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Tribal Ideas

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ABSTRACT Different dimensions of anthropological research are being introduced, like the interpretation of certain situations, the abstraction and generalisation of such observation, and the comparison. Interpretations of situations face the problem of possible variants in the cultural logic of the actors. When dealing with the social morphology, ideological concepts are the cause as well as the consequence of certain forms of group formation. The structure of the groups is closely related to the structure of the ideas on the world. Such worldviews may been seen in an evolutionary context as well juxtaposing non-modern, traditional and modern societies. The article tries to indicate the morphological and ideological differences between the non-modern tribal society of western Orissa and the traditional Hindu world or the modern Western setting.

INTRODUCTION

Many an anthropological dispute is only superficially, if at all, involving factual discrepancies or intellectual flaws. In reality, the dimension of social life under study is at variance.

Most anthropologists analyse observed action, such as a feast conducted on a village square, or social norms, such as the permitted or prohibited nature of the food to be consumed. They, in all likelihood, conceive relations of power and influence, i.e. the difference of central and marginal positions occupied during the common meal, just as they work on questions of social morphology, i.e. the groups and categories included in or excluded from the feast and the criteria of their selection. This requires fieldworkers to observe as many occasions of the same type of event as possible in order to gain insight into the complex issues of promulgated and practised norms, of permitted leeway in executing the prescribed action, and of latent norms, i.e. behavioural demands not followed by negative sanctions in case of non-performance.

Dissatisfied with such a singular preoccupation, many anthropologists offer the same type of intensive attention to not just one event, such as the feast on a particular occasion or square, but to similar events, or feasts, on various dates and places, as well as other significant social action involving all sorts of other combinations of individual and group performance. The anthropological aim is to generalise. Events of social significance, impressed upon the ethnographer by the concerned people themselves, contain messages.

The anthropologist would try to "read" the messages conveyed through the interrelated social facts and "decipher" the meaning of the combined social expressions without recourse to the interpretations of the people themselves. Such a "de-codification" involves value-ideas. For Harris (1969: 571) such messages, containing the basic moral orientation of the social system, are as "emic" as isolated indigenous statements such as those about the healing power of a certain leaf. To this day, many anthropologists explicitly or implicitly follow his distinction of the "emic" and the "etic" - i.e. indigenous expressions and externally measurable data (ibid. 568 f.) - awarding an inferior epistemological status to the former. In passing, I would like to reject this unreflected mingling of the informants' wisdom with abstraction, generalisation, and analysis of indigenous values. I also reject a separation or given status difference of *Sollen* and *Sein*.

Beyond observed action, subsequent interpretation, and perhaps abstraction some anthropologists compare the abstracted systems of value-ideas on a world-wide basis with occasional references to the material world, whereas others - again world-wide - compare systems of the political economy from which they - sometimes - derive systematic expressions of religious meaning. Yet others, like Murdock's (1949) school, compare social forms according to their statistical occurrence, deriving evolutionary hypotheses from morphological comparison and

frequencies. Thus disputes in the field of social anthropology may, of course, involve factual discrepancies or intellectual flaws, but more often they relate to the different dimensions of social research, or the type of questions the author wants to be discussed or solved.

SITUATIONS

When observing a social event - complicated by the actors' multiple differences and interpretative disputes - Geertz is the master. He would present a "discourse," a sociologically relevant confrontation of contested meaning imputed by the actors of a particular scene. In village India, for example, people might debate over questions of seating arrangements for a feast. The parties would then refer implicitly or explicitly to questions of status and power and might delay or even paralyse the event as a result of such a debate. Geertz would collect all of the individual expressions and subtle nuances of the performance, trying to rescue as much of the situation as possible, all the time aware, however, that his "thick description" would be but a partial and incomplete review. Quality it would gain by its literary versatility, its entry into the subjective world of observer and observed, and its swift or easy access to certain general - if controversial or contradictory - motives of the actors involved.

Following the Geertzian course (1973), an anthropologist would concentrate on the situation, the subjectivism of the actors, and the beauty and refinement of the descriptive essay. The "system of meaning and symbols" - or *culture* in the words of Geertz (1957: 32-3) - would be uncovered to the extent permitted by the situation, and the "social interaction" - or *structure* - would involve disputes of intra- or intercultural interpretation among the actors involved. The anthropological essay, concerned with either feast or funeral, cattle-theft or cockfight, would be readable - or even a piece of admirable prose - according to the author's literary refinement and the reader's reach of the actors' values. Thus masters of "writing culture" had better select situations not complicated by strange moral orientations. Elwin's account of the Juang offers a good example of what to avoid: "The distances are great and the paths difficult even with elephants. There is no tradition, as in Bastar, of village hospitality. At one point, when I was being carried with high fever through the jungle at night, my Juang bearers dumped me down and disappeared, leaving me alone without a light and unable to walk" (Elwin, 1948: 3).

