

# **About the Hos of the Manbir/ Jamda plateau in Orissa/ India**

***Selected notes and annotations from my fieldwork among  
the Hos from December 2005 to April 2006.***

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## Introduction

This script is not a script in the sense that a proper topic is given, introduced and discussed. Neither do I describe, enlarge upon, interpret or draw conclusions from the observations that I made notes on during my fieldwork from December 2005 until April 2006 among the Hos in Orissa and Jharkand/ Middle India. It is work in progress being documented, an unsystematic, though preliminarily necessary step before becoming systematic and scientific. The approach is open in that hopefully by typing my hand-written notes into my laptop and checking them again I will gain clarity on how I am finally going to work them into a consistent thesis that is fair to the Hos, to whom I feel extremely obliged for all the precious insights they so freely shared with me, fair to anthropological demands and fair to myself. The vitality of Ho culture that I could experience was overwhelming, when “I was there” and it keeps having a lasting impact on my thoughts every day. So how can I meet these demands? Quantitative data and precise descriptions of routines and rituals are necessary and will be given, but how can they be presented and dealt with in a way that they contribute to working out something like a world view of the Hos, their cosmology, that they reflect the complexity, solidity and scope of a social framework within which the Hos “lead a meaningful life, a life full of purpose”? This is, how Father Deeney<sup>1</sup> put it, who spent more than fifty years with the Hos and who succeeded in implanting his deep admiration for the Hos, their culture and especially their language in me. I am grateful for the time he spent with me, for his as yet unpublished material on the Hos, which I was allowed to copy and of which I will make ample use in this paper.

A scientifically grounded empathetic approach towards the Hos: surely quite doubtful in academic analysis and anthropology, possibly quite insightful, when trying to *understand* something so altogether different from our own culture.

As yet I am undecided as concerns the character and contents of a future thesis as well as what is going to become its focal point: rituals? women? childhood? relationships? ancestors? Language, thought, reality in Ho society? Let the notes decide what is the culturally specific core...

So here is the first step. It is a bureaucratic kind of book – keeping of relevant moments and aspects of Ho culture that I have organized under a number of headings in an index in alphabetical order: from A (ancestors) to E (entry into the field) and S (stones). Some of these topics have been worked on like the chapter on “Ancestors and Ho society”, some have been

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<sup>1</sup> See „Entry into the field“.

annotated like “ Census in Marang Manbir”, but need to be completed, some are as yet left plain, as they were put down in the field like the maps and genealogies, which need to be put into the computer and interpreted.

## Index/ References

In the course of my fieldwork among the Hos I have tried to cover as much of my experience, my ideas and thoughts, as many of the rituals and numerous events as I could by making notes and drawings, by conducting and recording interviews and having them translated etc. In order to have them “at hand” for later systematic work and analysis I have organized and grouped them under a number of ( so far sixteen) headings in this index. I have given in brackets my sources of reference. These are my five notebooks, the tapescripts, cassettes, the maps, genealogies, the copies of texts and articles.

I have numbered these sources of reference as follows:

1. notebook no 1 covers the period from 1.1.2006 to 13.02.2006.
2. notebook no 2 covers the period from 13.02. to 14.03.2006 plus excerpts on literature found in the TRTC centre/ Chaibasa.
3. notebook no 3 contains my drawings.
4. notebook no 4 contains a diary and also notes.
5. notebook no 5 covers the period from 13.03. to 24.04. and also J. W.`s notes from his perspective.
6. no 6 are the tapescripts of the tape recordings, the genealogies a.o.
7. no 7 is a “dictionary of Ho culture” containing in alphabetical order key words that I have come across during my stay in Manbir/ Orissa. All of them I have checked as carefully as I could with the *HO – English Dictionary (Deeney: 2005)*

I have numbered and paginated all of my notebooks. Accordingly the 1<sup>st</sup> source of the topic *ancestors* would be in notebook no 5, p.153.

### 1. Ancestors

- 1.1. eB on ancestors and bongas (5: 153)
- 1.2. eB: Mando/ Story of the Strong Man (tape no 8), tapescript (6)
- 1.3. Purty on the creation myth of the Purty subkilis (5: 113)
- 1.4. history of settlement : *disum amin/ disum nam* (1:61),( 7: cp. D), (4: 14)
- 1.5. see below: Literature/Deeney: Spirit world etc.
- 1.6. “Ancestors: the relation between the living and the dead” ( paper and lecture for Gregory seminar on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006)

### 2. Bongas (rituals)

- 2.1. *baba mutu* (5:89)
- 2.2. *Ba` Porob*

- 2.2.1. *Ba` Porob* in Manbir, Taran (2: 70 – 83)
- 2.2.2. *Ba` Porob*: translation from (Purty/ Deeney, volume 2: 24-33), (2: 75, cassette no 3: A/B), (cassette no 4)
- 2.2.3. *Ba` Porob* in Manbir: music ( cass. 6)
- 2.2.4. *Ba` Porob* in Pathan Sai ( 4: 18)
- 2.3. *baram buri* (5: 70,80)
- 2.4. *bonga* against the evil eye (5:162)
- 2.5. *bonga* for two oxen (1:135)
- 2.6. *bonga* and *ketcho*: (5: 42)
- 2.7. child birth in Pathan Sai (1:78,126, 133), (2:28,4)
- 2.8. death related rituals
  - 2.8.1. translation from (Purty volume 1, chapter 1: 114 – 146) in ( 2:27)
  - 2.8.2. 1<sup>st</sup> burial – *sabsi*., *sassan diri*- in Gara Sai (1: 64-127), (4: 9), (5: 159,161)
  - 2.8.3. 1<sup>st</sup> burial in Badhu Sai (1:141), (1<sup>st</sup> day,5: 163), (2<sup>nd</sup> day, 5: 166)
  - 2.8.4. 1<sup>st</sup> burial in Pathan Sai (1:150 )
  - 2.8.5. 2<sup>nd</sup> burial – *diri dulsunum*- in Pathan Sai (4: 37 – 42), photos
  - 2.8.6. *dewa* and *bongas* (1:157, 59)
  - 2.8.7. *ere bonga* (1: 107,135,157), (4: 34ff)
  - 2.8.8. earth ritual ( 1:99)
  - 2.8.9. purifying rituals: *Adin bonga*, *Kolam bonga* (1: 127)
  - 2.8.10. ritual bath *sabsi*: (1: 148, 175, 90)
- 2.9. *Mokr Sankranti* (1:20)
- 2.10. *Saki*-ceremony I (2:42), II (5:62,146)
- 2.11. seta *andi* (dog`s marriage) (2:36 ff )
- 2.12. shaving rituals (1: 92, of baby 1:133)
- 2.13. *trishul/ puja* (3: drawing)

### **3. Everyday routines**

- 3.1. *Akara* (5:142), (4: 9), (7)
- 3.2. barter system (5: 130)
- 3.3. being socially outcast ( 5: 120)
- 3.4. construction work (5: 83)
- 3.5. *gonon* (5: 129)
- 3.6. house, the Ho (1 : 177), (3 : Z)

- 3.7. lice (5:106)
- 3.8. a mad dog (5: 139)
- 3.9. producing *ketcho*: ( (5:42)
- 3.10. respect relations (5: 156)
- 3.11. *san* (firewood) from the jungle (2:57)
- 3.12. veranda- ethnography (4: 22 – 26)

#### **4. Festivals (Porobko)**

- 4.1. *Ba`Porob* / March (2: 31,70,74,75,81,82), (4:18ff), (5:122,126)
- 4.2. *Baram Buri*/ April (5:70, 80)
- 4.3. Liste der *porobko* (1:88)
- 4.4. *Mage Porob* / February (1: 174 ff), (2: 29)
- 4.5. *Mokar Sankranti*/ January (1:20), (7)
- 4.6. see Literature/ Purty / Deeney/ 7 volumes

#### **5. Genealogies**

- 5.1. “elder Brother”: Jado Bage (from Sardar Sai/ Bage *kili*) (1:169,170), (6)
- 5.2. Giridhari: *munda* and local king of Manbir/ Bage *kili* (6)
- 5.3. Laxman from Marang Sai (( 2: 60)
- 5.4. Purty, Chumburu from Pathan Sai ( J.`s Saki): ancestors and kinship (6)
- 5.5. Purty, Santi from Pathan Sai ( E. R.`s Saki): address terms (6)
- 5.6. Shadrugan from Gara Sai/ Tarana (2: 50)

#### **6. Interviews**

##### **6.1. Helena Bage**

- 6.1.1. Questions for Helena (5:81)
- 6.1.2. 1<sup>st</sup> interview (5:104)
- 6.1.3. tape, ( 7.4.: cassette no 9, on women and *bongas*)
- 6.1.4. tape, (12.4.: cassette no 11, on marriage a.o.)
- 6.1.5. tapescripts (6)

##### **6.2. “elder Brother”/ Jado Bage/ Sardar Sai**

- 6.2.1. notes (1: 169,170), ( 1: 173), (5: 65,85,155)

- 6.2.2. tape, ( 20.02: cassette no 5, on the history of the Bage settlement, Sorai etc.)
- 6.2.3. tape, ( 12.03.: cass. no 10, on struggle with Durua king, Bage/Raja of Mayurbhanj in Baripada),
- 6.2.4. tape, (30.03.: cass. No 8: on tchou dance, clarifications)
- 6.2.5. tapescripts (6)

### **6.3. *diuri* of Pathan Sai (5: 1, 44)**

### **6.4. *diuri* of Jamda (5: 14, 132, 29)**

- 6.4.1. tape recording 23.03., cass. No 6 on diyan/ rasi, desauli, clients , Hos today
- 6.4.2. tapescript (6)

## **7. Kinship**

- 7.1. joking relationships/ Laxman (2:59)
- 7.2. kinship terms, see *genealogies/ address terms*
- 7.3. kinship terms of +1 level ( 6)
- 7.4. kinship terms of ego's *balas* and *hagas*, four-line terminology on 0 level (6)
- 7.5. respect relations (5: 158), (2: 62)
- 7.6. *Saki* : marital relations;  
see *Saki* or 5.5. for address terms

## **8. Life-Cycle**

### **8.1. Birth**, see *bongas/* child birth (2.6.)

### **8.2. Marriage**

- 8.2.1. *seta andi* ( 2: 36)
- 8.2.2. negotiations/ Laxman (2: 60)
- 8.2.3. mediating a marriage (4:26)
- 8.2.4. run-away marriages (5: 156)
- 8.2.5. marriage kilis of the Bages (5:155)
- 8.2.6. *gonon*- 7 years after the marriage (5:129)
- 8.2.7. marriage in Kuleibira (5: 26,34,48 - 60,138)

### **8.3. Death**

- 8.3.1. child death in Gara Sai (1:150 ff)

- 8.3.2. death of our neighbour/ *nana buri* (5: 141), (2: 53-57)
  - 8.3.3. death related rituals (2: 27)
  - 8.3.4. *diri dulsunum* (4:37, 42)
  - 8.3.5. *ere bonga* (4:34ff), (1: 157), (5: 113,117)
  - 8.3.6. 1<sup>st</sup> burial/ general information (1:64ff)
  - 8.3.7. 1<sup>st</sup> burial in Gara Sai (1:90ff), (4:9), (5: 159,161)
  - 8.3.8. 1<sup>st</sup> burial in Badhu Sai (1:141ff), (5:163, 166)
  - 8.3.9. 1<sup>st</sup> burial in Pathan Sai (1:150ff)
  - 8.3.10. grave (3: drawing)
  - 8.3.11. mad dog killed (5: 139)
- see *bongas*

## 9. Literature

- 9.1. Deeney, S.J.
  - 9.1.1. On Ho Creation Myths (2:3)
  - 9.1.2. The Husband in the Role of the Midwife (2:4)
  - 9.1.3. How the Hos foretell the weather (2:5)
  - 9.1.4. The Hos' Continued Relationship with their dead (2:6)
  - 9.1.5. Ho Women's Rights: Appeal to Supreme Court (2:8)
  - 9.1.6. Some Theological Reflections on Ancestor Veneration among the Hos (complete copy)
  - 9.1.7. What Tribals get from the trees of the jungle (2:14)
  - 9.1.8. Article by himself about himself and the Hos (2:24)
  - 9.1.9. The Spirit world of the Hos seen in a Christian Perspective (complete copy)
  - 9.1.10. a list of Deeney's articles (2: 25)
- 9.2. TRTC Library/ Chaibasa
  - 9.2.1. systematic catalogue (2:10)
  - 9.2.2. selected literature on the Hos (2:12)
- 9.3. Michael Yorke: outline of his PhD thesis from 1976 (2:16)
- 9.4. D.S. Purty/ Deeney: *Ho Disum- Ho Honko*, 7 volumes
  - 9.4.1. vol. 1: Death related rituals 114-146; birth related rituals 1-18; finding a namesake (*nutum sapaki*); marriage; (2: 27)
  - 9.4.2. vol. 2: Porobko (Festivals): *Mage* 1 - 29, *Ba`* 24 - 33, *Hero* 39 - 49, *Batauli* 50-55, *Jaumnama* 56-63, *Hiad Murgad* 64-67), etc (2:29)
  - 9.4.3. vol. 3: Hospitality and Respect relationships etc (2:32)

- 9.4.4. vol. 4: out of print
- 9.4.5. vol. 5: From infancy to old age, 1 – 262 (2:32)
- 9.4.6. vol. 6: Hunting 232p., (2:34)
- 9.4.7. vol. 7: Myths and Old stories (2:35)

## **10. Manbir**

- 10.1. Manbir in maps: the village and the *sai* (
- 10.2. Maran Manbir in numbers. the census
- 10.3. Maran Manbir in context: location, *kilis* and inhabitants
- 10.4. Legend

## **11. Miscellaneous**

- 11.1. Entry into the field (lecture in C. Gregory's seminar on May 29, 2005)
- 11.2. Die persönliche Erfahrung der Feldforschung ( lecture in tutorial Pontzen on 06.07.2006)

## **12. Myths/ History**

- 12.1. Ho creation myths/ Deeney/Purty (2: 3)
  - 12.2. dto/ Buriuli in Kathbaria (2: 63)
  - 12.3. myth of the Purty kili ( 5: 113)
  - 12.4. Bage kili:
    - 12.4.1. the history of their settlement,
    - 12.4.2. exchange of women among the Bage and the Hos,
    - 12.4.3. Sohrai/ a Bage festival,
    - 12.4.4. namesgiving of Kili,
    - 12.4.5. food habits,
    - 12.4.6. buffalo sacrifice,
    - 12.4.7. commemoration stones,
    - 12.4.8. mythology: from goddess to king,
    - 12.4.9. relationship Bage – raja (6: tapescript of interviews with elder Brother)
    - 12.4.10. Story of Mando, the strong man ( cass. No 8)
- see: *interviews/ tape recordings/ tapescripts*

see ( 1:61, *disum amin – disum nam*)

### **13. Relations ( inter-personal, inter- group)**

- 13.1. children (5:26)
- 13.2. cook- carpenter (5: 60)
- 13.3. *Jomnu*/ invitation in Marang Sai (5:100)
- 13.4. mediator (4:26)
- 13.5. Muslims – Santal (5:25)
- 13.6. Santal – Hos (2:1)
- 13.7. relation to the dead ( 2:6,15,19)
- 13.8. respect relations (5: 158), (2: 62)
- 13.9. ritual friendship (1: 48)

see Deeney/Literature

*sakin*: see *saki*

### **14. Saki**

- 14.1. ceremonies, *sakin*- related (2:42), (5:62,146)
- 14.2. days spent with our *sakins*` (4: 18ff), (5:9,27)
- 14.3. duties as village headman/ political life (5:117)
- 14.4. organising our farewell (5 : 100)
- 14.5. our *saki* on illness (5: 89)
- 14.6. preparing *ranu* (5: 107)
- 14.7. the myth of the Purty kilis and subkilis ( 5:113)

### **15. Stones**

- 15.1. menhirs near Chaibasa/ Bai Hatu (5: 76)
- 15.2. dto near Barabil (7: M)
- 15.3. commemoration stones (5: 131)
- 15.4. stones in Papari Sai and Marang Manbir (4: 21)
- 15.5. *saki diri* / witness stones (1: 142)
- 15.6. *sassan diri* / burial stones(1: 80,151)
- 15.7. *diri dulsunum* / 2nd burial: see *bonga*/ death related rituals)

## 16. Tapes

Tape no 3:

- 3.03.06: our neighbours singing at *diri dulsunum*
- 11.03.06: *Ba`porob*: singing at the diuri's place in Pathan Sai
- 11.03.: singing at our sakin's yBr (best archer at bow/arrow competition) at *Ba`porob*
- On *Ba`-Porob*. Translation - summary from Purty/Deeney, vol. 1, by Guru Hansda (our assistant) on tape

Tape no 4: translation/summary continued from no 3

Tape no 5:

- 20.02.2006: elder Brother/ Jadhoo Bage from Sardar Sai on the history of the Bage, Sorai, namesgiving of the Bage *kili*, food habits, buffalo sacrifice, biddiri as commemoration of settlement, mythology: from goddess to king. 2<sup>nd</sup> interview. (1<sup>st</sup> interview without tape.)
- Neighbourly talk at the well in front of our house.

Tape no 6:

- 14.03.06: marriage bonga in Marang Sai (House no 58/general)
- 14.03.06: *Ba`porob* in Marang S.: dancing and singing in the evening
- 23.03.06: interview with the *diuri* of Jamda ( on sacred *diyan*, gods on *desauli*, clients of Hos etc)

Tape no 7:

- 23.03.06: *diri dulsunum*; women singing on their way to Papari Sai and passing our home
- 24./25.03. 06: marriage at Kuleibira, drumming at day, drumming at night.
- 26.03.06: two young women talking at the well.

Tape no 8:

- 30.03.: interviewing our elder Brother from Sardar Sai, clarifications.
- The Story of the Strong Man, as told by the eB. (tapescript: see 6)

Tape no 9: 7.04.2006: talking to Helena Bage from Sardar Sai

Tape no 10: 12.03.06: our eB on expelling the Durua king and the raja of Mayurbhanj in Bariphada

Tape no 11: 12.04.: talk to Helena Bage, continued tape no 9 (not yet fully transcribed)

# 1. Ancestors

## 1.2. The Story of Mando, the Strong Man

- told by Jado from Sardar Sai ( cp. also 6.2.4; 12.4.10 )
- 30. 3. 2006.
- recorded in Ho on tape no 8, side B.
- this is the translation into English by our assistant Guru.

