyclical continuities of processes of renewal in their specific ecosystems, kinship classifications, marriage patterns, life-cycle rituals, and their social interactions in general.
34. Cf. chapter 3.
35. *sabsi:* consists of two words: *sab* (v.) denotes 'to catch, to seize', *si:* denotes 'the foul smell of, e.g. rotten fish or meat; foul, offensive (e.g. of language)' (Deeney 2005: 340). The colon at the end of 'si:' is phonemic. Its pronunciation

is a glottal stop. Interestingly, the terms of rituals often reflect what people are *doing* in the course of these rituals: here they will *catch* impurity, there—in the case of the second burial called *diri dulsunum*—they will *pour* oil on the burial stone. This comes close to Trawick's remarks on 'culture. . . as an activity. . . done among people, leaving its traces in memory' (Trawick 1990: 89–90).

36. *gara*: small river; *sai*: hamlet.
37. She was the wife of my (younger) brother's paternal grandfather's younger brother's younger son who became my *kaka* and father.
38. As a relationship term *kaki* refers to FByW (the wife of a father's younger brother) *and* to MZy (a mother's younger sister).
39. It did not matter much in this respect, when I told my *kaki* that at home, in my culture, I would be mother of two daughters and grandmother of two grandchildren. First, they said that as the elder sister of the *munda*, who was their classificatory son, I would become their daughter and *mai* as a matter of cultural fact. Second, as I knew so very little or almost nothing of almost everything this would even more turn me into their *mai*. In fact, my *kaki* was a brilliant and patient teacher, and a lot of what I have learnt, I owe to her.
40. The different ritual treatment of the *rowa* or soul is something that can be empirically witnessed in participant observation. For analytical reasons I make use here of Parry's (anthropological) construct of a 'bad' death, although I have tried to show above that it is a simplifying classification when it comes to illustrating the Ho's understandings of death. In their language they speak about the different ways of dying, the various kinds of death in quite concrete and descriptive terms, e.g. of a death due to being bitten by a snake, to being burnt, by having fallen into the fire, etc. In another case when it was not clear whether a woman had been murdered or committed suicide, they called the death *tataka* ('stupefaction; amazement; to be stupefied, amazed', Deeney 2005: 371) or *roka* ('suddenly; sudden, fresh, for the first time', 2005: 313).
41. There are a number of ritually important elements involved in this process which cannot be enlarged upon within the scope of this chapter. They concern questions of who prepares the food, who does not, what kinds of vessel are being used, where and how the food is kept, what kinds of ingredients are being used, what kind of firewood, etc.
42. A Ho woman will gradually adopt her husband's ancestors after marriage.
43. She addressed her ancestors in the second person plural.
44. In terms of readability this is an approximate English version: 'I am offering to you, our ancestors, sweet bread prepared on the occasion of today's festival, *Mokor Porob*. Today is *Mokor Porob*. I am giving to you all sweet bread of today's festival. Today is *Mokor Porob*. Old men, sleeping men, you, who are my ancestors, I have not seen all of you. I do not know how many you are. This sweet bread here, divide it and give each his share. This is how I am performing the ritual' (E.R.).

45. In Ho gender is linguistically not differentiated.
46. It may be interesting in this context that in the area of my fieldwork a comparatively pure Ho was spoken with rather little Hindi mixed into it. It was, however, quite common in Boja Sai and the surrounding hamlets and villages to use *beti* and *beta* (son) as reference terms to their living children—alongside *kui hon* and *kowa hon* which are the equivalents in Ho.
47. Teachers in the Jamda area were usually people from the plains speaking Oriya as their mother tongue and teaching the children in Oriya. There was no school in the vicinity in which Ho or Santali were spoken or taught. Similarly, in Jharkhand alphabetization was done in Hindi or in English, where parents could afford the school fees.
48. *Mage Porob* is the Ho feast observed in each village after the harvest work is done; in the course of this feast obscene language is used.
49. *ba*: flower. *Ba Porob* is the annual flower feast celebrated at the time when the flowers of the sal tree (*sarjom daru*) blossom.
50. There is by now an impressive body of scholarly literature not only on the dilemmas of death in secular settings and beyond, but also on such culture-specific classifications of death as dealt with in this essay (Parry 1994, Schömbucher and Zoller 1999, Alex 2008). Within the scope of this chapter it has not been possible to discuss and compare different mourning rituals and cults of remembering. It might be especially rewarding to explore and compare notions of death in Brahmanical Hinduism with those of specific Ho concepts.

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