Even if an anthropologist of Geertzian persuasion would not exactly share Elwin's position, the situation would hardly be selected for some "thick description." My own first encounter with the Juang, on the contrary, was ideally suited for such a piece of prose, had I had the gift of writing: The highest forest officer of Orissa, impressive by his tall and heavy stature, led some Indian and European anthropologists[1] to a "model village," i.e. some brick-huts with asbestos-roofs constructed by the government for the "downtrodden" of the Keonjhar forest. But the houses were uninhabited, the Juang nowhere in sight. Finally a ranger found and brought a lean and elderly tribal, not taller than 150 cm, carrying a tambourine.

"Come here child!" the supreme forest officer exclaimed, but the Juang remained where he was. One of the Europeans, a famous revolutionary anthropologist, thereupon made notes for the draft petition, later to be forwarded to the executives of the conference, and an Indian colleague, hailing from the Northeast, walked over to the Juang, smiled, took the tambourine, and started dancing to its beat, thus saving the situation.

Under normal circumstances, the mighty officer would not even have glanced at any of the forest dwarfs, but here he had to please the foreign visitors, because the Delhi World Conference - something like a Vedic *jaggian* - was meant to have a unique climax in the province of Orissa. The anthropologist and revolutionary had mostly been concerned with Parisian university politics and historical varieties or successions of modes of production in the theoretical sense, but here size and weight of the principle actors suggested practical problems. The Assamese anthropologist, on the other hand, was used to tribal counterparts of the more militant type. Finally, the Juang himself saw no reason for the whole encounter and was probably hoping to get over with it as soon as possible. The individuals involved were directors and inhabitants of the forest, world-famous Marxist intellectuals

and ordinary academics of several countries and age-groups. Ruling and inhabiting the forest, political, academic, and simply "civil" persuasions implied references to certain values accessible by any ordinary reader of an anthropological account. The situation was suitable for a "thick description," whereas dumping poor Elwin in the midnight jungle was not.

MORPHOLOGY AND IDEOLOGY

Even if Murdock' s numeral fetishism is left aside, morphological questions imply deeper studies of social groups and categories, their normative and practical interaction. Thus Evans-Pritchard (1940) introduced the system of Nuer lineages involved in conflict-resolution, efforts which at times even crossed the ethnic boundary. When agnatic lineages were actively engaged at various levels of conflict, any one party battling on the ground might consist of agnates or not, i.e. the practical execution was not just a matter of those qualified and obliged in a normative sense. Evans-Pritchard did observe such situations in order to conceive the structure, the relational pattern of the elements. Certain people were performing on the ground, but the conceptions of the parties on the ground not necessarily coincided with individual membership rules. "...Nuer think generally in terms of local divisions and of the relationships between them, and an attempt to discover lineage affiliations apart from their community relations, and outside the ceremonial context, generally led to misunderstanding..." (1940: 203).

In fact, Evans-Pritchard described the Nuer lineage and its agnatic membership rule as well as the ritual lineage interaction as conceived by the Nuer, i.e. the lineage model, just as he discussed the identity of the individuals involved in lineage disputes on the ground. This approach was echoed not only by praise but also by ridicule: "The Nuer model...provides reliable guidance neither to Nuer social behaviour nor to Nuer values" (Kuper, 1983: 95). The dispute is of crucial importance. Whereas Kuper wants to know how the Nuer actors behave or conceive right and wrong, Evans-Pritchard's structure was a model of the total Nuer world involving the same type of parts related by different levels of inclusion. It is doubtful, whether any single Nuer would be able to convey this model. The groups, performing as lineages on the ground, also consisted of non-agnates, and yet the ethnographer was able to "decipher" more than a situational conflict over interpretations of meaning. His model was based on the idea of inclusion - or encompassing - and the idea that the superior level would include the inferior level, even if the latter contained an inverse relation. Furthermore, this relational pattern determined the meaning of societal whole and not the behaviour of certain individuals and groups. Nuer lineages are separate but interdependent and some of them - those of a higher level - include others, thus being of higher value and able to invert the relationship of the lower level.

Evans-Pritchard's book on the Nuer did relate to the interaction of groups in a behavioural and a normative sense. He showed how some type of group was supposed to react to some other type. Beyond these ethnographic abstractions, Evans-Pritchard introduced the reader to a structure - i.e. a regular pattern of interrelated elements - of ideas not actions, ideas not devised or conceived by individuals but deducted from verbal categories and a behavioural world marred by innumerable irregularities. Thus "The Nuer" (1940) is a book concerned with morphology as well as ideology.