By post/title Mando was actually not a Sardar. He was physically a very strong man. As our geneology says they were the sons of Madho. Motai was the eldest son, then Dunda, Domke, then Mando, Jambira and the youngest was Jugru.

The eldest son, Motai, was performing the duties of Sardar. The rest of the brothers were living a common life. But Mando was different from them in terms of his physical strength.. When they went to the jungle to bring wood with their bullock carts, Mando often used to pull his cart himself instead of using the buffaloes.

The Raja (king), Krusto Chandra Bhanj Deo, called Mando to wrestle with his own wrestlers. The wrestling competition as arranged in a place called 'Chingri Pokhri' near Kherna. The Raja asked Mando what food he would like to eat. Mando demanded the meat of a big goat and one 'hata' filled with *chauli* ( uncooked rice). They cooked all eat and rice. Mando ate up all cooked meat and rice. He left nothing even for his brother Jugru who had accompanied him. The Raja's servants told the Raja how much Mando ate leaving nothing even for his brother Jugru. Then Jugru was given one cock and one poila rice to cook and eat.

When the Raja's wrestler came to know about Mando's food habits, he mocked at him for his rudeness. But Mando did not care and waited for the next morning.

Next day they woke up very early. Both of them went to Tendo river and sat on a huge stone oiling their bodies. Both were to be given one *pua* (1/4 of a kg) of mustard oil each. But Mando asked for mustard seeds. He was given a kg. He pressed the seeds in one hand, collected that oil in his other hand and oiled his body. He repeated this until one kg of mustard seeds were finished and oiled his whole body.

After oiling his body it was time to brush his teeth. While they were brushing their teeth, Mando noticed that the huge stone on which they sat, was moving a bit up and down due to its unbalanced installation. Mando requested the Raja's wrestler to lift the stone and to re-install it. The wrestler tried his best for hours but failed. Mando mocked at him saying that he was eating the Raja's food for no use.

Now Mando turned to the stone. He did not touch it with his hands. He pushed it with his foot and settled it on the ground. The Raja's wrestler was so afraid and frightened that he fled from there and nobody knew of his whereabouts.

Mando was so strong that he could cross the Kanhui river when it was flooded.

Once there was a feast arranged by Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo at Bahalda in a Brahmin's house. The *poyta* ceremony should take place there. All important and famous people were invited to that ceremony. So, also Mando was sent for.

When Mando arrived, the Raja welcomed him. He told the gathering that Mando can eat a lot and ordered them to give him as much as he (Mando) could eat. They prepared food for 400 – 500 people. Mando ate up everything. Nothing was left for the others.

After Mando finished eating the Raja questioned him: you have the same stomach as we have. Tell me where do you keep all that you have eaten? Mando answers: what I ate is accumulating in a place near Dundu. And the Raja realised that Mando was not a common man, that he was somehow extraordinary.

The Raja sent his men to the Dundu Ghat beside the Khadang River. They saw that everything that Mando had eaten, accumulated there.

“I think”, the elder Brother said, “Mando was equipped with three things- his own physical strength, his inner qualities and blessings of his *guru* (teacher) and ancestors. That is why he did whatever he wished without any failure.”

Q: what do you think about the bed which we saw in Marang Sai and which is said to have been used by Mando?

Jadho: No, he was not a monster. He was a man like us. Originally the bed was made earlier than Mando, even earlier than Motai. After Motai died nobody slept on it. But afterwards Mando Budi (Maybe Mando's wife?) who was called Raimoni, wanted to use that bed. She slept with her husband on that bed. But as it is a sin to use a bed of *bau honyar* both of them became blind. And Mando Sardar had his last breath on that bed. So people say that bed belongs to him. It was different, bigger than what it seems to be today.

Like this there are many stories related to him. Although he was not a real Sardar people used to call him Mando Sardar because of his physical strength. Just like a family member of a Raja is called a Raja.

Q: Who was the guru of Mando?

Jadho: He was Buddhu Pandit. He blessed Mando. Jambira, one of Mando's brothers, was the *diuri*. He had direct connection to Gods and Goddesses. Thus Mando was the combination of many blessings and power.

## **1.6. About the Hos: Ancestors.**

### **The relation between the living and the dead**

Handed in to:

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## **Ancestors: the relation between the living and the dead**

In this chapter I will deal with the Hos`, the Aghrias` and the Gadabas` attitude towards their ancestors. I shall sum up S.J. Deeney`s articles on the ancestor veneration of the Hos<sup>2</sup>, U. Skoda`s discussion of the ancestor worshipping of the Aghrias<sup>3</sup>, P. Berger`s paragraphs on the Gadabas and their relation towards their ancestors<sup>4</sup>.

Finally I will add the experience I had with the Hos in that respect during my fieldwork in Orissa this year by showing and explaining a few photos of death rituals, especially the “making of the ancestors”.

### **Ancestor veneration and Ho Society**

Ancestors are a central category of Ho culture. Huge tamarind trees (*jojo daru*) dominate village and landscape shading immense burial stones (*sasan diri*) each referring to an ancestor of a particular clan (*kili*). Thus ancestor veneration on a village level is given a visible, very concrete public expression, an expression that no one approaching a village will escape.

Ancestor veneration on a family level is less visible. Whenever a Ho eats or drinks something, a bit of cooked rice or a few drops of rice beer will be customarily offered to the ancestors; other rituals addressed to the ancestors take place more in seclusion in the *adin*, the sacred part of the Ho house, where also the family meal is prepared. This *adin* is usually part of a room portioned off by a wall coming only partly way up and serving as the site where the ancestors are venerated and where they are supposed to dwell.

Deeney has written three articles on the ancestor veneration among the Hos.<sup>5</sup> He reflects on the spirit world of the Hos with *Singbonga* at the top as the creator of the universe and its Supreme Being and the *bongas* or spirits he created to involve themselves in the lives of men, tutelary as well as malign ones. Of this invisible spirit world ancestors form a part. In “The Hos` Continued Relationship with their Dead” Deeney focuses on aspects of purity and impurity which he again takes up in “Some Theological Reflections...”. Here he also answers the following questions:

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<sup>2</sup> I will do this at some length, since the type - written manuscripts have not yet been published in English. The articles that I will focus on are translations from Ho into English by Deeney. Together with D.S. Purty, his *pandit*, as he calls him, he has written and/ or edited seven volumes on the Hos and their culture. These small books are written in Ho and in the Devanagari script. They have not yet been translated but for those few parts that Deeney translated himself. No year is given. The first of the seven volumes, however, was published in 1978.

<sup>3</sup> U. Skoda, *The Aghria, A peasant Caste on a Tribal Frontier*, New Delhi 2005.

<sup>4</sup> P. Berger, *Füttern, Speisen und Verschlingen. Ritual und Gesellschaft im Hochland von Orissa, Indien*. Berlin, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> (1) “Some theological Reflections on Ancestor Veneration among the Hos”, (2) “The Spirit World of the Hos”, (3) “The Hos` Continued Relationship with their Dead”.

- (a) who becomes an ancestor, when and how?
- (b) What is the Hos' attitude toward their ancestors?
- (c) What concrete expression is given to the ancestor veneration of the Hos?

(a) Whoever is eligible to be called into the *adin* will become an ancestor and will consequently be eligible for veneration. This holds true basically for all Hos, except

- those who die a violent death, e.g. by an animal or by an infectious disease, especially smallpox,
- women who die in childbirth before giving birth to the child
- children who die before the namesgiving ceremony
- those who have been outcast. Reasons for this can be marrying within the same *kili* which is considered incest, or marrying a non – Ho.<sup>6</sup>

Veneration will start from the moment when the soul (*rowa*)<sup>7</sup> of the dead person has been called into the *adin* or would have been called into the *adin*, in case a Ho has died far away from home and had to be buried there.

Veneration of the ancestors is done mostly at two levels, (1) a village level and (2) a family level.

(1) On occasions when sacrifices or prayers are offered for the whole village community<sup>8</sup>, the dead male heads of the families of that village are mentioned by name, going back about two generations. Although women and children, who have died, are not mentioned by name, they are included as can be shown from the wording of the prayers in which e.g. *mothers* and *women* are clearly mentioned. Addressing the ancestors of two generations can mean quite a long, of course unwritten list of names, and Deeney mentions one case ( personal communication), when an old man cited a list of more than 128 names of the ancestors of his village. After about two generations the names of the deceased are no longer mentioned at the village level, but as they will continue to be considered as ancestors, they will continue to be venerated as long as this Ho tradition is alive and practised.

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<sup>6</sup> In the Jamda area of Majurbhanj where I did fieldwork a Ho man or woman would also become an outcast in the case of marrying a Christian, even if she/he were a Christian Ho.

<sup>7</sup> To understand the terms, their distinctions and the context to come better I will give a few definitions, all of them taken from S.J. Deeney, *Ho – English Dictionary*, New Edition – 2005. Revised and Enlarged. Xavier Publications.

**Rowa** : « soul. The *rowa* of a man does not die. While a man is still alive his *rowa* can leave his body and move around, e.g. when he is dreaming or at the time of near death or sickness. When a man dies his *rowa* leaves the body and later is called into the *adin* of his family in (a.o.) the *keya or umbul ader* ceremony. “ ( p.315)

**Ji** : “ the principle of life. When this goes a man dies; spirit; heart ( not in physical sense). “ (p.179)

**Jibon** : “life; spirit; to put one’s heart into, to be engrossed in” (p.179)

**Bonga** : “ a spirit; to sacrifice ...” (p.47)

When a person dies, his body will be buried in a grave. However, his soul is believed to live on.

<sup>8</sup> Such occasions, when the complete village is addressed are e.g. the big village festivals like *mage porob* (around the full moon day of February), *ba porob* (around the full moon day of March) or *batauli* ( a feast to obtain proper rain ), in which case it is the diuri’s responsibility to name all the ancestors.

(2) At a family level all the dead relatives of the family are venerated, i.e all those who are known to descend from a common ancestor about four generations back. Again only men would be named, although also here women and children are included among the ancestors being venerated. In concrete numbers this means that in the case of a family veneration usually about 15 – 20 ancestors are named<sup>9</sup>. Therefore once someone's *rowa* has been called into any *adin* he or she is venerated not only in that particular *adin* but also in the *adins* of all the relatives within the same *kili*<sup>10</sup> descended from a common FFF or a FFFF.

The relation between *adin*, ancestors and those still living is stressed in yet another way. The family meal, which is cooked within the *adin*, is prepared in the *mandi chatu* (*mandi*: rice, *chatu*: earthen pot). Those who descended from a common ancestor refer to each other as *miyad mandi- chaturenko* (*miyad*: one; people of one/ same rice pot) that way referring to those distant ancestors who once ate from the same rice pot.<sup>11</sup> People related like that may enter one another's *adin* and may touch one another's *mandi chatu*. If any member of a family so related dies, i.e. being related over four generations by a common ancestor, then all the families so related would throw out or no longer use the *mandi chatu* which had been currently in use. This relationship is reflected in the language which calls those *miyad mandi chaturenko* also *mandi chatu epera:ko* (*era*: -to throw away; *epera*:- to mutually throw away).

(b) what is the Hos' attitude towards their ancestors?

When offering to their ancestors, Hos refer to them as *ham hoko* ( old men), followed by *dum hoko* ( sleeping men). Hos think of their ancestors as spirits, since they have entered the spirit world. They do not refer to them as *bongas*, although in offerings to their ancestors they make use of the verbal form of the root *bonga*<sup>12</sup> the same way as they do when addressing *Singbonga* or any of the *bongas*.

Having passed over into the spirit world it is believed that the ancestors have access to and intercessory power with *Singbonga* and the *bongas*. In prayers they are asked directly to intervene on their behalf and to ask for favours.

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<sup>9</sup> In the case of my *sakin* 26 ancestors were named; see genealogy of Chumburu Perti.

<sup>10</sup> As a mother or a wife are from a different *kili(s)*, their ancestors will not be included.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Yorke in his PHD thesis enlarged on the *mandi chatu* and its implications and Deeney has made use of a few of Yorke's ideas in this context ( personal communication).

<sup>12</sup> Meaning:" to make an offering to"

It is also believed that the ancestors of the same family as connected by a common ancestor are cordially united with one another by sitting on the same stool: “ you all sit together on the same stool ...closely united (hand in hand, arm in arm) as are the teeth of a bear- trap”.<sup>13</sup>

Though invisible to them, Hos think of their ancestors as family members, who have not left them, who remain very close to them, who are aware of and concerned about all that goes on in the family, who will continue to stay with them, just in a different way from before and who continue to have their responsibilities for the family members and also gain new ones. They are believed to be especially concerned with the ritual purity of the family, so when a new member is brought into the family either by birth or by marriage, when a member of the household dies, when the family moves to a new place etc. special (re-)purification rituals are being performed.<sup>14</sup> That way the bond between the living and the dead members of a family remains a strong one.

As members of the invisible spirit world the ancestors share the capacity of *Singbonga* and the other spirits of not being limited to a particular spatial presence. Although the *rowa* is called into a particular *adin*, it does not mean that the ancestor is present only in that particular *adin*. One and the same ancestor can be called upon within many different *adins* of brothers, cousins etc. simultaneously and also at many different places, e.g. at the threshing floor, in the cow – shed, while hunting, in the fields, wherever offerings are made to them which they gratefully receive.

If ancestors are not treated with proper respect or when a family does not pay proper attention to its social purity and to traditional observances, they may inflict mild punishment on the respective members. This is intended to call attention to the faults<sup>15</sup> that have been committed and to make good rather than to cause harm. There is no malicious intention assumed neither on the side of the offenders nor on the side of the ancestors, the offended. Means of appeasing ancestors, in case that in a process of divining a shaman ( *dewa*) has ascertained that the ancestors are punishing someone, are tobacco (*sukul*) offered by men and cooked rice (*mandi*) and rice beer ( *diyan*) offered by women.

(c ) What concrete expression is given to ancestor veneration?

Prayers are being made to the ancestors as well as sacrifices, vegetarian and animal ones.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ratamleka- paseleka ti: yakan- gatiyakante, norakan- jangiyakante* ...Deeney quotes and translates here from Purty ( volume 4: 31,33), who has tape- recorded and transcribed a number of prayers. These transcriptions are published in Ho in the seven booklets on Ho culture. In this case the quote has been taken from the 4<sup>th</sup> volume, p. 31 ff.

<sup>14</sup> for more details see the next paragraph ( c ).

<sup>15</sup> When my *sakin* fell ill one day he was seriously worried contemplating what mistakes he had committed.

Whenever a sacrifice is made to *Singbonga* or to any other spirit, also in the case that a sacrifice has been promised (*agom*), the ancestors are implored to intercede and add their support. If an animal has been sacrificed to *Singbonga* on the occasion of a feast (*porob*), times of sickness in the family or an epidemic in the village, at the completion of the rice harvest at the threshing floor (*kolam*) etc. the liver and the lungs will always be offered to the ancestors. So no separate animal sacrifices are made in the name of the ancestors.

There are some occasions, however, when animal sacrifices are made directly to the ancestors, customarily a *kaluti*. This is a hen which has reached the laying age but has not yet hatched eggs. This happens

( 1 ) when a baby is born. The baby is considered socially impure, and so is everybody taking care of it, especially the baby's father since with the Hos the father is the midwife and thus shares his wife's impurity. Until purified the new baby is not seen as a part of the tribe or the family. Only after a number of rituals will the baby be fully purified and may be properly introduced to the ancestors thus becoming entitled to their protection and intercession.

In the case of a new-born baby a *kaluti* is offered to the ancestors to make good for the social impurity they may have been exposed to.

(2) when a new wife in the family needs to be introduced to and accepted by the ancestors of her husband. Only after the *jom- isin* (*jom*: to eat, *isin*: to prepare) ceremony is she considered ritually pure enough to enter the *adin*, touch the *mandi chatu* or prepare the family meal.

(3) when a member of the household dies and his *rowa* after several attempts refuses to enter the *adin* a *kaluti* will be offered to the ancestors pleading with them to welcome the spirit of the dead in their company.

(4) after the stone is placed on the grave of a dead person.

(5) when a family moves into a new house they will ask their ancestors to move with them.

They will also offer a chicken to them<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> The prayers addressed to the ancestors differ depending on the particular occasions. So the prayers in the case of a childbirth differ significantly from those of bringing a new wife into the house or those at the time of moving into a new house etc. As these prayers have been recorded in detail by D. Purty, I will give the English translation worked out by S.J. Deeney to convey the mood and the idea of ancestor veneration more authentically:

“From today, old men, sleeping men, I am making this my home. From today I am calling you to this house. Protect us. Let there not be sickness or suffering in this house. Today I am purifying this house... Revered old men who have died long ago, sitting on the one stool and dividing this evenly among yourselves, eat and drink this with merriment and joy. May we, your children, remain well. Do not leave us, do not forget us. Today we are bringing the *mandi chatu* into this house, into this *adin*. Do not punish us, do not despise us “. From Purty/2/87.

I will not repeat the offerings made to the ancestors that I have mentioned so far: in the case of disrespect and punishment, on the occasion of a village or a family feast or the offerings of rice and rice beer before every meal.

To conclude it should have become clear that Hos have a strong awareness of their ancestors and that the bond between the living and the dead is an active one. Hos do not conceive of their ancestors as divine or Gods. They are treated and looked upon as respected members of the family who have moved into the invisible world where they are closer to *Singbonga* and the other spirits. As spirits they would retain their human aspirations and keep their inclinations and defects, also physical disabilities like lameness and blindness.<sup>17</sup>

This way Deeney speaks of ancestor veneration and criticizes the term “ancestor worship” often used when referring to the Hos, because the word “worship” would imply the adoration shown to a deity.

### **Ancestor worshipping and the Aghrias**

I will now summarize those parts of U. Skoda, *The Aghria. A peasant Caste on a Tribal Frontier*<sup>18</sup>, which deal with the worshipping of the ancestors of the Aghria and other related aspects. Within the topic of the various stages of the life-cycle Skoda discusses birth, marriage, death, transformations, and rebirth. Between death and birth, given a cyclic understanding of the continuity of life, Skoda deals with ancestors and the worshipping of the ancestors.

According to Skoda the Aghrias associate a mild form of impurity with the ancestors. In the ideology of the Aghrias as reflected in their notion of the life cycle at the time of death maximal impurity is reached, which can only partly be transformed towards purity by means of rituals. So the period of time that the full transformation into an ancestor requires is considered a period of pollution. Only after a transitory period of one full year can one fully become an ancestor.