EVOLUTION

Research in ideology is at the core of Dumont's work. Following his teacher Mauss, anthropology is to "posit the unity of mankind," but "in order to provide a scientific picture one must consider the differences, and to do this one requires a sociological method." The latter implies that "men are men only by virtue of their belonging to a specific, concrete global society" and "we ourselves are made to look back on *our own modern culture and society as on a particular form of humanity*" (Dumont, 1986: 205-6, emphasis given). Thus the systems of ideas - the ideology of a specific society - is as relevant for the sociological classification, as is the constitution of groups and subgroups, or the morphological system.

Beyond these well-known postulates,

Dumont's work also contains an implicit evolutionism. He is differentiating "modern culture" made up of national subcultures (ibid. 211), from "traditional societies," such as India, and "nonmodern societies" (ibid. 215) which he does not discuss. Thus Maine's stage of "territorial sovereignty" (1864: 98) and Morgan's stage of "civilisation" (1877: 30-1) reappear in different context and bifurcated into the "modern" mobile postindustrialist or individualistic world of North America and Europe and the "traditional" complex societies like India, China or the Arab world. Morgan's "savagery" (1877: 36) and "barbarism" (1877: 42), or Durkheim's "segmental organisation" (1893/1933: 177), are left alone by Dumont and lumped together under the non-derogatory term of "non-modern."

In "modern" society the idea of the individual governs. Humans are supposed to be humans only, whereas the holistic ideology of "traditional" societies provides status or given evaluation to different human collectives. Both individualism and holism "would lie beyond and outside" of "non-modern" societies, so "they would be as badly described from one point of view as from the other. It may prove that one should use another axis in comparing them to modern societies. For the moment this axis or these axes are not to be seen" (Dumont, 1986: 216). What has constituted the major field of anthropological study since the initiation of the discipline, i.e. the so-called "tribal society" or that of "hunters and gatherers," remains - in ideological terms - a mystery for a cautious thinker like Dumont.

Others have made less timid propositions. The older and more recent advocates of cultural evolution conceive a materialistic paradigm and associate different ideologies with certain technological adaptations or evolutionary stages of the political economy. Hunting and gathering may only be successful for small units of population, whereas horticulturists or pastoralists among the tribesmen may favour bigger groups and networks but hardly conceive the urban centres of the territorial states. Size and integration of settlements are likely to reflect on issues of a codified religion, priesthood, and morality. Thus Sahlins is talking of the "segmentary calculus" of moral action. "Within the home community, not to mention the family, conflict must be speedily surpressed on pain of breaking the group apart. Within the tribe, feuds ought to be settled...-sooner or later. But enmity toward other tribes may be eternal" (1968: 19). Raising plants and animals defines people as a tribe, or a social organisation with a segmentary design which is instrumental of a "sectoral morality."

The basic concepts of the evolutionary model relates to societal forms and their changes, as well as the overall direction of the movement. Biology has provided the model: "Evolution may be regarded as the process by which the utilisation of the earth's resources by living matter is rendered progressively more efficient" (Huxley, 1943: 387). Humans have devised societal forms utilising the earth's resources more and more efficiently in progressive stages from homogeneity to heterogeneity, or so it seems at first sight. Hunters and gatherers made a living in bands of a few individuals, tribesmen united in grand feasts of merit consuming their surplus, arranging marriages and sacrificing to their gods in the course of "total social facts," and finally the state had a government that monopolised force and guaranteed the peaceful specialisation and coexistence of economic and religious pursuits. The evolution of the organic (life) and the superorganic (culture) is viewed as inversion of inorganic evolution which, following the Second Law of Thermodynamics, "proceeds towards decrease in organisation, culminating in homogeneity and the random distribution of matter and energy" (Sahlins, 1960: 8).

Self-confessed students of cultural evolution - both of the "specific" and of the "general" type - thus concern themselves with morphological changes and the direction of the latter. Ideological issues are - stage by stage - seen as consequences of the technological adaptations and the dependent transformations of social units. The Maussian or Dumontian method, on the contrary, conceives different systems of societal ideas in a temporal sequence, but abstains from materialistic deductions. The sophisticated worldviews of different societal types on their own merit sufficient attention. In what appears to be a paradoxical result, however, the ideologies of "complex societies" have in fact been "deciphered," whereas those of simple or "nonmodern" societies are yet to be understood.

TRIBAL SOCIETY

If it is understood that anthropologists may quarrel over anything from the interpretation of a village feast to the evolution of inorganic, organic and superorganic matter, the prospects of entering the "tribal code" are bleak. If the venture would yet be initiated, we would - at the beginning - have to agree on the meaning of the term "tribe" or "tribal society."

For the practical purposes of this presentation, attention may be confined to India and the Indian province of Orissa where about a quarter of the population is viewed as "Scheduled Tribes" or ST, an administrative status conferred by the President of the Union. If however, following Dumont, we believe that "men are men only by virtue of their belonging to a *specific, concrete global society*" (1986: 206 my emphasis), we must ask, whether the Orissan "Scheduled Tribes" as a whole - or as any one of them - make up such a society, and the answer will be negative. The many different ST display a major "family resemblance" rather than definite common criteria of any sort, and they share their settlements and their habitat with other indigenous people, carrying other administrative titles,[2] but interacting with the ST on a day-to-day basis in innumerable sacred or secular matters. In contrast to the position of immigrant settlers from outside, these locals must be seen as "tribals" or members of "tribal society," because they also share a common system of meaning and symbols with the ST. Thus the whole indigenous population of the hills - in contrast to the caste society of the plains - includes more than half of the population of the eastern province and is inhabiting about two thirds of its territory. The tribal society would, however, not be confined to the provincial boundaries but spill over into the neighbouring states of West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

Any introduction to this tribal society might mention the languages, the names, and statistics, and the fact that now a days only a small minority among the tribals continue as swidden cultivators, while most of them are simple peasants, i.e. farmers and craftsmen, just as more and more become absorbed by the urban centres, eking out a living as industrial workers or kulis of sorts. Why should "tribal society" differ from "caste society," if tribals speak Oriya, wear saris, wield ploughs, or labour in the daily shift of their industrial plant like innumerable members of the lower castes in the same province?

The so-called "Adivasi" - again an administrative term - are known to be different in terms of Orissan classification, but - leaving aside the standard clichés - few inhabitants of the province could say how and why. If the political economy is unlikely to indicate their cultural status, morphology and ideology will have to, no matter if they are seen as "superstructure" and "reflection" of some - present or former - politico-economic infrastructure or not. Such a study will, however, have to cope with difficulties unknown to the student of caste society: The latter has been equipped with Brahmanical and folk literature as well as an access to historical knowledge, administrative principles and elaborate sacred or ideological institutions like temples and monasteries. Participant observers of caste thus command a rich knowledge of historical, religious and local accounts, condensed in a good number of theoretical contributions, while students of tribal society face situations and informants as total strangers. In the style of the founders of the discipline - who had been confronted with Kwakiutl or Trobrianders - European ethnographers face the people of western Orissa. Indian researchers, on the other hand, would not only communicate in their native tongue but also find plenty of other cultural commonalties preventing them from "the ability to wonder." Thus we may explain why about a hundred million members of the middle Indian tribal society are hardly known to the anthropological community, whereas the synthesis of several scholarly traditions may have allowed Dumont and others the remarkable access to the morphology and the value-ideas of the Indian societal mainstream. Interdisciplinary research efforts in Indian tribal society have been confined to questions of "development," or the ill-advised endeavour to improve the material basis without reasonable access to the tribal mentality.

Aware of the dearth of general knowledge, anthropological research is bound to approach the tribal order in the Durkheimian manner, i.e. beginning with observable or external regularities.

The "family resemblance" of the tribes as such has already been noted, and at a closer look, certain commonalties and differences arise at a lower regional level within the province as well.

THE GOND COMPLEX

Beginning from the south, we may initially note a "Gondide" block, comprising the little known Koya, Dorla and Dhurwa and perhaps other units, unvisited by ethnographers.[3] Language and group formation of these ethnic categories are Gondi with certain variations yet to be studied. Thus on visiting the Koya, their order of patrilineal *saga* (phratries) was complicated by the juxtaposition of a single "senior" one, named *kawasi* (tortoise), and four "junior" phratries named *marvi* (goat), *markami* (tortoise), *podiami* (some bird), and *odi* or *sodi* (buffalo). Each one of them was again subdivided into moieties - of "senior" and "junior" status respectively - marked by either the tabu on the consumption of the totem's meat or milk or the freedom from it. Again to this day *marvi* and *podiami* erect wooden poles as memorials in their grand funeral celebrations while the others erect menhirs. Grigson (1938: 240) has associated the *marvi* with both goat and cobra among the Maria Gond of Bastar, Buradkar (1940: 111/271) links them with the porcupine, just as the *sodi* totem is tiger in the Betul District, M.P. The Orissan Koya - like the other Gond - would therefore differentiate themselves into a "senior" and a "junior" segment and associate all five phratries with totems of land (buffalo[4]/tiger) and water (tortoise) animals, or sky-bound (bird) and earth-bound (goat/cobra) creatures, again segmented in a binary manner. Elsewhere (Buradkar, 1940: 271) the totemic code is associated with the numeral code, elaborated by von Fürer-Haimendorf (1956: 500) for Adilabad in Andhra. This author (1979: 179f.) has also elaborated the myths, or the holistic framework, of all *koitor* (humans), as the Gond call themselves, and the Koya acknowledge these without hesitation. We may note therefore, how an acephalous tribal entity of many million members, inhabiting all of the middle Indian provinces, retains a specific identity.