Likewise the fortnight of the ancestors (*pitru paks*) is considered an impure period though different from birth pollution, when the family members neither shave nor cut their nails and the house is cleaned only very superficially. However, at the end of *pitru paks* no elaborate purifying measures comparable to rituals after birth and death are required. Maybe this is the reason why Skoda speaks of a “mild form of pollution”.

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<sup>17</sup> In this context Deeney refers to F. Hoffman's *Encyclopedia Mundarica*, p.1640. As the Mundas symbolize and treat the *roa* of a dead person as having a body, the same could be said of the Hos.

<sup>18</sup> New Delhi 2005.

The main objective of a funeral is to turn a spirit – ghost (*pret*), who has dangerous potential, into an ancestor (*pitru*), who is seen rather as a protective force whose blessings are sought for agricultural production, weddings etc. The transformation is a gradual process aiming at pacifying the *pret* and his final merging with the ancestors (Skoda 2005: 356).

Who becomes an ancestor?

According to Skoda those will become ancestors, for whom the complete funeral ceremonies have been performed. This is actually done in the case of the Aghrias only for those who are married. And: unmarried Aghrias are not even allowed to worship the ancestors. At their wedding bride and groom will perform a ritual for the ancestors for the first time together with their parents.

There are more specifications. Even if married someone who commits suicide and women who die during pregnancy or during confinement thereafter cannot become an ancestor. These persons will turn into a category of evil spirits and will not be remembered in any rituals for the ancestors.

What is the Aghrias' attitude towards their ancestors?

Aghrias seem to assume that their ancestors are in heaven waiting for a rebirth. They are worshipped to come back to their family. Although most ancestors seem to be reborn in an alternating generation as grandchildren, this is, according to Skoda, no fixed rule, but generally taken for granted. By conceiving of the ancestors as waiting to be reborn the continuity of the life – *cycle* is stressed, especially the phase between death and birth. Ancestors are not considered to be present in the house. A limited communication with ancestors is possible in rituals and in dreams, which is interpreted as a sign of the ancestor's concern for his family. In dreams they may see to it that guests are served properly, they may ensure a successful harvest, they may complain about being treated disrespectfully.

How are ancestors worshipped?

Aghrias believe that their ancestors will return to their families for a fortnight in September/October “during the dark side of the moon” ( Skoda 2005: 359 ) every year. During this period “the ancestors are constantly worshipped” ( Skoda 2005: 359). They are offered special food, flowers, a *ghi*- lamp and incense by a daughter – in – law of the house. The offerings are being made under the eaves of the house, usually on a spot precisely between the veranda and the place where the rain falls from the roof. On a small stool cigarettes and tobacco are placed plus small twigs as tooth – brushes.

Also rituals are performed in this period for ancestors whose bones have not yet been taken to the Ganga. On the 9<sup>th</sup> day of this fortnight all female ancestors will be collectively worshipped whereas on the 10<sup>th</sup> day all male ancestors will be collectively worshipped.

At the end of this period the ancestors are asked, again by a daughter – in – law, to protect the fields.

Apart from this ‘fortnight of the ancestors’ ancestors are being worshipped at the occasion of marriage, as mentioned above.

### **The Gadabas and their ancestors**

According to Berger ( 2004: 260/261) ancestors (*anibai*) are of minor importance compared to those who have recently died (*duma*). These are being paid attention since they are potentially and generally dangerous to those living on. They are expected to withdraw from the lives of the Gadabas fully resulting in a complete breach of the social relations they once had with the living. It is the gods’ task to protect the Gadabas, and they are constantly implored for their support and protection. A Gadaba will become an *anibai* as soon as the funeral rites have been performed. But *anibai* with the Gadabas constitute an undifferentiated, socially seemingly irrelevant category. The only relation to the living that seems to be of any relevance is the generation of the village founders, who are commemorated by a stone. Genealogies of ancestors are not known. All in all, the *anibai* of the Gadabas do not seem to play a central role, neither as individuals nor as collective ( Berger 2004: 261)

### **Conclusion**

Comparing the category of the ancestors as conceived of and practised by the Hos, the Gadabas and the Aghrias three entirely different concepts are revealed.

After the burial and as soon as the funeral rites have been completed Hos conceive of their ancestors as dwelling inside their houses and as forming part of their everyday and their ritual lives. The relations between the ancestors and those living are mainly beneficial ones and, according to Deeney, every Ho sincerely hopes for his future to always be remembered and to continue to be included in the offerings.

This is very different from the Gadabas. According to Berger ancestors’ (*anibai*) genealogies are not known, although with the Hos these were given to me as soon as I had asked what about their culture they would consider especially important. Moreover, it seemed to be a privilege of and a matter of pride for those who were able and allowed to come up with these genealogies, usually senior members of the community of a high status.

The Gadabas pay great attention to the deceased (*duma*) after cremation expecting them to utterly retire in due time from the lives of those living on. Berger denies that in the case of the Gadabas the relation to the ancestors will structure the relations of those alive, he denies any social relevance to the relations with 'apical ancestors' (Berger 2004: 260). Exactly this seems to me to be the case with the Hos. In the rituals on the family level all ( male) ancestors over four generations back are addressed and thus the local lineage of the *kili* is constituted; by rituals on the village level, in which the dead male members over two generations are addressed, the ritual and social identity of the village is constituted.

The ancestor veneration of the Hos also seems greatly different from the Aghrias' worshipping rules and practices of the ancestors. Whereas Hos immediately after the completion of the funeral rites become eligible for ancestor veneration, a transition period of one year is assumed with the Aghrias. Ancestors will return once every year to their families for two weeks allegedly from an assumed place like heaven, whereas Ho ancestors stay on with their families throughout the year and right inside their houses. Contact, presence and communication thus is given in practice on a daily basis.

I also understood that Aghrias are very much concerned with their own impurity as caused by the relation to their ancestors as well as due to their worshipping them. The Hos are rather worried about their ancestors being exposed to any inconvenience due to the social impurity which a family experiences at certain times like childbirth etc. The protective role of the ancestors is moreover seen in their responsibility of taking care of a Ho family's social purity. Skoda quotes Michaels (Skoda 2005: 356) to reveal the Aghrias' unclear notion of where exactly to locate their ancestors. This in a way also seems true of the Gadaba. It certainly is not true for the Hos with their ancestors located inside their *adin*.

On the other hand, Hos, Gadabas and Aghrias share the conviction that one can only become an ancestor after the funeral rites have been fully performed. The complete funeral rites with the Aghrias, however, presuppose that someone is married, whereas for the Hos and the Gadabas these would be given to anybody after his/ her namesgiving ceremony ( apart from other a.m. restrictions).

### 3. Everyday Routines

#### 3.12. Veranda – Ethnography or: A Day in the life of the community well.

As long as I had stayed in Manbir I had wanted -just for a day or two- to do nothing but sit on the veranda and make notes on what I was witnessing, close to and around the main community well. I was wondering if there might be any anthropological value involved in case I was working out a change of perspective like *A day in the life of the tamarind tree* ( what did it witness? Goats in the shade: what is their fate, which are they sacrificed, is a *diuri*'s goat different from somebody else's, what about the ritual difference of a black and a white one; children playing, playing what and how, who with; a sacred fire at the time of *ba-porob* kept burning all night by the *diuri*'s wife right below it; men assembling discussing village affairs in its shade; men walking in line to their ritual bath being welcomed by the village women on their way back just below the tree etc.); or *A day in the life of the jungle (buru)* etc. etc. It proved impossible because somehow or other I got involved in a number of activities. So also this attempt at noting down the daily routines at the community well is an incomplete one.

March 27 and 30, 2006

5.05 a.m. Dawn; girls and women get water from the well, giggling, talking  
5.30 a.m. more and more women are coming, also very young children  
7 a.m. someone has come on his bicycle selling "jewellery". He is singing so people realize he is there. A few women are interested, very few are buying something. He waits for about 20 mins, then cycles to the neighbouring *sai*.

The *diuri*'s wife is purifying the inner courtyard of their house with cowdung.

7.20 it's quiet at the well.  
The *diuri* begins to milk his cow ( for us and ??)  
7.25 a cart drawn by two oxen rolls down the village road. It is full of freshly cut tree trunks.  
Some women begin to clean their teeth/ chew their twigs ( *karkad*).  
7.40 *diuri* is still milking his cows;  
his wife cleans the stable opposite our house in which they keep sheep.  
A man with a big bundle of firewood ( *san*) on his bicycle and a thick trunk comes from the jungle and moves towards Chatani Sai.

7.45 schoolchildren go down the road towards the primary school, a bundle of books and exercise books in their hands.

Laxman is on his way home, he is walking with and talking with a friend of his. He holds a paper in his hand.

Our neighbour is walking around (*honorte*).

Three women on their way to the jungle.

The diuri's place is still being purified with cowdung.

7.55 the first child that I see running- on his way to school.

One of our Hindu neighbours is talking about the "Germans"

We receive our milk: a daily ritual. While the diuri is pouring the milk he is either saying *towa duletananj* ( I am pouring the milk), while before I would address him by saying "towa emanjme" (Please, give me milk).

Another two women on their way to the jungle

A Ho whose brother used to sit in Parliament is talking to two other men. After that he is walking around (*honorte*)

One of my neighbour's sons who is recovering from a broken leg is lying on his bed (*karkom*) inside the courtyard singing

Some boys climb a tree to cut some *karkad* ( toothsticks). Serving the same purpose the day before the last palmtree in front of our kitchen window had been made use of.

7.58 a bullcart is led towards the jungle by a boy of about 12 years. The cart is empty but for four boys.

8.15. A man with two freshly cut tree trunks on a bullcart on his way to Chatani sai.

8.45 2 goats in front of our house

The *diuri's* wife addresses us asking me about our *saki* ceremony which took place at our saki's house. She wants to see and feel the *lija*, the cloth that we were given during the ceremony. She seems to appreciate it.

We show the film that we made during the wedding ceremony in Kuleibira which shows me dancing with the *mamus* a.o.

8.58: Women with *mur* leaves for a "shed hut" in Jamda return from the jungle.

9.05 A woman on her way to the jungle a basket on her head- I presume for *hasu*, that is soil plaster the *pindigi* or the house

Our Parliamentarian goes to my iril, the woman who is the ricebeer producer in the village. He goes there together with two men and stays for about 20 minutes.

9.14 A girl with a freshly cut tree on her head returning from the jungle.

It is a sleepy quiet day, everybody and everything happens very, very slowly.

Our assistant is late- as usual. I decide to wash my hair- inside the house.

9.32: The carpenter has come and brought our table!! (The tree had had to be cut in Jharkand- across the river, and the wood had had to dry. All in all it had taken more than five weeks to have the table finished.) There it is- right on the verandah and I'm sitting at it! So far with veranda-ethnographers I have had rather negative connotations. Right now I feel that the independent step onto the veranda seems a huge one- being prepared to talk to people in their language and being prepared to be talked to ( including not being able to understand and respond).

10.20 the *diuri*'s mother- in- law washes herself at the community well. ( So do mostly only elderly women; the younger ones take their bath before lunch in one of the water holes (*banda*) .

10.21 Sheep on the road, goats inside our room, oxen at the community well.

Our female neighbour is at the well. She seems to have recovered from a fit of malaria. She had been lying on her bed (*karkom*) for three days inside the courtyard.

10.22 the woman who had returned from the jungle at 8.58 for the first time now returns for the second time. Again she drags a bundle of wood for a shed hut

10.25 Laxman is sitting on a *karkom* at our neighbours`. J. had invited him last night, he had agreed but had not turned up.

10.40 3 women with firewood (*san*) return from the jungle.

Time and again women stop telling me how much they appreciate that I am wearing a saree- at last!

10.45 Laxman leaves on a bicycle. He is sitting on top with his legs crossed doing nothing. He is being moved by a young boy who is sitting at the back behind him and who cycles him home. It's all a big joke, everywhere big smiles. ( Laxman's marriage is being meditated at the time and it seems that he is enjoying his last days in freedom- at least this is our assistant's interpretation.)

11.05 I ask my neighbour about the name of a music instrument that was played during the wedding in Kuleibira and that seems unknown here under the name that was given me there : *reta*:. I draw it on a piece of paper. Immediately people gather around us and start discussing. I hear the word *sekor/sekod*, which I will also find afterwards in Deeney's dictionary. Before this term is finally passed on to me the *diuri*'s wife is asked and agrees. Everybody seems to know the instrument and seems to know about it, they laugh and some start

dancing. We are Hos, Generals, girls, women and boys. They know exactly at what time of the wedding ceremony it is used: when the *mamus* and *kumas* arrive it is “played” by women of the bride’s side.

11.20 the woman going to the jungle at 9.05 returns carrying *san* in her basket: thick chunks.

Two huge oxen are being driven towards Sadar Sai by the *diuri* uttering the familiar sounds and shouts.

Our Ho neighbour gets water.

A boy passes holding small sticks and bows and arrows (*ar saar*) in his hands.

11.25 a woman waters red bark tied together like a rope inside an earthen pot (*mandi chatu*).

For one minute nothing is happening at the well.

11.26 Our Ho neighbour gets water for the 4<sup>th</sup> time

School children return from school walking down the village road.

Our neighbour washes herself at the well

We decide to have a walk through the village- for the first time on our own, to chat and look.

Raimoni, the eldest daughter (*maran mai*) of Giridari Bage, invites us for tea on our way back.

1.20 Guru has come and brought lunch.

Opposite our house a new fence was made in front of the goat shed two days ago. Now also a gate is made from bamboo. This is done by the grandfather (*tata*) and his grandchild (*jaitadi*).

2.50 The gate is almost finished.

Laxman’s mediator has returned from Jharkand where she was negotiating with Laxman’s bride’s parents. Now she is waiting for the bride’s elder sister (*aji*). They will decide on an appointment when Laxman’s parents will go and meet the bride’s parents. Purpose: *lija tol*

(pulling of the cloth). The *lija* has already been passed over to the bride’s kin when they

visited Laxman’s parents last time here in Maran Sai. Laxman’s father is a little unhappy.

According to him the mediator is too slow. He would like the whole ceremony to have been completed by now.

Before *ere bonga* Laxman himself is not allowed at his bride’s house. This ceremony against evil spirits will be performed half way between Laxman’s and his bride’s houses.

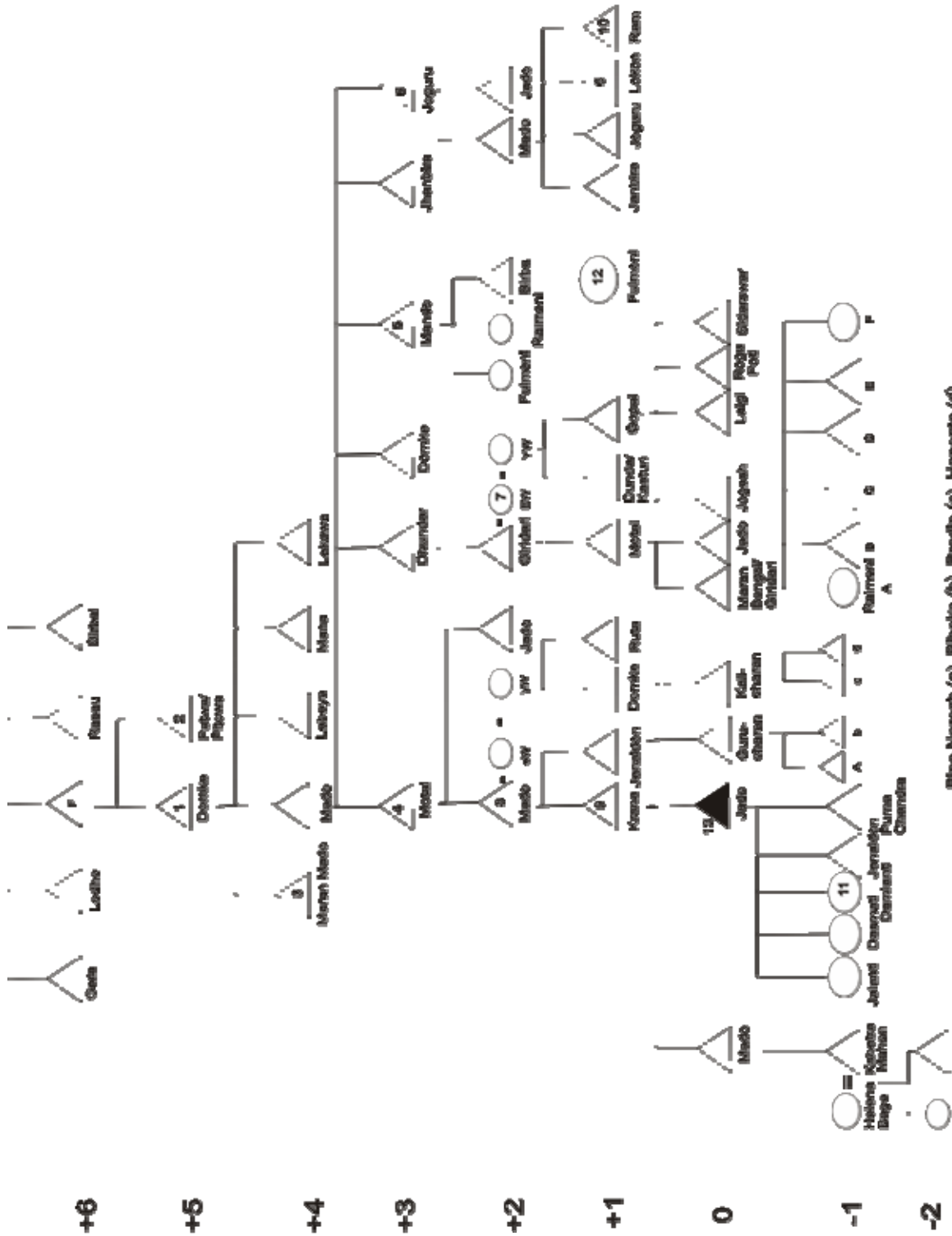
A seller of aluminium vessels (*dikshi*) passes on his bicycle.

The *nana buri* from next door washes her *jaitadi* and afterwards she does some washing. She is the woman who will die a very short time later.