THE KORAPUT COMPLEX

Further north and east around the capital of the old district, we may speak of "the Koraput Complex," or people who call themselves *desiya* (locals) comprising categories of so-called *porja*, or peasants, and others, like the higher ranking Rona, the Bhatra, and the Bhumia. Myths seem to unite all of the *porja* units (Elwin, 1950: 2-3), but the order of patrilineal clans includes the others as well. Some tribal units, like the Bondo and the Bhumia, are made up of the moieties tiger and cobra, others, like the Gadaba, are subjected to the fourfold classification (tiger, cobra, monkey, and sun), and yet others add another four totemic categories, i.e. fish, cow, bear, and vulture. Gadaba, Bondo, Parenga and Didaye also use patrilineally assigned titles, differentiating two sacred and two secular categories, and perhaps all of the many tribal units separate a "senior" and a "junior" half.

KONDH AND SORA

Further north - somewhere between Koraput and Rayagada - begins the great Kondh Complex which includes innumerable different local units. Each one of these is united by a common dialect, collective marriage obligations and common ritual regulations. It should, however, be noted that many Kondhs also belong to the Koraput Complex on the Orissa/Andhra border where they share numerous cultural traditions with the other *desiya*. A Kondh village is always recognised by its binary opposition of the two rows of houses situated in east-west direction. It is clear from the few sound ethnographies (Niggemeyer, 1964; Nayak, 1989) as well as my own ethnographic experience, at least the Kuttia and the Dongria Kondh are classified by territorial clans. Each Kuttia is named either by a sacred or a secular title, while the Dongria use two of each kind as patrilineally inherited markers.

Towards the west, Kondh country ends shortly before Bhawanipatna, in the plain centre of the Kalahandi District, so that much of the new "Kondmals District," ranging almost to the Mahanadi in the north, is the heartland of these tribals. In their south- east, i.e. in the former Gunupur Subdivision and the hilly parts of the

Ganjam District, the Kondh meet the great Sora Complex, again comprising numerous local units with their own linguistic, affinal and ritual rules. Strikingly the Sora lack any type of clan organisation and their shallow local lines are associated with secular (i.e. *gomango*) and sacred (i.e. *buyya*) status (Elwin, 1955: 50).

THE NORTH

The Mahanadi divides the southern from the northern tribal region of Orissa, even though a few islands of Gond and Kondh may be found north of the great river. The hilly parts of Sambalpur and Sundargarh are the home of the Kharia ("senior" and "junior"), Munda (including their "seniors," the Ho), and Oraon (including their "seniors," the Kisan) whose settlements are always interspersed and whose habitat extends to the neighbouring Bihar districts of Ranchi and Singhbhum. They also form the bulk of the migrant labourers in the industrial areas. Their tribal myths as well as their clan organisation - differentiating senior and junior totemic categories - are very similar to those of the Santhal and Bhumia of Mayurbhanj in north-eastern Orissa and Midnapur in neighbouring West Bengal. All of them inherit titles like *munda* and *pahan,* thus juxtaposing secular and sacred authority.

In upland Keonjhar, Bhuiyan and Juang - as "senior" and "junior siblings" - have their own demarcated territories with a few *pirh* subdivisions and specific clan localities. Rather than titles, at least the Juang unite two sets of alternating generations within each village combining "parents" and "children" of a person against his or her peers of the same level as well as "grandparents" and "grandchildren" irrespective of the natural age. (see McDougal, 1964).

STRUCTURAL IMPLICATIONS

Having pondered over these morphological issues for 20 years (see Pfeffer, 1982), a review is overdue. Initially, it should be clear that none of the tribal names, mentioned above, has ever made people of the category unite as such in action for some purpose. During the great rebellions of the 19th century, or at the time of the "Quit India Movement" of 1942, inhabitants of the tribal area attacked governmental institutions in spontaneous and uncoordinated moves with whatever weapons they had at hand and well aware of the certain prospect of being crushed by superior force. Similarly, peaceful political ambitions or economic endeavours of any of the above units have been remarkable by their absence. If university-educated urban tribals involve themselves in various projects, they lack followers.

No kind of traditional tribal administration exists as such. People may belong to the local category named "secular leader" in the particular language, but this does not imply practical political authority. Neither a Koya nor a Juang as such would raise a hand for a member of his tribe, not to think of strangers. "Jealous of their own sovereignty, they recognise no greater political cause standing over and against their separate interests" (Sahlins, 1968: 21) Perhaps the tribal system of orientation, i.e. the order of ritual and kinship, of in- and outgroups, has been so long-lasting, because it never had to perform against a challenge. It just existed, unquestioned like anyone's skin. Quite different from the order of caste, the tribal order does resemble Durkheim's "segmental organisation" when it comes to the lack of political institutions and the very limited economic specialisation or the general decentralisation. If we follow Sahlins' reasoning, we must notice that tribals may have adopted the plough or the earthen tile from immigrants, but this "gain in productive efficiency" has not been "employed in the build-up and maintenance of higher organisation" (1960: 34). In fact, the organisational scheme makes use of very few and simple classificatory ideas, and the institutional homogeneity of tribal society offers little substance to develop or undo. Perhaps the land issue is vital though. Perhaps the tribals would, if robbed of their direct or indirect dependence upon land, cease to adhere to "*specific, concrete global societies*" (Dumont, 1986: 205) and simply be dislocated individuals on the brink of survival, like some of the unfortunate people found in the urban slums of the day.

TRIBAL DESIGNS

The tribal constitution - selfunderstood and

inconspicuous as it may be - does however, imply certain practical and moral consequences. In a recent article (Pfeffer, 2000b), I have tried to show the difference of the middle Indian tribal order compared to the "African" model of inclusive opposed exogamous lineages - as developed by Evans-Pritchard (1940) and Fortes (1953) - and the "Biblical" model or the "conical clan" as discussed by Barth (1959/1981) in Swat or by Sahlins (1954) in Polynesia following Kirchhoff's (1935/1968) original scheme.

THE "AFRICAN" MODEL

In the "African" structure (see *diagram 1*), the ethnic whole (e.g. "the Nuer" or "the Tallensi") consists of several "maximal lineages" which we may call I, II, III, and IV. Each one of these is including several segments of the same type which in turn - at successive stages - include specific lineages of the lower segmentary levels. According to the "segmentary calculus" (Sahlins, 1968: 19) lineage 1 might fight lineage 2, but the two would unite as lineage a in opposition to lineage b and the latter would join the former as lineage A when opposed to B while both of these antagonistic segments would form a single category I when fighting II, III, or IV. Reference to the past - or successive upper generations of the pedigree - is instrumental in assembling a larger number of people in the present as members of upper-level lineages for predatory purposes, conflict resolution, or ritual assemblies.

THE "BIBLICAL" MODEL

The "conical clan" (see *diagram 2*) differs from the "African" model by its centralisation. A single focal ancestor, e.g. Abraham, serves as all-inclusive category for the whole of the tribal design, made up of his descendants. The oldest living member of the senior most lineage (named 1 on the extreme left of *diagram 2*) would be the leader of the whole, just as the principle of seniority would rule every subsection of the scheme. Sahlins (1968: 25) and Barth (1981: 66) do not, however, mention another structural feature of equal importance. At no level of the tribal design, the segments are exogamous. In fact, agnatic cousins are able and eager to exchange sisters as brides. In competitive strategical moves their marriage policy implies striving for a better access to water, herds, and power. The formalism of the clan constitution gives rise to utilitarian competition of close agnates at the lowest level of the structure. As a result the leadership of this segment - formally left to the senior most member - is contested in practice. Sahlins "segmentary calculus" (1968: 19) is inoperative, since what may be called "the Barthian reversal" comes into play. The mutual identification of close agnates in the "African" model turns into the opposite as the "perpetual relation of opposition and rivalry" (Barth, 1981: 66) between close agnates. This is illustrated at its best by the Book of Genesis with its constant inversion of the seniority principle at all levels of Abraham's clan. Other models of patrilineal descent organisation, e.g. that of

Diagram 1: "African" Model

The Whole																															
I								*II*								*III*								*IV*							
A				*B*				*C*				*D*				*E*				*F*				*G*				*H*			
a		*b*		*c*		*d*		*e*		*f*		*g*		*h*		*i*		*j*		*k*		*l*		*m*		*n*		*o*		*p*	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32

Diagram 2: Model of the conical clan, exemplified by Abraham's descent

Abraham															
Ismael								*Isaac*							
Nebajoth				*Kedar*				*Esau*				*Jacob*			
a		*b*		*c*		*d*		*Eliphas*		*Reguel*		*Ruben'*		*Levi*	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16

Highland New Guinea, are equally inapplicable in middle India.