## 5. Genealogies

### 5.1. “elder Brother” Jado Bage ( 13 ) and The Bage kili of Manbir

(recollected by Jado from Sadar Sai)



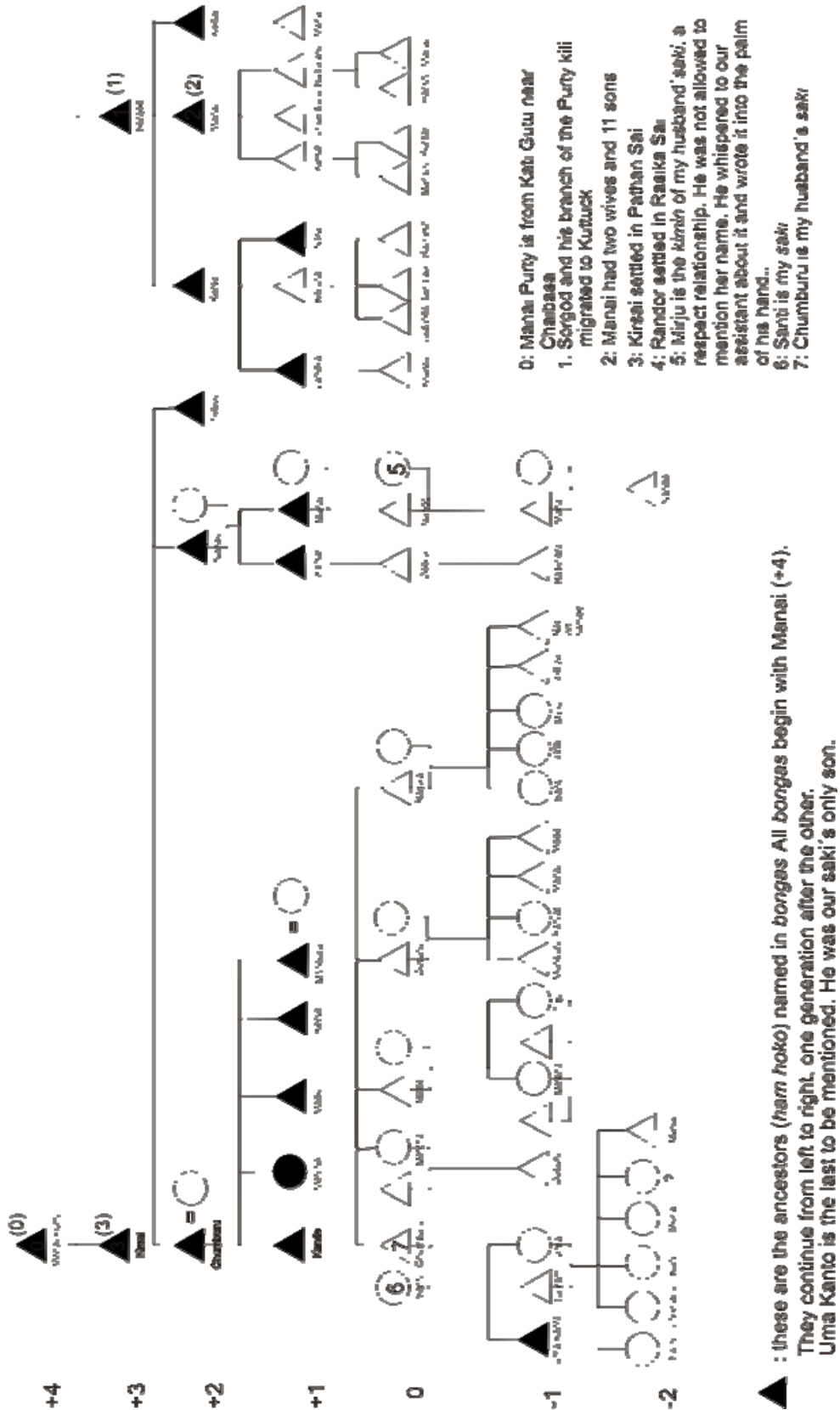
Bipo Norweh (a), Bibeke (b), Prody (c), Hamoto (d)  
Raimon (A), Batu (B), Doman (C), Pastur (D), Rajaram (E), Subodina (F)

## Annotations referring to the Bage *Kili* of Manbir and Jado

- (1) *Domke*: founder of Manbir, 1780
- (2) *Patwa*: founder of Ratna Sai
- (3) *Mado*'s successors settled in Buru Sai
- (4) 1<sup>st</sup> sardar: inherited office from *Golam/ Jamda*, who fled the region after having committed a murder.
- (5) “strong man”, raja (by name, not by inheritance)
- (6) *diuris* of Manbir
- (7) *Giridari*'s elder wife was burnt in Manbir. One of 3 commemoration stones was used as burial stone (*sassan diri*) on her grave in Sardar Sai.
- (8) Last sardar of the Manbir/ Jamda region. He had two wives.
- (9) Last *munda* of Manbir. Father of ***Jadho, our eB***, who we interviewed several times.
- (10) *Ram* and *Lokon* (6) were twin brothers. Ram died young, and so did Janbira and Joguru.
- (11) At *Ba`Porob* Damianti cooks at *Lokon*'s home
- (12) *Fulmoni* worships Goddess *Durga*. She is a female shaman (*dewa*) and lives exclusively on raw, uncooked food. She is the “strong man's “ granddaughter.
- (13) *Jado*, about 85 years of age, addresses *Lokon* (6), the *diuri* of Marang Manbir, who is about 50 to 55 years old, as uncle ( *kaka*); *Lokon* addresses him as son ( *hon- sed*). As a reference term *Lokon* used ***elder Brother*** towards *Jado*.

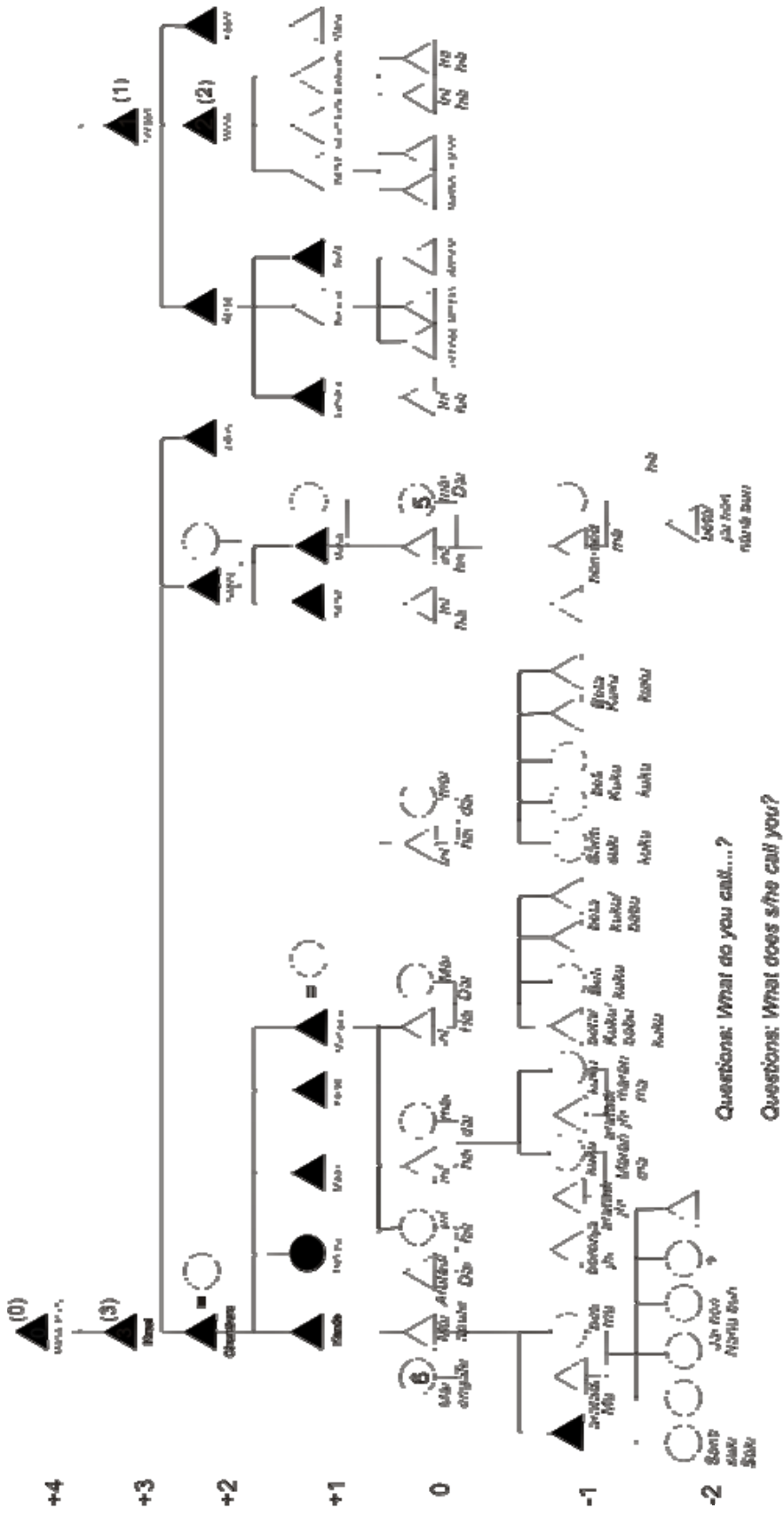
## **5.2. Giridari Bage: *munda* and local king of Marang Manbir**

## 5.4. Ancestors (*ham hoko*) and kinship of our *saki* Chumburu Purty from Pathan Sai





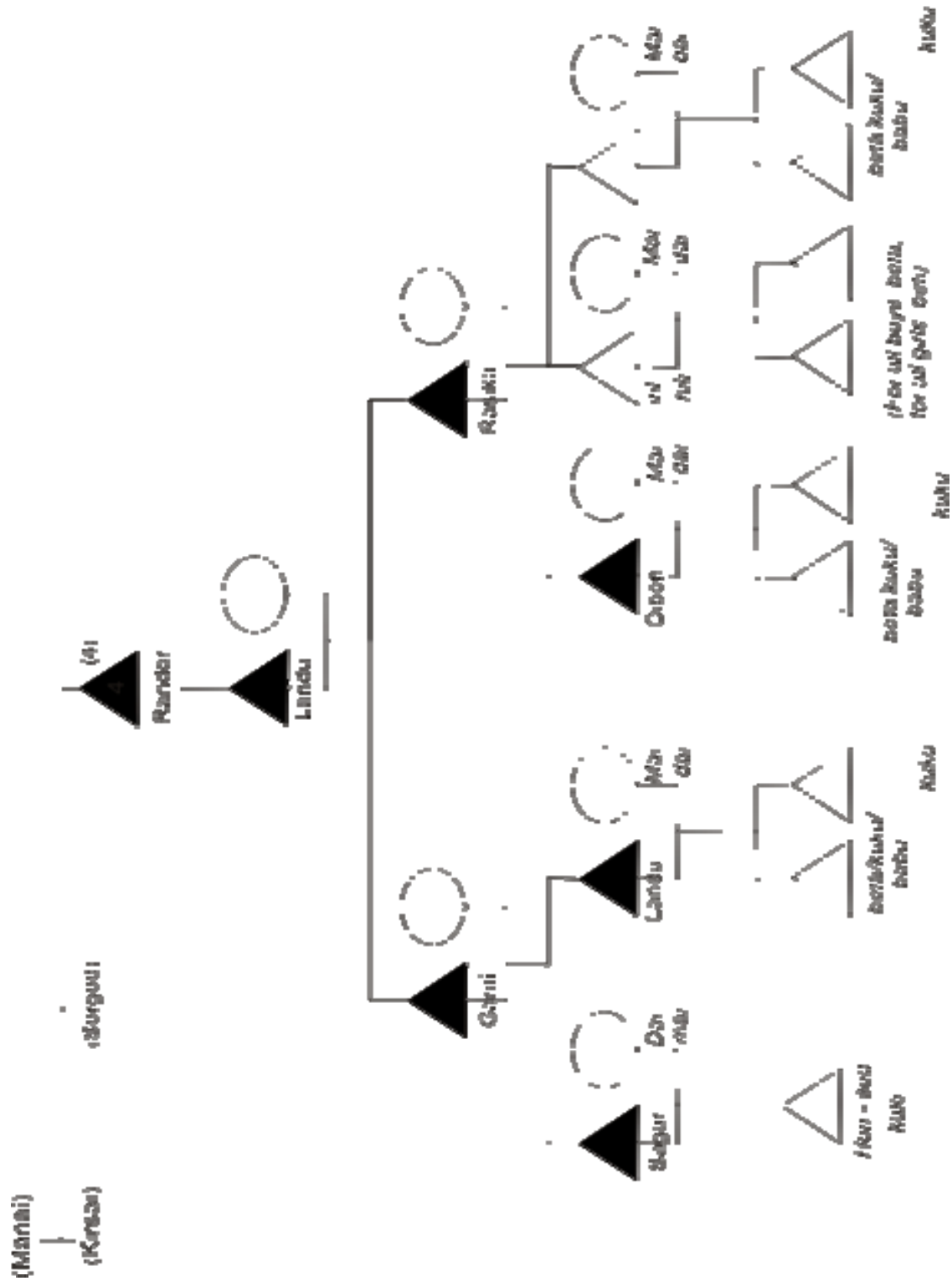
### 5.5. Purty, Santi (*my saki*): address terms (incomplete)



rdi Santi, my saki  
 The relation between her and her is a sibling relationship. That why I also had a number of her. And she is also  
 with relationship is mother, name her, sub 010

Questions: What do you call....?  
 Questions: What does she call you?

## 5.5. Santi Purty: address terms ctd.



## 6. Interviews

### 6.1. Helena Bage

- 6.1.2.: 1st interview
- 7.04.2006 at her home in Sadar Sai;
- topics: identity of Ho women and *bongas*
- 6.1.3.: tape 9, sides A, B.

Helena has called herself “one hundred per cent Ho” and “...a political man”. She represents the villagers of Manbir in the panchayat and has been reelected several times. She is a well known figure in Manbir. Every day but for the weekend she was sitting at the back of her motorbike on which her husband took her to work in Jamda. That way she was the only one using a vehicle other than a bicycle regularly. Both were regular guests at the *diuri* of Manbir’s home with her husband being a bio-doctor and the local dewa simultaneously performing at the monthly *porobko* in our village. She understood some English but preferred not to speak it. Together with our assistant she had attended the Jesuit School in Chaibasa and been in touch with Christianity and a western influenced school system. Her two children stayed in a boarding school in Keonjhar. She was in charge of a huge house which was well kept and furnished. Everyone knew that she was the only one in Manbir able to grow *basmati* rice and curry leaves. Three commemoration stones of the founders of Manbir were standing erect inside her courtyard.

About Ho identity and Ho women she said:

Helena: Whenever there is a *bonga* or some worshipping to be performed we Ho women share a lot of the duties with our husbands. If there is a *diuri* e.g., heshould have a wife. She has to fulfill special tasks. In everyday life she has to clean the adin and everything else as well. During the period of the festivals women play a special role, while men are busy doing something else. Women are very important in our culture. We may not tell our men to clean the floor or the pots. It is also impossible for men to make their beds.

During the *bongas* there are a male god and his wife. He is being called upon by the *diuri* when he is having his sacred bath. He also accompanies the *diuri* on his way to the bath. The god’s wife, the goddess, takes care of the women. This relation between the *diuri* and his wife just like that between Helena and her husband is established and kept alive in Ho culture. The goddess’s task is being done by the women, i.e. to cook, to prepare the leaf cups and leaf plates. They will cook lentils without oil, ad a bit of turmeric and a little salt in newly bought

earthen pots to serve the God themselves. The leaf cups from which the offerings are made on the *dessauli*, are produced by the *diuri*'s wife. And as I am from the Bage *kili* which again is the *kili* that the *diuri* is from, I usually have some very special tasks during the festivals. If the *diuri*'s wife is not present at the time of a festival, I may perform in her place.

Q.: What are your relations to the *diuri*'s family? How have you acquired your particular role?

Helena: The preceding *diuri* was her father-in-law in this house. When he was about to die her husband was still very young. He wrote down all the *bongas* and mantras that his father told him. But people said: How can you tell your son everything, he is still so young. They elected Lokon as their *diuri* and asked my father-in-law to tell Lokon everything that he knew. Everything that my husband knows he knows from the notes that he took down from his father. So only Lokon and my husband know all the *bongas*. And like that it is my task to participate in everything. And I know everything...

Q.: I have heard that all the knowledge is being passed on from father to son. How is it that you know everything?

Helena: Motar Sardar had two wives and the present *diuris* are the sons of Motar's second wife. The first wife's sons were very young at the time, and so the post of the *diuri* was conferred to the present *diuri*'s line. Otherwise the present *diuri* would be from this house. The people of this house have given land and everything else to the present *diuri* so he can perform the duties of a *diuri* properly. Until today whenever there is a *porob* people come to me and my husband and want to know what is to be done and when. If the *diuri* and his wife are present I will act as their helping hand. I will accompany them on their way to the bath and help them with the leaf cups.

Q.: How did you, Helena acquire your knowledge?

Helena: When I married into this household I was also very young. I found an unmarried woman here ( a *hatom* ) . From her I learned everything.

Q.: Which is your maternal *kili*?

Helena: Birua.

Q.: What are your particular tasks during *Ba-porob* as a woman?

Helena: Women and especially the *diuri*'s wife play a special role during *Ba-Porob* inside the *adin*. During the daytime they will fast. They will prepare rice and lentils (*masuri*) and afterwards they will offer this to the gods and goddesses. During the preparation or during the offering they are not allowed to give any answers in case someone calls them. Such is her role.

Q.: What about your hair at that time?

Helena. We should make no use of oil, a comb. The hair may be open or not. During the *bonga* you are not allowed to scratch your head. There are some villages like Tolo or Dutasai, so I have heard, in which women are not allowed to wear blouses during the bongas. So they will wear very little altogether

During the days of the festivals we must purify our floors with cowdung. Only after having taken a bath are we allowed to fetch water from the community well. And only after having taken a bath and after fetching the water are we allowed to cook inside the *adin*. Before and after the days of festivals it is not necessary to take a bath before getting the water.

Q.: After having prepared the food inside the *adin*, where do you offer to the gods?

Helena: On the *pindigi* inside the *adin* we put rice and dali on 12 *rumsakam* and also *diyan*. While we are offering we sit facing east.

Q.: When passing the threshold, when leaving one room and entering another one, are there particular regulations?

Helena: No.

Q.: What makes you and other women convey such a spirit of self-confidence?

Helena: I am convinced this is so because we are Bages, not Hos<sup>19</sup>. We were the Kondaits and we have huge houses. Whenever a bride is brought along her status should be very equal to that of the Bages. They should not marry into a poor family. If it does happen the new wife will not be able to live up to the expectations, because she will lack experience that is necessary to run a big house.

Q.: So in the case of a marriage the status should be equal?

Helena: The young wives should learn from the old ones. Not all the women in this area are equal, because their status is not equal. Their intelligence is also not equal. They should be prepared to continuously learn, but not every woman wishes to do so. Women may be physically strong, but mentally weak or psychologically unreliable.