THE MIDDLE INDIAN MODEL

Like the African Nuer, the members of an Orissan tribe, say the Kharia, conceive themselves within the overall framework of agnatic, decent categories, and like the Polynesians or the children of Israel, they associate higher status with "senior" descent categories, and yet the middle Indian system implies fundamental differences compared to both of the other tribal designs. The Orissan structure (see *diagram 3*) classifies both exogamous descent categories - like the "African" ones - as well non-exogamous ones - like those of Pathans or Polynesians - within a hierarchical framework of seniority. The exogamous *muru* (tortoise) clan of the Dhelki Kharia (Roy, 1937: 128), or the exogamous *kawasi* (tortoise) phratry of the Gond is senior to the others of its kind, but the - endogamous - Dhelki Kharia as a whole are also the "seniors" in relation to the Dudh Kharia, and the - endogamous - Gond are the "juniors" of the Raj Gond. The significant aspect with regard to the structure of group formation - and the structure of thought - is the omnipresence and the binary character of the seniority principle. Thus the Santhal may elevate seven "senior" clans in relation to five "junior" ones, but also raise the first two in status above the subsequent four (Bodding, 1942: 9).

As a consequence, descent groups in Orissan tribal society do have the option of segmentary opposition for the sake of conflict resolution, as Nayak (1989) has shown, but such a juxtaposition remains confined to a single segmentary level. The call for unity cannot come from a higher segmentary level. Sahlins' "segmentary calculus" does not work. Orissan tribes also lack the scope of what Sahlins (1961) has called "predatory expansion," because they lack the *relative* and ever expanding inclusiveness of both the African model and the conical clan. Middle Indian segmentary opposition at one level cannot be raised to that of a more inclusive structural frame, because segments are not classified according to the relative generational proximity or distance of a particular descent line. No such descent lines exist. Pedigrees are absent. Frequently, the descent categories do take the order of "birth" or "arrival" of the respective forefathers into account - relative time is the major classificatory instrument - but the senior status of one level of segmentation is not transferred to any other level. In the "African" model, the minimal lineages 1 and 2, are included by the minor segment a, just as 3 and 4 are included by b. In Orissa, however, a and b may be opposed at their level, but would equally include all lower order "local lines" (Leach, 1961: 57) such as 1,2,3,4,5, and 6, so that any conflict between local lines, say 1 and 4, could never escalate to the level of a and b.

The Biblical model is also inapplicable, because the non-exogamous nature of its segments is of crucial general importance, even though both Sahlins and Barth fail to evaluate the structural implications of marriage, confining their analyses to descent features. For the sake of illustration, we have excellent examples in the Bible. In the Book of Genesis, Isaac's wife Rebecca is his close paternal and maternal relative who in turn encourages her son Jacob to seek his bride among her brother's daughters. *Because* of these close marriages, Isaac and Jacob, inspite of being juniors, obtain the privileges of seniority.

In the same manner close agnates in Swat fight over their marriageable female bilateral cousins, because such a marriage to a "father's brother's daughter" implies greater access to land and water, power and influence. But in Orissa the system of diachronic affinity is excluding the Pathan confusion of affinal and agnatic categories. Those of the same descent category will never exchange brides internally and always stand together, when it comes to "seizing" a bride of the opposed category or warding off abductors of "sisters." Individual leadership in Orissa is not contested in the style of daily meetings in the men's house of a Pathan *khan*.

The above distinctions can be exemplified by the Gadaba structure (see *diagram 3*), i.e. the "senior" and the "junior" half of the tribe, the four clans of tiger, cobra, monkey and sun, as well as the two sacred and the two secular local lines at the village level. A member of one of the latter may quarrel with a person of another such line, but he would not be able - from the structural point of view - to involve a higher level into the dispute, because outside of his village all Gadaba

Diagram 3: The middle Indian tribal design

Gadaba as "siblings" of all *porja* tribes of the Koraput Complex	
"senior" Gadaba (*endogamous*)	"junior" Gadaba (*endogamous*)
clans (*bonso*) of tiger ("senior"), cobra, monkey, and sun (*exogamous*)	
local lines (*kuda*): two named as sacred and two named as secular specialists (*exogamous at the village level, non-exogamous at the inter-village level*)	

clans would contain the same type of local lines designated by the same names. Similarly an individual might unite his tiger clan-fellows in fighting the hostile cobra folk, but he would not be able to raise the issue to a higher level, because both "senior" and "junior" Gadaba would equally include tigers and cobras.