Q.: You hint at the differences between women. What do you know about run-away marriages or love marriages?

Helena: Families and parents prefer arranged marriages, but the young people of today do not always obey their parents nowadays. Even in the case of a run- away marriage the Bages will not leave the young couple alone. Some rituals will be performed which are very similar to those at a proper marriage. Lokon's (the diuri's) marriage was also a run- away marriage. In that case a Brahmin was asked to come and perform the rituals. But if a Brahmin is called this

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<sup>19</sup> There are times when Helena refers to herself as a Ho ("100 % !), there are other times when she makes a very clear distinction between the Ho and the Bages.

will not be a proper Ho marriage. The Bages are no Hos and so they will ask a Brahmin and he will arrange the wedding in his way.

With the Hos a run- away marriage is an accepted affair.

Q.: Rule or exception?

Helena: No exception.

Q.: and happen regularly...

Helena: Educated people modernize themselves, have run-away marriages and... Nowadays these marriages happen frequently. There are no problems involved. Also if there happens to be a run – away marriage the very same rituals will be performed, the same procedures that do matter in our culture.

Q.: *gonon* (bridewealth) will be given...

Helena: Yes. In our Ho-society we buy the bride. A lot of money is to be paid to the bride's side. A big oxen, jewellery, dresses, such things. In other societies such as in the case of the Hindus it is exactly the other way round.

If we are giving from the brideside things are not meant for the groom, but for the bride.<sup>20</sup> If e.g. a motorbike is given, it is the bride's, not the groom's. He can use it, but it belongs to the bride.

Q.: As a woman and a member of the *panchayat*- is there anything endangering Ho culture?

Helena: I think at present the Ho people are still old – fashioned .They doubt everything. They even have no faith in the government. Whenever I start a developmental project as a member of the *panchayat* they will doubt its value. Take the case of a hand pump for instance. They do not use it properly and when it is broken they come to me and complain. This is surely different in foreign countries. Actually we should think that the government has provided these things for us, so we should protect it. The whole village should be proud of it. They even misuse the canals and bathing ghats. Of course, the contractors will make some profit out of its construction, the people should not mind this. Their duty is to preserve and use it properly.

Some people like those of Tala Sai are still living in the Primitive Age. Their clothes are very dirty. They don't take a bath daily. They don't want to talk to the outsiders. They hide themselves when they see a stranger. In fear they may even not offer water to you to drink. They are perhaps not ready to mix with the outer world<sup>21</sup> . But now-a-days there is a primary

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<sup>20</sup> In this respect it might be interesting that Helena had pointed out to us before- clear, loud and in front of her husband, no shyness involved- that the rather modern motorbike that she used every day to get to her work was her's and not her husband's.

<sup>21</sup> Interestingly enough I had been to Tala Sai the previous day. A.o. I had visited the school consisting of one room. It was crowded with children, boys and girls. Their teacher welcomed us, talked to us, introduced us to the

school in Tala Sai. Some children are going and some are not. I don't know how many years it will take to change them.

Addressing Guru: I don't know how these people are living in Maran Sai. On my way to work I have to pass through, but I don't go there often because there are a lot of witchcraft knowing women. They can harm me.

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children who were quite responsive, took us outside and showed us around. The teacher proudly pointed out some *sassan diri* surrounding the complex of the school.

## 6.1.4. Helena Bage: 2nd interview

- 12.04.2006
- tape 11, side A, B (beginning)
- topic: goddesses, marriage
- this interview has not been completely translated by our assistant.

Q: The first question is about unmarried women and if there are specific tasks that only they may perform?<sup>22</sup>

Helena: Unmarried women in the Ho tradition can perform every ritual that a married woman can perform. It does not matter whether they are married or not.

Q.: So Fulmoni Bage, if she was married, she could perform just the same things that she is performing now?

Helena: Yes.

Q.: Last time you mention the Goddess accompanying you during the time of a *porob* to your ritual bath. What is the name of that goddess?

Helena: All the Gods and Goddesses of jungles, of fields, of villages, of this vicinity, they are all with me.

Q.: Can you come up with a few names?

Helena: Like Manbir pat, Jai buri., Desauli I'll say some of the *bongas*... (not clear)

Huring (small) Kadalko, Marang (big) Kadalko, they are all women, the Goddesses of the forest.

Q.: And it is separated like this? The Goddesses are with the ladies and the Gods are with the men?

Helena: Yes.

Q.: Quite a different question concerning the topic of marriage. How is the relation to your ancestors affected when a Ho woman marries?

Helena: When a woman is married she belongs to her parents, she will have to follow the ancestors of her birthplace. But when she is married to a certain family, right from that moment when this wedding ceremony takes on, right from that moment she will have to follow the ancestors of her husband's house. Everything will change, her *kili*, her *kuro* which is her home, everything, she becomes the member of her husband's household and she has to

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<sup>22</sup> I posed this question for three reasons: the woman who had taught me to produce rice beer and who was a professional ricebeer producer, was unmarried. So was Damianti, a woman from Sardar Sai living at Jado Bage's House, the man who we had interviewed several times. It was Damianti who would cook for Lokon the diuri from Manbir during the period of Ba'- Porob. Also another prominent woman from Maran Sai, Fulmoni Bage, was unmarried, and she was a female *dewa* (shaman) living on raw food entirely.

follow the rites and rituals of her husband. In a woman's memory, in her feelings she will keep her parents' ancestors in good memory.

A very special ritual is being performed during the time of marriage in the adin. The newly arrived bride is introduced to the ancestors of the groom's side. By that moment she is introduced to the ancestors and she is protected by the ancestors of the groom's side.

Q.: When I witness a bride cry during a wedding ceremony I am not sure how to interpret this.

Helena: At the moment of crying the bride realizes that she is leaving her parents, she is leaving her childhood friends, she is leaving her friends, her village, everything and at that moment she is just away from her birthplace. Maybe they haven't yet reached her husband's place. Maybe there is a doubt what type of house I am going to enter, what type of man I am going to be with and these sorts of things worry a girl that much. These mixed feelings make them cry.

Q.: When you call your ancestors nowadays, they would be your husband's ancestors who have become your own ones. So who are they, what are their names?

Helena: Whenever I am calling my ancestors these will be my husband's and not my parents'.

Q.: When you call their names, in what chronological order do you call them?<sup>23</sup>

Helena: When I came into my husband's family I was aware of the names of his ancestors of about two generations back. When you are new in a family there will always be women who will help you until the process is normalized. They will tell you more and more about the ancestors.

Q.: When you call your ancestors in a bonga, how far back do you go, how many generations back do you go?

Helena: I am well aware of Domke.<sup>24</sup>

Q.: Who do you call after Domke?

The rest of the talk cannot be traced clearly from the tape. Helena had begun to mention a few names, but as I suspected in a different order from that that Jado Bage or Giridari Bage had given to us. To make sure and also to stress that I was really interested I showed them the genealogy of the Bages as far as I had managed to trace it by then. Helena and her husband were clearly highly impressed, Helena immediately pointed out a number of names that were not included in my genealogy and so demonstrated that she was firstly able to understand the graphic model on the spot and secondly that she was really aware of all the names. Her

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<sup>23</sup> Helena's husband had joined us by now, also a few boys and elderly ladies. At the point of mentioning the names of the ancestors they really got excited and also interrupted the interview.

<sup>24</sup> Domke is considered the founder of Manbir.

husband jumped up, went inside his house and returned with an exercise – book in his hands. He showed us the names of his ancestors beginning with Domke clearly written down in the Devanagari script. The structure in which the names were put down and organized was identical with the pedigrees that are being made use of and criticized in western (anthropological) models.

## 6.2. Jado Bage/ “elder Brother” from Sadar Sai

- 20.02.2006, first (taped) interview at his home
- tape no 5
- topics: history of the Bage settlement, Sorai a.o.

**6.2.1.** With **Jadho Bage** from Sadar Sahi, a knowledgeable, prominent and highly respected man of about 85 years (cp.5.1.), we had altogether four interviews over a period of two months (4.02., 20.02., 12.03., 30.03.), three of which we recorded. His father was the last *munda* of Manbir, his grandfather the *sardar* of the region. He was recommended to us for a number of reasons by different villagers: as one of the eldest inhabitants in terms of seniority he was considered the most reliable and authorized source to convey his knowledge. Also he was almost always at home, probably suffering from cerebral malaria, his thoughts reeling and reeling, so he could sleep only discontinuously. He willingly talked to us enjoying the company of male persons, as he pointed out, my husband`s and my assistant`s, for he lived in a huge compound in a household being run completely by females who took care of everything, also of him. If we did not find him at home, he was usually close by, sitting on one of the huge burial stones (*sassan diri*) of the cemetery in the shade below the tall *jojo daru* (tamarind tree). Descending in a straight line from the founder of Manbir he claimed to be the only one to know and trace the line back over six generations. He was a proud representative of the Bage *kili*, the dominant *kili* of the Jamda/ Manbir region. He was not too confident in the (HO) future with the *munda/sardar* system having been abolished and the *panchayat* having been introduced. Helena Bage, his BSW, was an active member of the *panchayat* in Jamda, but he was contemplating what the political and social changes of tradition would do to Ho identity. He was really well informed about new developments in Ho society, e.g. the annual meetings of Ho representatives in January in Chaibasa/ Jharkand and was unhappy not to be able to attend these meetings any more due to his age. But he was informed what had been discussed there. We took down his genealogy, which he checked and corrected several times. He asked to be given our written version, could easily follow the graphic model, added to it e.g. the line to Fulmoni and Helena Bage, which he had first left out, confirmed it and finally asked to be given a copy. “I know it all, I’ve got it all in my head”, he said, “but I am the only one left, maybe the younger generation, they may need and want to check it, because they don’t know so much about their ancestors.” So I worked out a hand-written version, one copy of which we left with him.<sup>25</sup> He also asked to be given a copy of our interviews so he could read and check them. I was surprised not that he could read, but

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<sup>25</sup> Genealogy : The Bage *Kili* of Manbir.

that he could read without any glasses. For him our assistant had to write down the interview in Devanagari first, and from our “elder Brother’s” comments I could tell that he had studied the scripts carefully.

The following is a tapescript of our first interview with him, in which he enlarges on a number of topics of his choice.<sup>26</sup> I had asked him to inform us about those aspects of Ho culture that he considered most important. The script clearly reflects my insecurity in terms of question technique. It also reveals that my assistant and I still had not developed an efficient strategy of how to conduct an interview “properly”, how often to interrupt Jadhoo in order to translate etc. We also realized that it was necessary to work out a clear understanding of our assistant’s role: was he the translator of our questions ‘only`, as I had assumed, or would we listen to him conducting the interview, as he obviously assumed.

The interview contains these topics in this order:

- History of the Bage settlement
- Sohrai, a Bage festival
- Namesgiving of the *kili*: from Gondai to Bage
- Food habits in Ho society
- Buffalo sacrifice
- Biddiri as commemoration of settlement
- Mythology: from goddess to king

The places that Jadhoo mentions in the course of the interview :

- Asura
- Santal
- Podahat
- Pargana
- Kharsawan
- Icha:garh
- Riwa
- Ranchi
- Chakradapur
- Asura (Jharkand)
- Jampopi
- Barberia
- Chokediri<sup>27</sup>

### 6.2.2. The interview ( 20.02.2006)

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<sup>26</sup> That is it is the first tape - recorded interview. I had made notes during our first meeting and realized quickly that without tape recording I would miss out on a lot of information given the fact that in the process of translating from Ho into English a lot got lost anyway.

<sup>27</sup> All these places have been marked in the map ( ...)

E. R.: Last time we heard about your ancestors. This time we would like you to tell us what aspects of Ho culture you think important for us to know.

Guru: Some days ago they came here, we talked about your ancestors - now they wish to know about our Ho culture.

Jadho: Things about Ho culture...how we were named? How we were named Ho? How we found country to settle? How we entered into social system? Those things? Will they record it in English?

Guru: You speak in your own way, in Ho. I shall translate.

Jadho: Can they translate it in Hindi and write in Devanagari so I can know what I said is correct or not?

Guru: Yes, yes.

Jadho: Then I will speak about things related to me. I will speak about how we mixed with the Hos. I will speak what I know and whatever I have heard from others.

We were coming from the borders of Madhya Pradesh. The title/ *kili* of our ancestors was not this Bage as it is now. Bage *kili* was not there: you can call it a title or post as you like, it was called *Gondai*. Well, when we came we were the *Gondais*. The property we possessed were our cows and buffaloes- we were coming with those cows and buffaloes- on the way the 'Kartik – Purnima', the sacred full moon day arrived.

On the sacred day of 'Kartik Purnima' we had to observe 'Soraï' - we had to worship our cattle. After worshipping we continued to move in this direction. From there we came here- that means we were on the other side of the Ranchi border. There were other relatives and other *Gondais* coming with us. At that time there was *poita* on our ancestors' body. They cut off and threw away that *poita* while observing that 'Soraï' festival. After that we lit the sacred lamps and drove on with our cattle. As we abandoned the *poita* we were called Bage<sup>28</sup>. Thus our title/*kili* became Bage.

Our relatives saw us without *poita* on our body. They excluded and abandoned us saying: "Let us leave them"- and we were called Bage. Because we are the left ones in that society so they called us Bage. In this way our *kili* became Bage.

Have you understood?

Guru: Yes.<sup>29</sup> Do you think we<sup>30</sup> were Hos at the very beginning?

Jadho: I cannot say whether we were originally Hos or what else. Our ancestors had the title which was called *Gondai*. *Gondai* seems to be similar to *Khondait*. Therefore we decided to

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<sup>28</sup> in Ho language *bage* carries the meaning „to leave, to abandon“ (E.R.)

<sup>29</sup> Here Guru answers for us, forgets to translate and poses the next question

<sup>30</sup> Interestingly Guru, our Santal assistant, here includes himself in the Ho community.

worship the goddess mother Durga, and we still continue worshipping that sword, *Khonda*. The word *Khondait* means that what I said. But when we found ourselves amidst the Hos and found no other race<sup>31</sup> than the Hos, we made matrimonial relationship.<sup>32</sup> Our ancestors had a sister and she was married to the Hos. The first such relationship was made<sup>33</sup> in Barbaria, and then also in Chokediri. They all were Hos. They belonged to a very great dynasty. At that time our title did not exist, but our dynasty was great and it is still great.

But I think they (I and J.) cannot understand what I said. Well, if you (Guru) understand you can translate it.

Guru: Yes, do not bother. I can do it well.

Their ancestors. They married Hos from Chokediri. But he cannot say whether they were Hos in the very early days or not.

Jadho: This concept still continues. We still establish matrimonial relationships with great dynasties and visit<sup>34</sup> each other.

What I mean is there are three strata in Ho society<sup>35</sup> as far as food habits are concerned. Three strata means one is the great one, thereafter the middle one and then the lowest one. Because food habits play a major role.<sup>36</sup> That is why great<sup>37</sup> people eat and drink like great people. They don't eat the meat of any dead animal, of animals who have fallen ill, died by themselves ( that is not having been killed purposefully for the sake of being eaten) or died due to any other causes. Those are not eaten.

The middle ones eat dead goats and dead chicken.

And people of the lowest strata eat dead animals, also dead cows which have been thrown out, they cut those and eat them.<sup>38</sup> That is why there are three strata in our society. But who behaved in great manners, was happily accepted by the great dynasties. People with neat and

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<sup>31</sup> 'race' is the term our assistant has chosen. Jadho himself used *jati*, which Deeney in the English-Ho Dictionary defines as " race; tribe; caste; type, kind" (p.177)

<sup>32</sup> I had asked our assistant to stay as close as possible to the original in his translation.

<sup>33</sup> Here the original reads as follows: " our first *bala-saka* took place in B." For our Jadho says "aleya:", which is 1<sup>st</sup> person pl. exclusive, which means: *we*, the Bages excluding *you*. Otherwise he would have said: "abuya:" denoting *we*, including *you*. Secondly: *bala – saka* is more than a relation; according to Deeney *bala – saka* denotes the "prospective relations through marriage; to become relations through marriage" ( HO-English Dictionary, p.25).

<sup>34</sup> in the original the term *bala- saka* again is used. See footnote above.

<sup>35</sup> For *stratum* and *society* Jadho employs the Hindi terms *star* and *samaj*. Consequently both terms have not been listed by Deeney in the Ho-English Dictionary.

<sup>36</sup> In our next interview Jadho will confirm this one but for the aspect of food habits: " in the old days this might have been so, but nowadays people eat just what they like. So the difference is between *ruji* ( to like) and *oruji* ( to dislike)." Even though the translation in this respect is rather confusion Jadho spent some time on enlarging on this aspect of food. I still do not know what made him draw back on this aspect later.

<sup>37</sup> In the original Jadho says *maran* implying great, old, elder (e.g. *marang mai*: elder daughter),

<sup>38</sup> this passage might need to be checked with the original.

clean looks and good manners were absorbed in Ho society after ritual purification.<sup>39</sup> The lowest strata people work like labourers...

Actually food habits were in consideration. Those great people cannot eat the meat of dead animals and live with neat and clean looks. Only then they can be called great people, if they are ritually purified. It is not easy. In this manner their inclusion took place. The number of the ritually purified people is very small. The people of the lower strata also want to mingle with us.

In Santal society all live in the same society without any differences. But the society which we live in, is still existing with three strata.

Nowadays three strata concept is disappearing. Only two strata exist in good form. People of the lowest strata have completely mingled with us. In modern days In modern days they are engaged in service jobs, some became rich farmers, and nobody care about their food habits. They all eat and drink in their own ways. They were accepted after their ritual purification in Kolhan society,

Our society is called Kolhan society. That is why the great assembly of the Hos took place at Kuju near Chaibasa. It is called "Ho samaj upurum jumur akra". This year, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, this meeting was held. In that great assembly the people who were lost in other countries, participated and they are included in this society.

This meeting is held every year. Usually it takes place in the month of January. The date may be different but essentially the day is Sunday. It can be the first or the second week. The programme of the meeting is made one month in advance. People assemble there and discuss matters. In our Ho society there are many more existing titles/kilis. People discuss how a particular kili came into existence. They debate social subjects. They talk about social and religious ways of life.

Guru: What happened in the meeting of this year?

Jadho: I didn't go. But they talked about the festivals and ways of attending them at full moon.

There are festivals like Mage, Ba, Jomnama, Hero:, Baba Mutu etc. They talked and discussed on rules and regulations of those festivals, why we observe Hero: festival, why we observe Jomnama- they discussed about all these matters.

In our society people don't discuss about our own festival, that is "Sohrai". We, the Bages, only observe and celebrate it.

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<sup>39</sup> Um die Übersetzungsproblematik zu verdeutlichen, gebe ich die **wortwörtliche** Übersetzung wie folgt: „But who in great goes, he/she but great one happy with ( *happy* is used in the continuous form) his/her cleanliness, other things see after, he/she ritual purification after included they keep.

Guru: Back to the food habits. What kind of meat do they eat? What kind of meat do they not eat?

Jadho: Well, the people of the upper strata eat chicken, goat, mutton, and all the animals living in the forest: deer, jungle pigs, sambur (deer). But the pigs living in nasty places in the country they are not eaten. People rear those pigs in their houses, because they are disgusting. These pigs eat dirty things that is why they are disgusting. They are not eaten, but the jungle pigs are eaten.

But bears, lions and elephants cannot be eaten, only deers, jungle pigs, porcupine etc. are eaten.

Guru: What about the people of the lower strata?

Jadho: Those people eat everything, they eat these meats. They also eat goat, chickens, sheeps, cows and buffaloes if they are dead. They can readily eat them.

But we kill them only before eating . We don` t eat the dead animals animals. They eat the meat of dead animals which have died from any illness, e.g. dycentry etc. They willingly eat them.

Guru: Are there more rules concerning food habits?

Jadho: Usually Hos eat and drink rice and ricebeer. Whjy we drink ricebeer is we in our festivals we offer ricebeer to our gods and our male and female ancestors, there is no cptrontroversy over this eating and drinking. Top to bottom we use these...also chapatti and puri. Everyone eats these. There is no controversy about this.

Guru: What about the meat of buffaloes and cows, can that be eaten?

Jadho: We don` t. But when we worship our Great God- formerly they usually sacrificed buffaloes, hat meat was eaten. But cows are not eaten. Because they are the cow-gods. They are the chariots of the Supreme God. So they are respectables to us, and they are not eaten. In our Ho society as well as in Hindu society they are not eaten.

Guru: What about buffalo meat?

Jadho: They continue to eat buffalo meat. Those people of the upper strata, those who sacrifice them, they eat them.

Nowadays buffaloes cannot be sacrificed, even if it is a big offering. Goats are offered instead. That meat is eaten. With sound physical health eating the meat of goats doesn` t create problems. People suffering from arthritis may not feel good to eat it.

Guru: In what situations were buffaloes sacrificed?

Jadho: When some sickness and sorrow arrives at our home, scabies- pox occurs, or in the entire village but in one's home- as we are the superstitious<sup>40</sup> people- there are dewas. We give them rice- seed and sindur, we ask them to find out faults. They tell us that the great god is troubling you. Therefore something should be offered. Let us make a promise. Let us promise. And then afterwards we offer. There is no special time- table. It can take place at any time. Any time means it should be between the months of January and June, after this it is inconvenient. There would be rain ahead. Between these months a date is fixed and that animal is offered. It is not like an offering during festivals; it is fixed within and with other relatives.

The animal is worshipped at home first, then taken outside and then killed. But we, the Bages, we offer the Boda, a special goat, a he-goat. We make a promise like this... we prepare the rope to tie the goat, we keep it aside, it is hung over our house. When we find the he-goat, we bring down that rope, the rope is tied with it, then we start saying: you take out these troubles from here; this goat is for you. Now we shall bid you farewell.

Only male members consume it. The head is eaten by the dewa, the person performing the sacrifice.

Guru: Our ancestors sacrificed the buffaloes. Did they do it for pacification of their ancestors' spirits or what else?

Jadho: Yes, it is for pacification. "We are suffering from this or that trouble. Let us heal. Therefore we are giving to you what you owe from us. You take back these troubles from us".

Guru: Have you ever witnessed such sacrifices?

Jadho: I haven't seen, only heard about, because my father's kuma's house is in Ganjia, they are Aldas, they sacrifice buffaloes. One Ramrai Alda is residing close by. They may still sacrifice buffaloes these days, too. In former times, when they performed this sacrifice they made a promise to S.B. first, put an earthen pot upside down upon their house. Then they worshipped the buffalo, bring down the pot, prayed at home, take it outside, sacrificed and then all ate. Everyone in their dynasty- because three kilis came out of the Alda kili: Sawaiyan, Kalundia and another kili-, and all would be present in their meeting.

Guru: One more question. What about the Ho tradition of setting those big erected stones?

Jadho: These erected stones, these are...because our ancestors possessed endless power- at the place where they came and settled, after making settlement they erected three stones<sup>41</sup> to commemorate that this is our settlement.. They were satisfied and settled. They would have

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<sup>40</sup> Here J. uses a Hindi term for 'blind belief'.

<sup>41</sup> Within the compound of Helena Bage at Sadar Sai living next door to Jadho Bage there are two erected stones, a third one having been used as a sassan diri.

gone elsewhere if they were not satisfied. Nevertheless the symbol of our ancestors will remain here to commemorate the Bage's settlement. That is why they were erected.

Guru: Can these stones be erected on burial sites as well?

Jadho: Yes, they can. They are there in Asura also, also in Podahat. Wherever we settled for a considerable time while coming to this place, there these stones were erected. They belong to the Bage.

I cannot say whether others erected these stones, too, but we possess them surely.

Guru: At what time did we reside altogether? How long did we reside in Podahat?

Jadho: We settled in Podahat, too. There also our symbols exist. There was a goddess in that area. I don't know the name...She was offered a human being daily. It was a problem to arrange a human being daily for her.

"No, we should have a king. Who should be made king? It was the blessing (?) of that goddess... Well, he who is going to be king? I shall give you a horse. The man who can ride the horse will be king. If there is a king everyone will have to obey him. Nobody will be able to ignore our king. He will be the king of hundreds of thousands of people. He can offer anyone for sacrifice at his will. He can pacify the goddess in his own way.

But nobody was able to ride on that horse. Everyone in Saraikela and Podahat tried to ride and failed, so we went out in search of the man who could ride the horse and would be king.

Everyone was thinking who could ride and would be our king. Then the goddess said: "I shall give you a power. Go west with that power. Bring the sons of a king who can ride the horse.

And let him be the king of this area. He can worship me being the king.

So they went westward.

The power given to the Gondais was a sword and a shield. They went to Nagpur with that power. The means of transport like motor- vehicles were not available during those days, they used the "mind-vehicle" for transport. We all know about ancient Indian transport system.

Those five pandavas, Ram and Laxman, how they travelled from Ayodhya to Lanka... they used the "mind- vehicles". They flew, like that they flew to Nagpur.

They found a Raja there in Nagpur. He had three sons. They requested the king to give them one of his sons, but he refused. Disappointed by the king's refusal they said: "The king didn't give us his son, let us try the power of the goddess, the sword and the shield. Let us see how much power it possesses".

Then they left the king's palace. There was a pond nearby, there were three palm trees on the bank. They cut those three palm trees in single-single blow.

They cut those one by one in a single- siongle blow. A witness to this went to the raja and told him about what he had seen. The king wanted to know more. He heard how they cut those three palm trees one by one in a single- single blow. “What type of people are they?” And: “ Well, go and call them back”, the king said.” They were asking for my sons, but I refused, so they are going back now. But if there is war between us and they possess such enormous powers, we cannot win the war. So better let us give them my sons.”

So the three princes were asked to come. The names of the three were Bir Bikram Singh, Arjun Singh and Reno Singh. They went to Podahat. They sat on the horse and rode iot. People said: Oh, these will be our kings. But which one will be the kin of which place? Then the eldest became the king of Saraikela, Arjun Singh in Kharsawan, Reno Singh in Podahat. After their coronation our ancestors moved to Asura. Like this there is a long story of ours. That is why we have a relationship with the kings of Seraikela and Icha: until today. This Icha:garh...there is relationship with them. My forefathers used to go there, but now we don`t...we are talking about history, isn`t it?

Guru: Thank you very much for this conversation.

### 6.2.3. 2nd interview with eB/ Jado Bage from Sadar Sai

- 12.03.2006
- tape no 10
- Translation from Ho into English: Guru, our assistant.

This is the second of altogether three taped interviews that we had with Jado from Sadar Sai. Last time he had mentioned the struggle of the Ho with the Durua and how the Bages helped to find a king. So we just listened to him talking about all this without raising an initial question. We just let the conversation flow...

The *places* mentioned in it are (cp. map):

Rairangpur

Riwan

Chokediri

Bharbharia

Kunhu River/ Kherna/Tento

Bhanjasura

Keonjhar

Baripada

Jamda

*Persons* mentioned in it are:

Narendra Mohapatra

Madho

Dhurua

Durga/Kali

Jadunath Bhanj Deo

Raghunath Kondankel

The *topics* are:

Struggling with the Durua king, expelling the Duruas from Rairangpur

Bage/ finding a king for Mayurbhanj

Mando and the Kabul

In the beginning there was a king in 'Garh'. The name Rairangpur did not exist at that time. It was called 'Garh'. The wife of Narendra Mohapatra, the king, was very beautiful. Her complexion was like that of 'Rai' (mustard) flower. That is why 'Garh' was called Rairangpur. (rai: mustard, rang: colour, pur: kingdom).

Narendra Mahapatra ruled 'Garh' or Rairangpur. He was a Dhurua. He was a devotee of Mother (goddess) Kali. The mothers had supernatural powers. The people used to talk with the bongas just like we are talking to each other. He (the king) used to capture human beings and sacrifice them to goddess Kali. People were unhappy to be treated in that manner. They wanted to dethrone the king and drive him away. But he was supported and empowered by the goddess. Then they came to know that there was a man in Manbir called Mado who was a great devotee of Mother (goddess) Durga. They decided to go to Mado and request his help. They came to Mado and requested him. Mado accepted the request and told them to wait. Then he meditated and had a talk with Goddess Durga. He came out from his house and told the people that it was a very easy task to drive the king away. The visiting people were very happy. Then they wanted to fix a certain day to begin the fight. Madho also wanted to call his own relatives to consult on the matter. At that time the relatives were from Chokediri, Bharbaria, and the Kondankels and the relatives of his wife's side. He called them up. They agreed to drive away the Dhuruas.

They all met at Jamda market ground. Jamda people also joined them. They started proceeding towards Garh from that meeting place. They did not have advanced weapons. Some went with their axe, some with sichels, some with bows and arrows. Mandho went with bow and arrow only. He was leading the fighters. They crossed the Kunhu river and reached Bhanjasura. From Bhanjasura they watched the Garh/ fort. They made a roaring noise. The king in the fort heard the noise and realised that people had revolted against him. He wanted to fight. So he beat the battle drum. His men assembled soon with arms and prepared to fight. The king with his men marched towards Mando's men.

Mando's men wanted to march forward but Mandho restricted them saying: Let me fight first. Mandho waited for the enemies to come close. When the enemies were close enough in his striking range, he shot an arrow. By the power of that arrow the battlefield became dark and the king's man couldn't see anything lying before them. Then Mando ordered his men to charge. They killed their enemies with whatever weapons they had. The king's army fled. The king with some of his men hid inside the fort. It was sun-set by that time so the fight was stopped for that day.

The Duruas with their king fled to 'Kherna' (a place south of Rairangpur) that night. All other Duruas gathered there. On the next day there was a bloody battle on the banks of Kanhu river near Kherna and Tento. The fight continued for four days. The Dhuruas were killed in huge number. Water in Kanhu river turned red. At last the Dhuruas were defeated and they fled away from there. Not a single Dhurua was left in Mayurbhanj. If some of

them were left, they lived here in Majurbhanj with their changed identity as 'Sawnty', Bhatari, Chera etc. This is what I have heard from my ancestors.

After the Dhurua were driven out of Majurbhanj, people requested Mando to be their king. But Mandho refused saying he was not fit to be a king. They went to the adjacent kingdom of Keonjhar and brought Jadunath Bhanj Deo to Mayurbhanj and Baripada became his capital.

Some remains of Garh can be seen still today but it lost its importance and Baripada became the capital of the newly established kingdom. There was a dense forest of Ankol trees in Rairangpur. People feared to go there. But nowadays the jungle is cleared and a town is slowly developing.

Q.: We have heard a story about Mandho when he was feeding his goats with tamarind leaves bending a branch of a tamarind tree...

Jadho: Yes...yes... that time money was in scarcity. People used to borrow money from 'Kabul'. Mando also borrowed some money from them. He had not repaid his money so far. The Kabuls maintained fair records of the borrowers. Some of them came to Mandho to ask him for money as the repayment. They came to Mandho's house but didn't find him as he was out somewhere to feed his goats. They went in search for him.

They saw Mando bending a branch of a tamarind tree and the goats were eating the leaves comfortably. They asked Mandho to repay the money that he had borrowed. Mandho told them to hold the branch as he did so that the goats could keep eating the leaves.

Meanwhile he would go home and bring the money. So the Kabuls held the branch. As soon as Mandho left the branch the Kabuls flew up with it. Somehow they managed to come down. Thus they realized Mando's extraordinary power and returned back without money not to return ever again.

Guru: what about Raghunath Kondankel...

Jadho: Yes... the Bages and the Kondankels came here together from Riwan. That is why the Kondankels are said to be our ancestors in this village. We can establish matrimonial relationships with the Kondankels.

Raghunath Kondankel, though less powerful, helped us fighting the Duruas. There is a fair record of everything in a document called 'MADRAPANJI'. Once a Brahmin came and took it with him. He never returned it to us.

## 6.2.4. 3rd interview with eB/ Jado Bage

-30.03.2006 in Sardar Sai

-Tape No 8 side A on the *chou dance*. Side B: Jado tells us the Story of the Strong Man, Mando.

- *Note*: when I listened to the original interview later I realized that our assistant had missed out on translating quite substantial parts of the interview. So we asked him to translate some specific parts in detail which will be added here.

By himself Jado begins our talk by making some corrections of what he had told us in his last interview. This way we could clearly see that he had read the transcription of our interviews carefully.

We have put down everything correctly, he said, but for his explanations of the strata. Today there would not be any differences between the *kilis*, because education would abolish the distinctions between people. Purity and cleanliness would be the only distinction left, and the difference between poor and rich. The house should be clean, dresses as well and tools etc. In former times there used to be more distinctions, nowadays people would get closer. It is not difficult today to be pure and clean. Formerly people used to use ashes from the jungle and only if people were not clean and pure, there were distinctions.

We asked some questions related to our last interview.

Q.: When the Raja from Nagpur gave his sons, what did he get in exchange?

Answer: Nothing, because he gave his sons in fear. The sons became the kings of three kingdoms. There is a very special relation between the king of Saraikela and the Bages. This relation we still have today. I have been unable to attend the competition of *chou-dance* in the last three to four years.

Q.: Have you also visited the Raja of Saraikela?

A.: Yes, Bradjwan Shughdeo is still staying in Saraikela and our relation is still a very good one.

Q.: What do you call each other?

A.: We haven't talked about our families often, but when I arrived there we used to talk about my health and how this *chou dance* could be improved.

Q.: How do you address the Raja, how does he address you?

A.: There is no particular term. Whenever we meet we will talk about our families, health and the improvement of the dance.

Q.: Whenever we meet people they will address each other by kinship terms. Does he feel towards the Raja like an elder Brother?

A.: I usually call him Raja Babu or Raja Sahib and he calls me Jado babu.

Q.: Where is this chou dance from? Is it a Ho dance?

A.: This dance has a very long history. It is a very old dance. The Bages acquired it in Saraikela. The first to teach that dance was Hari Har from Saraikela. I was one of his students and I have also taught it to a few people here. The chou dance is being danced with a sword and a shield as it is the dance of the Rajas. As times used to be quarrelsome earlier, the dance was being regularly practised and rehearsed. Once a year I would go to Saraikela together with my dancing group to give a performance over there. We never got any money for it or anything else.

This way the dance of the Rajas became the dance of the Hos. When the Raja of Mayurbhanj realized that professional dancing was going on in Saraikela he saw to it that the dancing group would also go to Baripada, the residence of the Raja, to perform there as well.

Q. Last time you have told us that when the three kingdoms had been founded the Bages left Saraikela and settled in Asura. After that they went to Barbaria and Chokediri, gave their daughters to the Hos and became Hos themselves. At that time did you consider the Raja to be the Raja of the Hos?

A.: Jadha digresses and begins to tell the story of the first Raja of Mayurbhanj as being supported by the Hos and about the Hos who were being led by the Bages and who settled here.

Q.: What can you tell us about the Bages of Jamda and Manbir- when did they separate?

A.: We did not separate, we are still one. One of our ancestors settled in Ratna Sai, Chokediri, Jojohatu...At that time there was jungle all around. All the Bage brothers had a lot of cattle. To feed them properly the brothers split up. At that time we led a nomadic life, and our cattle determined where exactly to settle down. Where our cattle had sufficient food, temporary huts (= Jamda) were erected.

Q.: Do you know anything about the huge vertical stone in Papari Sai?

A.: Our ancestors came from Ratna Sai to Papari Sai and some Kondankel accompanied them. The Kondankels stayed on, the Bages moved on. I don't know anything about that stone. Maybe it is a commemoration stone.

Later additions from the interview: (tape 8, side A)

(1) Jadho: In the time when our ancestors were living, the Sardar occupied a very prominent position here. He brought Kunkals ( the potters) from Sarakela and arranged for

their settlement. Those potters called one teacher from Saraikela and learned to dance. I have forgotten the name of that dance teacher. The well learnt people used to come and go to perform every year. They used to call each other during festivals to perform. There was no competition among them. The Raja did not come. Only his party (performers) used to come. Once we also called them. We gave them money for their performance. We, too, went there and they gave us food and fare to return. And so this type of dance-exchange was there. Till today we regard Saraikela performers as Guru (teacher).

I cannot say how the *chou dance* itself came into existence. It may be found in ethics of Art. From there, perhaps, they learnt it. It is actually blessing of *Singbonga* by dint of which anyone can learn it.

In the context of *chou dance* what I can say is there were Rajas in the old days. They had their own '*Paitary* or say *Parikhanda* which means teacher-like men who taught them to fight with swords and not getting hurt. By the process of this learning, the *chou dance* came into existence. The same techniques and steps were followed. In due course of time two types of dances came into existence. They differ from each other. They selected the good poses and steps in the course of learning and turned the *chou* into a beautiful dance. The first teacher from Saraikela was Harihar.

Guru: First the *chou dance* was the dance of the Rajas. From there, we the Hos, learnt it. Do you agree?

Jado: Yes... when the Raja of Mayurbhanj saw the people dancing here, he, too, wanted to organize a Chou dancing party. He also called Harihar. And thus this dance went to Baripada. Like this the old people used to talk, though we have not seen with our own eyes. But for sure, the first teacher was Harihar.

(2) Jado: After Asura they went to Jampopi. There Domke married a woman from Chokediri. She was called Parvati. And they had a sister who was given in marriage in Bharbharia.....(digresses from question and starts talking about the first Raja of Mayurbhanj and the Durua Raja Narendra Mohapatra of Garh/Rairangpur).

(3) about the relationship between Bages of Jamda and the Bages of Manbir:

Jado: We are not separate at all. As I told you at the very beginning there were four ancestors coming to this area. The sons and grandsons of those ancestors settled in Baihatu, Balibandh, Chokediri, Ratnasai, Jojohatu and Ghagarbeda. And some of us we

came to Manbir and Jamda. It is the area of the Bages, isn't it? In the Ho society we, the Bages and Tiriyas only celebrate Sohrai festival and nobody else.

#### 6.4. Interview with the *diuri* of Jamda

- 23.03.2006
- Tape 6, side B
- Topics: sacred diyan, gods on desauli, clients of the Hos

With the *diuri* of Jamda we had two interviews. He lives in a representative house, rather in a number of houses around a big courtyard, together with his big family. While we were talking to him, we were never alone: especially elderly women were busy working at the mustard seed plants that had been harvested and collected in the courtyard, and also other women, some young men and especially children joined us, listening attentively to what the *diuri* was talking about and also at times helping in, when he was not too sure of an answer. I gained the impression that this was a.o. one way of passing on knowledge from one generation to the next ones. The *diuri* was a Bage, and a very self-confident one. He proudly showed us around Jamda pointing out the numerous graveyards and the enormous burial stones.

In our first interview I only took notes, only to realize later that I had missed out on a number of important information. So the next time we had prepared a number of questions and took along our cassette recorder. The text below is the transcript of the second interview.

The questions we asked were partly inspired by our discussion with Uwe Skoda, who at that time was teaching at the Anthropological Department of Sambalpur university and who was kind enough to come and see us for a few days in Manbir.

The interview:

Q.: What about the meaning of *diyan* and *rasi*?

A.: *Diyan* and *rasi* is very special to us. All the gods and goddesses around us, the spirits of the ancestors as well as the *balas* and the *hagas* are being served *diyan* and *rasi*. Without these two drinks no social or ritual duty may be performed.

*Diyan* and *rasi* are the preferred dishes of the gods and goddesses. They are also offered when we are having guests, when there are rituals and sacrifices being offered. In every social event they play their role.

Q.: Are these drinks prepared in a special way if they will be given to the gods and ancestors?

A.: Yes. *Diyan* is prepared in a newly bought pot and only after those, who will prepare, have taken a bath.

Q.: This *diyan* is different from that that is being drunk in everyday life?

A.: Yes. It is different and will be consumed only by those who are going to perform the *bonga*, nobody else.

Q.: These are the *diuri*, the *dewa*, the head of the household?

A.: Yes. Women are not allowed to drink this particular *diyan*.

Q.: Is there a particular moment when this *diyan* turns into this very special one?

A.: This special *diyan* is being produced in the evening, roughly between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Q.: I have heard that sometimes also the *diuri*'s wife produces this *diyan*, otherwise only men.

A.: This sacred *diyan* is produced by the *diuri*'s wife for every festival (*porob*).

Q.: What is so special that *diuri*'s wife produces this *diyan*? And is there anything special that she should pay attention to during the production?

A.: When the *diuri*'s wife prepares *diyan*, she will not eat anything that has been made by somebody else after having taken her bath. Whatever she wants to eat in this situation she must produce with her own hands and then eat.

Q.: Are there any specific restrictions while she is preparing *diyan*?

A.: Yes. Her hair should be left open, not tied together.

Q.: She can Talk?

A.: She can talk.

Q.: Is she allowed to prepare *diyan* in case she is pregnant?

A.: Yes, she can.

Q.: When you as a *diuri* call the gods and goddesses and ancestors in the *desauli*, will they come and where will they go, if they come? Do they enter the body?

A.: When I call them, there are particular seats for them inside the *desauli*. We will clean the places first and after that they will sit down there.

They cannot enter human bodies. When the gods, goddesses and ancestors come, I will offer them *diyan* and *rasi*.

Q.: When the gods are coming, do they carry special weapons ?

A.: Yes, they'll come along together with their weapons.

Q.: What are for instance the weapons of particularly important gods?

A.: We cannot see these weapons.

Q.: In our last interview you told us about the clients of the Hos: blacksmith, pottrters etc.

What were the conditions that made you need these people to come?

A.: Wen our ancestors came down from Baihatu, they had a lot of cattle. Special people, the Gaus, were asked to come to take care of them.

The Hos also needed pots , so they called for the Kunkal; also ketcho: were a basic need.

Q.: Inexchange for their service what did they receive?

A.: They were given baba, because money was rare at this time.

Q.: How have things changed today?

A.: Today they are given money.

Q.: When did things change? Last time you mentioned that by now they are rich in money and you are poor?

A.: As we had to give them money they are rich, whereas we ourselves are busy in agriculture.

Q.: Is there something comparable to the Santals that people jointly decide every year what exactly these clients are being paid per year?

A.: There is. Once every year we discuss these matters. E.G. we do call a blacksmith from far away who has his tools in this vicinity.

Q.: In our last interview you seemed to be dissatisfied with a few things. If you could changes things, what would that be?

A.: If I work well, I will become a rich person. If I don't work, I will become poor.

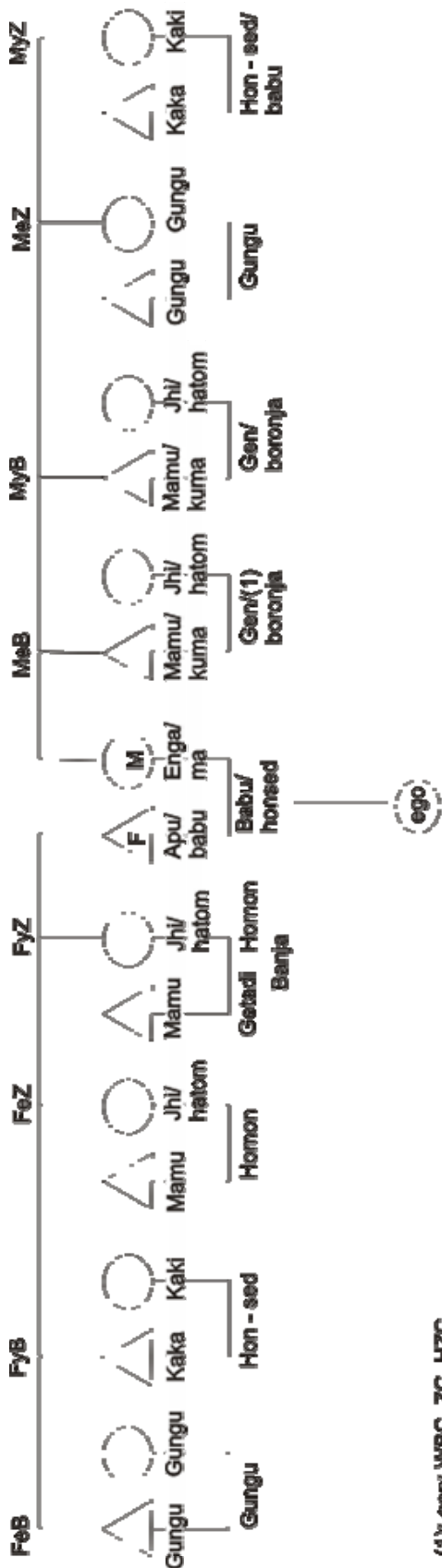
Q.: What do you think: will the Hos be able to live well as peasants?

A.: Yes. If the blacksmith is coming they will lead a comfortable life, because they need to plough their land and, as sufficient iron is there. It is the blacksmith's duty to sharpen the iron, and if he does not do that they will not be able to plough their land.

Q: Are the Hos of today leading a comfortable life?

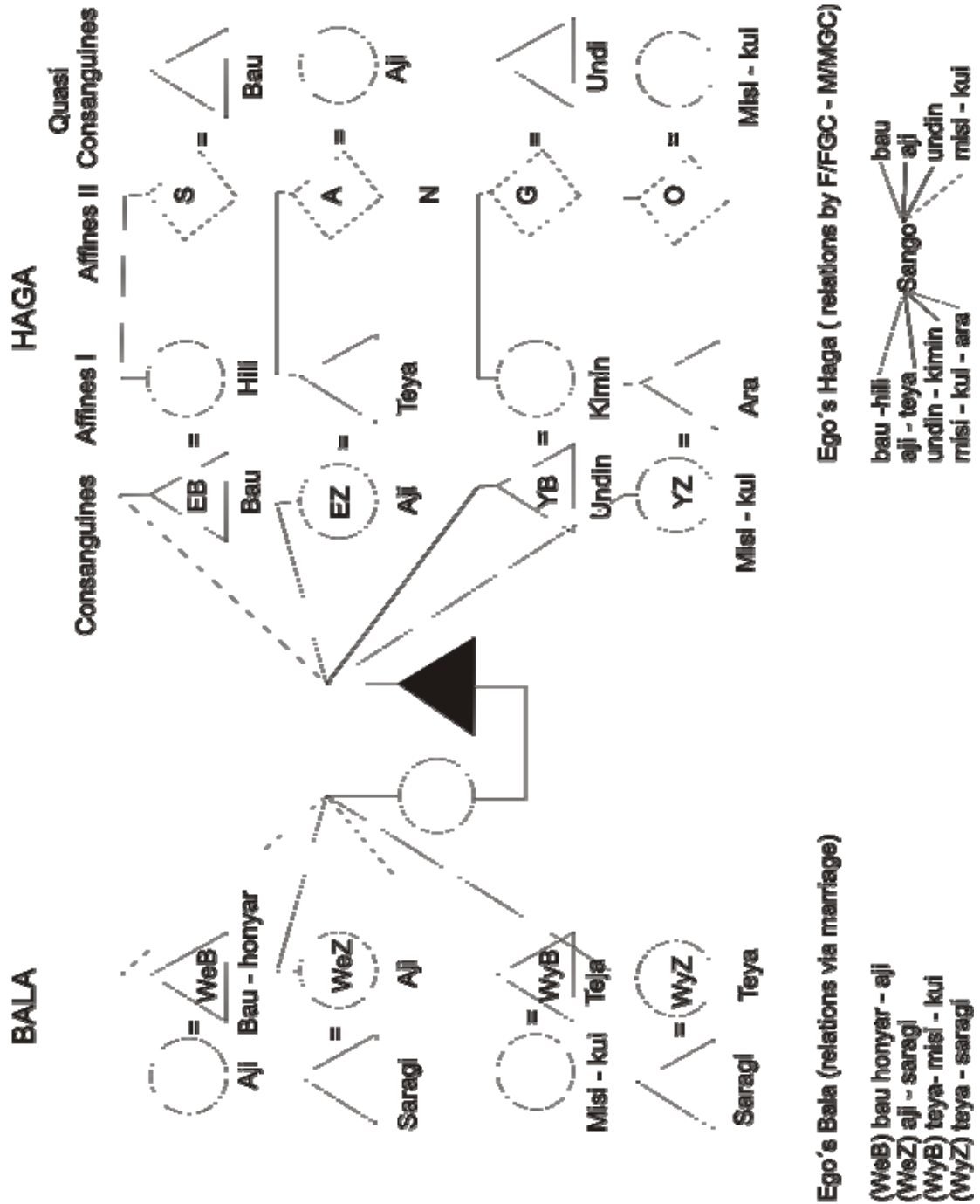
A.:Yes, we do live in peace, because we offer correctly and adequately in the course of the *bongas*. If we didn't do that, some unrest among the Hos might grow.

7. Kinship - 7.3. Ho kinship terms of +1 level

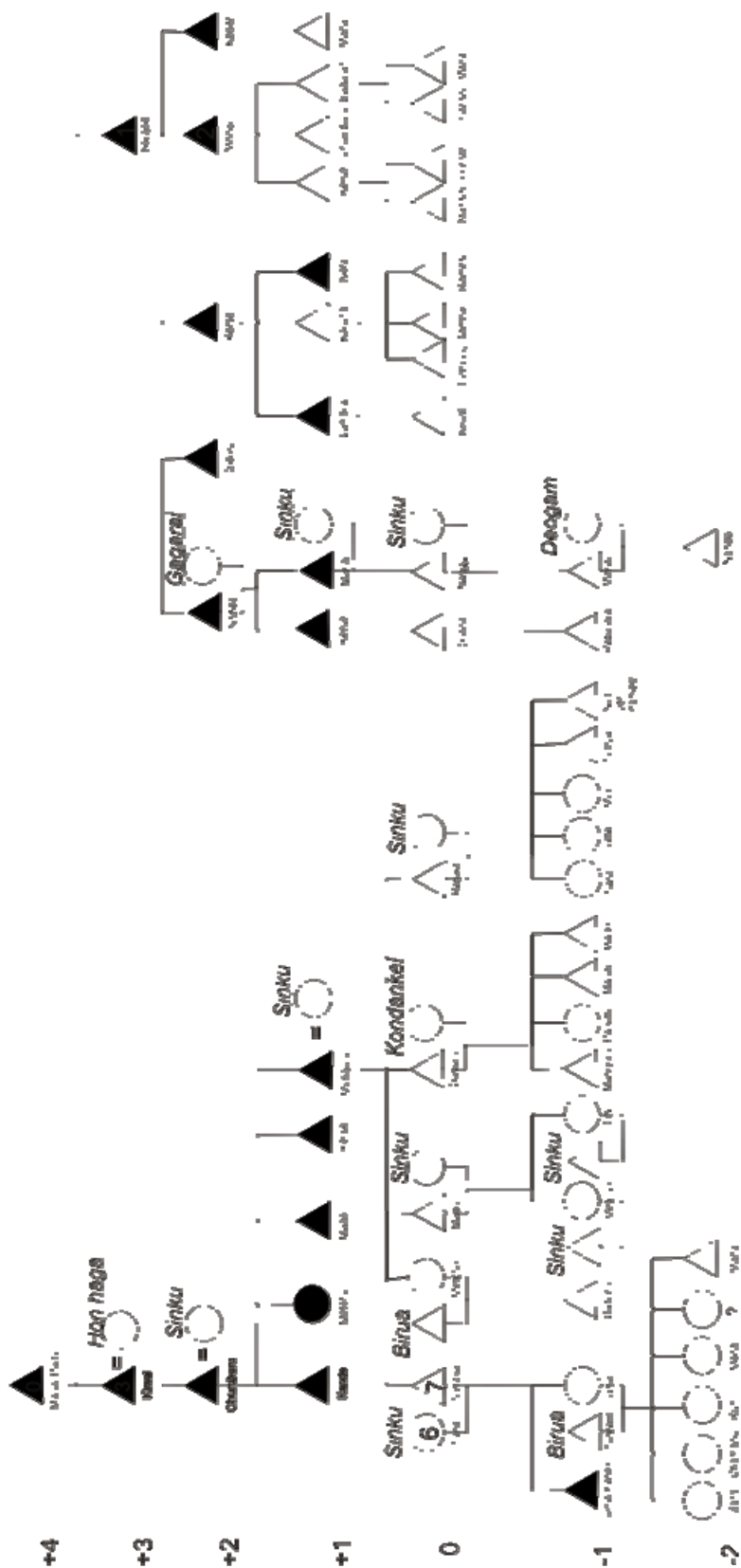


(1): gen: WBC, ZC, HZC

7.4. Ho kinship terms of ego`s *balas* and *hagas*; four – line terminology of 0 level



## 7.6. *Kilis* that the (Holong) Purty clan has had marital relations with (incomplete)





## 9. Literature

### 9.4. D.S. Purty/Deeney: *Ho disum- Ho honko*, 7 volumes

In 1960 Dhanur Singh Purty, a former pupil and Ho graduate of Deeney's at the time when he was teaching at St Xavier's High School at Chaibasa, began writing on Ho customs.

Between 1978 and 1982 1342 pages were published. Purty is still working for Deeney as his assistant. Deeney makes it a point that everything that he has published on Ho culture has been thoroughly checked and corrected by Purty.

At the time of my stay in Orissa Deeney and Purty had begun to translate the seven volumes into Hindi. So far they have been published in Ho represented in the Devanagari script with the fourth volume out of print.

The following is a translation into English of the headings of the chapters of these volumes, in order to be able later to decide on a closer translation of specific parts. The translation into English proved extremely difficult for our assistant who was fluent in Ho and English. The reason I presume was that the language is full of specific HO terms for rituals that even my assistant did not know and the rituals themselves, as he told me, were so completely different from his own Santal culture and background. So without the Ho-English Dictionary we would have been quite at a loss. Still we could not finish our preliminary translation, and consequently some parts are missing.

#### 9.4.1. Volume 1: Customs at the time of birth, marriage and death

##### Death related rituals (114 – 146)

###### *Burying*

- Earth digging
- Waiting for the relatives (*balasaka*)
- Putting the body inside the grave
- Serving rice beer
- Fixing a date for calling the spirit of the dead inside the *adin*
- Offering toothstick and water to the dead
- Calling the *rowa*: inside the *adin*

###### *Burning a body*

- Setting a stone
- Pouring oil on the stone
- Eating and drinking
- Burying of bones

##### Birth related rituals ( 1-18)

*After delivery*

- Beating the house (breaking the news to the neighbours)
- Cutting the umbilical cord
- Burying the placenta
- Special “house” to cover that place

*Social Impurity or the role of the midwife become impure in that context*

- Shaving
- Boiling the clothes
- Searching for a name
- Finding a namesake (not to be done on the day of the namesgiving ritual)
- feast to be given by parents of the baies
- relatives to be informed
- chicken or goat to be offered
- string (*dora*) on baby to be organized by opposite parents

**Marriage rituals** 27 ff. ( not translated here)

#### **9.4.2. volume 2: Feasts (*porobko*)**

##### **1. Mage Porob (1 – 29)**

The beginning

Ways of performing it

- taking out the cows
- calling in... (a special purifying ceremony held 2 weeks before Mage at the Dessauli
- *diuri*’s wife to produce *diyan*
- *mage* is called
- worshipping of earth
- plucking leaves
- males carrying firewood to desauli
- purifying with cowdung ( homely affair)
- main festival: Mage Porob at full moon

What is performed at the site of the Mage Festival

Next day

Chasing Mage

##### **2. Ba´ Porob (24 – 33)**

##### **3. Baba mutu (beginning of sowing) (34 – 38)**

##### **4. Hero Porob (39 – 49)**

- rituals performed at the time of beginning to sow

##### **5. Batauli (50 – 55)**

- sacrifice and festival asking for rain

##### **6. Jaum nama (56 – 63)**

##### **7. Hiyad Murgad (64 – 67)**

- festival at the time of/ after *Jaum nama*
- not observed in all Ho villages

8., 9., 10. missing

### **9.4.3. volume 3: Hospitality, Chaibasa Market, Signs of Rain coming, other subjects**

1. Hospitality towards the relatives ( 1-13)
2. Respect Relations (14 – 26)
3. cultivating the earth (17 – 59)
4. work on the threshing ground (60 – 84)
5. bringing the “riceball” ( *bandi*) inside (85 – 89)
6. place for silkworms (90 – 149)
7. old Chaibasa: market place (150 – 168)
8. wind and rain as related to scarcity and abundance (169 – 198)
9. illness and medicines (199 – 216)

### **9.4.4.volume 4 (out of print): Singonga and the Bongas**

### **9.4.5.volume 5: From Infancy to Old Age**

Ho people in this life

1. Children and infants (1 – 108)
2. Adolescence (109 – 196)
3. Being a wife and a husband (197 – 255)
4. Being an old man (256 – 262)

### **9.4.6. volume 6: Hunting**

1. Hunting in the jungle (1 – 47)
2. Bison (48 – 50)
3. Discussion of hunt-related perception (51 – 82)
4. Rabbits (83 – 89)
5. Porcupines at night (90 – 100)
6. Deer (101 – 107)
7. Catching fish (138 – 167)
8. Flying ants (168 – 184)
9. Tying a cock (185 – 232)

### **9.4.7.Myths and Old Stories**

(No translation of chapter headings)

## 10. Manbir

### 10.1. Manbir in maps: the village and its hamlets

Manbir is a village of about 1000 inhabitants in the Northwest of Mayurbhanj, a district in the North of the state of Orissa. It is situated on a plateau of about 300 metres surrounded by wooded hills and mountains. It is very close to the Balisudra, the river separating Orissa from the state of Jharkand. 13 hamlets (*sai* or *sahi*) constitute the village of Manbir with Marang Manbir, where I stayed during my fieldwork, as the largest *sai* and the only one that has got a newly built cement road. The oldest *sai* is probably Sadar Sai with three huge stones commemorating the foundation of Manbir at around 1870 by *Domke*, a member of the still dominant Bage clan (*kili*) in the Jamda area.. Jamda is the closest market town (*hatu*), about six to seven kilometres away from Marang Manbir. It can be reached on foot within one hour or by bicycle in about 40 minutes. Access by car is possible, though extremely rare. Languages understood by most are Oriya, Hindi, Ho. Ho is the spoken language, spoken also by the General (in government terms they would be called OBC, Other Backward Classes). English is taught at school, but not spoken in the village.

### 10.2. Marang Manbir in numbers: kilis and inhabitants

(the numbers in brackets below refer to the numbered houses in the map of Marang Manbir).

According to our census there are:

Kilis with one household: **Purty** (No 32: 1 person); **Sawaiya** (No 4: 6 persons); **Birua** (35: 7 persons); **Bari** (74: 6 persons); **Barda** (114 – 116: 6 persons);  
These are 26 persons or 15 % of the Ho population of Marang Manbir.

Kilis with more households: **Bage** (27 – 31: 24 p.); (62 – 68, 72, 73, 75, 76, 80 – 88: 56 p.); (99, 100, 102 – 106: 21 p.).

With about 101 persons the Bage constitute about 40% of the Hos.

**Deogam** (89-96, 101: 47 p.); (117 – 120: 12 p.). These are 59 persons or 24 % of the Hos.

**Gagarai** (38 – 48: 37 p.); (21,77 – 79: 16 p.). These are about 53 persons or 21 %.

Scheduled Caste ( 123 – 125; 23,24; 53 – 55; 37 : 42 persons)

Scheduled Tribe / Munda ( 111 – 113 : 8 persons)

Inhabitants of Marang Manbir: 443

Number of Households: 90

Hos :249 persons/ 56,2 %; General: 144 persons/ 32,5 %; SC: 42 persons/ 9.5 %; ST : 8 persons (non – Ho)/ 1,8%.

### 10.3. Marang Manbir in context: location, clans (*kilis*) and inhabitants

To the right of our house there was one of the two community wells. Close to it was a pump, which was out of order. So two wells provided more than 400 villagers with water, which was never short. In winter at around 5.30 a.m., from March onwards at around 4.30 a.m. women and girl - children met at the community well to giggle, laugh, talk and get water, which they would carry home in aluminium pots (*dikshi*) on their heads and/ or their hips. The well was in use almost all day with the “rush hours” being early morning and in the evening short before sunset which was at around 6.15 p.m.

To the east out of our back window we could watch the sun in the early morning beaming its rays ( in HO: *her* rays) trying to fight the dense fog in which *Parwa buru*, the mountain sacred to the Hos, was often wrapped up.

At the beginning of my stay I did not know, of course, how the villagers of Marang Sahi were interrelated, and even after we had done our census the situation remained quite confusing for a while. Only when I had worked out a few genealogies it was surprising and highly interesting to trace the links that related especially the Bage, the dominant *kili* of the Jamda area and of our village. So I found out, for example, that and how a few of my informants were interrelated by common ancestors: Helena Bage and her husband as well as Jadho from Sardar Sahi, Giridari Bage and Lokon Bage from Marang Sahi.

Opposite our residence lived Lokon Bage, the village priest (*diuri*) and village headman (*munda*)( houses no 85 – 88). A number of village rituals were performed inside his big courtyard or started from there. During the main village festivals his courtyard served as the dancing ground. In between the festivals the courtyard was being used, just as any other courtyard, for the necessary seasonal work, i.e. agricultural work: beating the seeds out of the mustard seed plants, drying and working on *masuri*, a special lentil pulse, drying, threshing and husking the paddy/ rice etc. The *diuri* functioned as the ritual head of the village during our stay, but not as the *munda*, a hereditary post according to which he was traditionally supposed to govern and represent the village in wordly matters. This he refused to do saying that the power was taken off the hands of the *mundas* and handed over to the *panchayat* instead. Whenever we wanted to talk to him about his duties as a village headman, he referred us to his elder Brother, as he called him, an old and very informed person living in Sardar

Sahi. This elder Brother turned out to be Jadho Bage, *hon- sed*<sup>42</sup> to Lokon Bage, our *diuri*, whom he addressed as uncle (*kaka*), although he was a lot older<sup>43</sup>. Often, when we went to see and talk to Jadho, he would follow us, eavesdropping on our interviews, but never participating in them, and drinking rice-beer until we had finished and left.

Diagonally opposite our house lived S. Deogam, an unmarried woman, together with her unmarried elder brother ( house no 89). She was a professional ricebeer cook, and consequently her house was continuously attended by a lot of the villagers, men as well as women or children. Right from the beginning I was her elder brother's wife (*hili*) and she was the younger sister of a woman's husband (*iril*) to me, a joking relationship. In difficult situations she functioned as a mediator between the villagers and me. She also became my teacher and taught me how to produce ricebeer properly.

Between her and our house was the dancing ground (*akara*). There not too often a few men met to discuss important village affairs publicly, e.g. when a special tree, the sacred *sal daru* was cut by someone from the neighbouring Chatani Sahi or when a petition was being signed on behalf of a fence around the sacred grove of the village (*desauli*).

Laxman Barda lived with his parents and brothers in houses 114 – 116. He was the only one, who could speak a little English with us. He was quite cooperative and the first whose genealogy I took down<sup>44</sup>. In the course of our stay his parents would hire a mediator or match maker to have him married to a girl from Jharkand, and we were invited to attend the necessary negotiations at his parents` home.

Giridhari Bage lived in no 75, his married daughter Raimoni, a Bari, in 74. I will give his genealogy<sup>45</sup>, but it took me some time to realize that he was identical with *marang bongsi* on the same 0 level as Jadho Bage, a term that Jadho Bage had given to me and that I have put down in the genealogy of the Bage Kili of Manbir<sup>46</sup>. Both Jadho and Giridari have the 1<sup>st</sup> sardar of Manbir as a common ancestor.

Fulmoni Bage lived in house 62. She takes position 12 in the genealogy of the Bage Kili of Manbir<sup>47</sup>. Everybody in Marang Sahi could tell a story about Mando, the strong man of Manbir<sup>48</sup>, and she happened to be his grandchild and thus received great attention and

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<sup>42</sup> Hon sed: a man's older brother's son; one's husband's older brother's son; a woman's older sister's son; one's wife's older sister's son; one's own son.

<sup>43</sup> Jadho and Lokon: see genealogy of **the Bage Kili of Manbir**, no 6 and 13, which explains this seemingly contradictory situation.

<sup>44</sup> See genealogies

<sup>45</sup> dto, the Bage Kili of Manbir

<sup>46</sup> dto,

<sup>47</sup> dto., no 12

<sup>48</sup> dto, no 5

commanded a high reputation. As a female dewa she lived on raw food and worshipped the goddess Durga.

Our neighbours in houses 1 – 3 were General people, very supportive, very helpful. Being of Hindu origin they spoke Ho like their mother tongue and as their lingua franca. When their grandmother (*nana buri*) died I could witness how much their burial rites were shaped by the Ho traditions. In house no 5 a young mother lived together with her son and her mother. Her husband worked in Bangalore. She supplied us regularly with firewood from the jungle, and whenever she went she would ask me to accompany them there which I once did. She also plastered our neighbour's house with mud, which she mixed with cowdung and water and time and again quite of her own accord she purified the porch of our house with cowdung. A *mai*, a young girl of eight who also stayed with them, did the washing up for us, after our first assistant had protested that washing up was no work for males.

These were the people that we mainly dealt with in our village.

## 10.4. Legend

House            empty house            house under construction

Pond,            big pond

S or            : Schools (Primary School in Marang Sahi, Highschool in Chatani Sahi)

Temple

Or M: Medical Centre

N            Kindergarden

Tree (*jojo daru*)

The sacred grove of a village (*desauli*)

*Akara*: “the dancing ground; the arena for a cockfight; to come together for conversation or play “ (from S.J. Deeney 2005: 6)

Graveyard

Mountain

Palm tree (Tale daru)

Pump

Well

Road (big)

Road (small)

Bridge

Erected stone (s)

## 11. Miscellaneous

### 11.1. Lecture: Entry into the field

**In: C. Gregory`s seminar “Key Issues of Middle Indian Anthropology” on May 29, 2006**

1. Entry into the field
  - 1.1. My assistants and I
  - 1.2. Manbir and the Hos
  - 1.3. I and the Ho language
  - 1.4. Time management and note taking
2. The Hos and their ancestors
3. Slides

I have been doing fieldwork among the Hos for about four months and I have only just returned. It has been a highly rewarding, intense and simultaneously very hard time.

I am very happy about and grateful for having been invited to talk to you about my entry into the field focussing on the difficulties involved in that.

In a second part I`ll look briefly at the Hos and their relationship with their ancestors, an important aspect of their cosmology, an aspect that is present in the Hos` everyday lives every minute.

Finally I`ll show some slides to give you an idea of the area, the Hos and their culture.

Please keep in mind that within 60 minutes I will not be able to convey anything else but a highly selective and subjective glimpse at what I experienced in more than 2500 hours that I spent in that area.

Where was “my field”?

My field was a plateau area near the jungle in Middle India, in Orissa, very close to Jharkand. Most of the time I spent in and around Manbir, or more precisely, Marang Sai, the largest of altogether 13 parts constituting Manbir.

Marang Sai is a mixed village of 443 inhabitants. 56% of them are Ho, 32% are General (Hindu), 10 % are SC and there are also a few non-Ho ST, in this case Munda.

In Marang Sai we, i.e. my husband, our assistant and I were given a house by the villagers right in the centre of the village and right in front of the community well.

Looking back I can say that although initially I didn`t have a table, although I got my water from the community well, although I had no bathroom or toilet and had to wash in nearby

ponds, although I had no electricity, no telephone or mobile I have lived in an atmosphere of plenty and in a culturally rich part of the world. The purpose of my stay made it a meaningful one and helped to overcome the many, many difficulties that I met almost daily. Although I genuinely felt invited, especially by the Ho women, to participate in their lives, it was so enormously difficult for me – beyond the language barrier- to do just that. Why was that so? I was right in the middle of the field, I was all surrounded by the field, why was it so hard to open the door of the house and step outside?

Of the many aspects let me mention just four.

### 1.1. My assistants and I: a sensitive and most challenging issue.

I was simply scared to enter the field without an assistant accompanying me; that was so especially at the beginning of my stay. As I usually like to be well prepared we had an assistant who had also offered to cook for us and who stayed with us in our one – room “palace” of about 16 m<sup>2</sup>. So what could go wrong?

As it turned out the field was not outside our house, but right inside. A charming honest young man with a degree in anthropology fieldwork to him was a matter of numbers and figures: doing census, collecting data on a standardized questionnaire, physical anthropology etc. Levy Strauss and his concept of “letting the field decide for you” was a clear waste of time to him indicating a wrong notion of fieldwork. Initiating a second socialization, helping to bridge us into Ho everyday life, he just didn't understand what I was talking about and intending to do. And he spent hours inside the kitchen preparing wonderful meals or outside the house where we wanted to be, socializing with others, while we were waiting, waiting, waiting for him inside.

Our second assistant was from a neighbouring village, Tarna. He was usually well informed, spoke Santal, Ho, Oriya, Hindi and English fluently and was very supportive. On the whole we were quite happy with him - that is if he was there. Unfortunately he was never on time, at least not according to my (German) standards, did not turn up at all for days dropping a note for us or he was sometimes so drunk that we had to send him home.

### 1.2. Marang Sai and the Hos

Was Marang Sai a good choice? Was it really our field and worth the effort of entering?

Before we settled down we had been told that in Manbir there lived 80 % Hos and 20% Santal. After our census we knew there were no Santal at all and less than 60 % Hos. Should we look

for a pure, i.e. 100% Ho village? Are there pure Ho villages? How would we get reliable information?

### 1.3. I and the Ho language

As every student of anthropology learns in her/ his first semester it is of paramount importance to learn the indigenous language and to learn it fast. So I was not surprised to realize that the major obstacle of entering the field was my utter inability to understand and speak Ho. Especially the Ho women desperately wanted me to communicate with them and urged me to solve that problem which finally was the best motivation I could wish for. So apart from some other support a few Ho children became my patient and reliable language teachers.

### 1.4. Time management and note taking

How many rituals a day can you observe and /or participate in without mixing them up and getting confused? How many sleepless nights do you survive? How many people can you meet and (not) get involved? If none (!) of your schedules and plans work out, do you stop making plans? How do you make notes when you are participating in a ceremony? What are you missing out on when you focus on observing events “only”? What is significant, what is insignificant? Is there anything like insignificant information in anthropological fieldwork at all?

To conclude:

In Manbir I was usually busy between 5 and 6 a.m. and 9 p.m.. I soon realized that the days and the period of our stay, especially since we had our second well-informed assistant, were too short, because just too much was happening almost all of the time, sometimes even at night and often in a most unexpected way. Despite or rather because of our continuous waiting for someone or something I was under constant pressure to cover anthropologically what was on offer:

- death related rituals taking place over a period of three and more days with some rituals being performed simultaneously at different locations.
- Birth related rituals
- Marriage ceremonies, also to a dog
- Complex bongas
- The sacrificing of black hens, red cocks, white chicken for the most different purposes
- Interviewing people: the *diuri* (village priest) and his elder brother, the *munda* (village headman), the *dewa* ( the shaman), the local king etc. etc.

- By gaining and entertaining a huge number of new relatives finding out about Ho kinship
- Gaining knowledge of the importance of their ancestors by working out genealogies
- Dancing for me, drumming for my husband
- Village festivals around the full moon days of January (Mokr Sakranti), February (Mage), March (Ba), April (Baram Buri)
- Accompanying women to the jungle
- Accompanying men to the jungle
- Killing a mad dog implying a number of purifying procedures
- Etc., etc.

## 2. The Hos and their ancestors

In part I I have focussed on us and a few of the difficulties in entering the field.

The second part will be about the Ho and their relationship with their ancestors.

To gain a preliminary understanding of that aspect of Ho cosmology and to see how it is similar or different from our own let us have a look at the system of classification as given in the Ho language.

Ho is not concerned with gender; there are no separate forms for masculine and feminine, however Ho is very much concerned with what is living/ animate and what is not living/ inanimate.

So when I'm writing a few nouns on the board, please decide which are living, which are inanimate:

*moon – spirits – stones – cow – tree – soul – thunder – horse – ancestors – flower – rain – sun – star – lightning –*

Result:

To the Ho the distinction is as follows: *animate* are God, spirits, people, animals, sun, moon, stars, natural phenomena like rain etc; *inanimate* are all other things including plants and trees. What is living and alive to the Ho can be visible like a cow or the moon, it can be invisible like God, the spirits or the souls of the ancestors.

The Hos are living in a world that is populated by invisible beings who in their everyday lives seem even more important than the visible beings, who are constantly around, who are to be taken care of and who take care of them.

Let me quote a paragraph from a text written by Fr. Deeney, an American Jesuit who has lived in Chaibasa/Jharkand since 1949, who has studied Ho culture and Ho language

intensively and who has published a.o. a HO – English dictionary, a Ho grammar and vocabulary.

### **“ *The Hos`Continued Relationship with their Dead*”**

One of the things which most impresses an outsider who comes to know the Hos is the strong bond which exists between the living and the dead members of a Ho family. Those who die remain an important part of the family. They are considered not to have left the family but to have passed over into the invisible spirit world where, although they are invisible to the family members, they are very much aware of and concerned about all that goes on in the family.

In the spirit world the dead ancestors and relatives are believed to be united very closely one to another in friendly intimacy . (... )

Although the Hos realize that the corpse of a dead person is buried in the grave, they associate the continued presence and beneficial support of a dead member of the family not with the grave, but with the home, especially that part of the home where the family meal is cooked, the *ading*. Therefore after a burial there is a special rite by which they call the spirit or soul (*rowa*) of the dead person back into the home (...) Once they have performed this rite they will henceforth make all family prayers and offerings to the dead person not at the grave but in the *ading* of the house (...).

### **3. Slides**

The slides that I have chosen will illustrate

- Manbir and its surroundings,
- Houses: outside and inside
- Seniority
- Stones
- People
- Rituals
- Farewell from the village.