Barth's application of the theory of games makes no sense in the context of Orissan tribal society where land was held on a collective basis by the local line, until the settlement camps arrived in the 1970s and 1980s. Those who jointly own or - as is the case now a days - cultivate land, do not exchange brides or fight with patrilateral cousins. Local lines within the villages sometimes meet separately, but such assemblies cannot be compared to Pathan men's houses, because "floor crossing" is impossible and ascribed seniority is not disputed. The Gadaba local lines are juxtaposed permanently as such. The Biblical, Pathan or Polynesian model, on the other hand, implies institutionalised differential power lacking in tribal middle India.

A comparison of the three very different models of patrilineal descent offers certain negative results regarding Orissa. If the "African" segmentary structure allows a rapid amalgamation and dispersal of combative units under the banner of descent, and if the Biblical model is centralised neatly, the order of middle Indian descent operates without such centralisation, without descent lines, without segmentary levels distinguished by seniority, and without inclusive ancestor categories as focal points of orientation. At the same time, it would be a mistake to see Orissan tribal society as simply "culminating in homogeneity and the random distribution of matter and energy" (Sahlins, 1960: 8), i.e. as lacking the impulses of organic and superorganic development. The problem, however, is the abstraction of a system of meaning from the impermeability of its formal levels.

VILLAGE OPPOSITIONS

Perhaps the relational whole can be conceived with the help of individual examples, as we know them from the other models. Perhaps understanding can come, if certain situations are recalled. Thus among the Bedouin, Peters has shown how a father pretends not to notice his son's marriage and "close senior agnates of the groom stay away from it all, discussing matters unconnected..." (1990: 188-9). The seniors' power and influence over the junior would decrease by the latter's marriage, so the affair must not be noticed. To meet his wife, a son must sneak out of his father's tent at night - and return before dawn - in order to demonstrate his continued respect for the supreme paternal power.

In middle India, a striking daily observation is the distance - if not hostility - between the generations. This is a classical trope. In the footsteps of Radcliffe-Brown, Lévi-Strauss had conceived the "atom of kinship" (1963: 48f.) as the binary opposition of the two intergenerational relations (F:S and MB:ZS), as well as that of the two intragenerational ones (H:W and B:Z), but in tribal Orissa the two former are *both* "negative" and the latter two *both* "positive."

Only recently Peter Berger, involved in long-term fieldwork among the Gadaba, narrated how a neighbour had killed his father in anger, and how the village community, i.e. more than a hundred people, had hushed up the case successfully. Berger was a frequent witness of similar quarrels. In 1997 two of my students witnessed yet another patricide in a tribal village. In another case, it was selfunderstood that a father had to vacate his house at the command of his son. On other

occasions, bitter and permanent silence governed the relationship. My own memories of the Gadaba include the picture of drunken old men and women who - faces smeared in black and red - stumble around one another in obscene actions on the day of the most sacred of all tribal rituals, while in the background sober and smart young women and men circle in the most disciplined manner around the threshing floor, involved in the most intricate *demsa* dance. From the few excellent tribal ethnographies similar stories evaporate. Of the Juang, McDougal writes the following:

> "...the father is a respect figure. He may not be addressed by name[5], nor should a son joke or refer to sexual matters in his father's presence. A son should not participate in a dance at the same time as his father....Although respect is formally due their fathers, in practice sons are generally lacking in respect toward them, occasionally displaying openly disrespectful behaviour....Sons often make fun of their fathers when the latter are intoxicated, and if creating a disturbance while in this state, the father may be insulted or struck by the son" (1964: 102-3).

I think, the position of the maternal uncle is equally problematic. Formally a figure of respect, the sister's son can, nevertheless demand from him *ad libitum*[6], so that the nephew is feared.

The issue is, of course, not one of individual characteristics. In a comparative study on the category of age, I have tried to show how adjoining age-sets follow opposite normative directions among the Juang and the Muria Gond (Pfeffer, 1996). I have also shown how alternate generations are equated - and opposed to adjoining ones - throughout middle India, as has been registered in the spheres of attitudes, actions, and terminological categories of kinship (Pfeffer, 1982: 20)[7]. The extreme sociological interpretation of this principle is demonstrated by the two unnamed Juang generation-sets of every village who "in certain formal situations...function as groups...to which differential rights and obligations are allocated" (McDougal, 1964: 141). It this case, the junior/senior opposition is relational in its purest form, because one set - calculating through six or seven generational levels - includes ego's "parents" and "children" and is opposing the other one that includes egos "grandparents," generation-mates and "grandchildren," both "seniors" in one perspective and "juniors" in another - quite independent of their biological age. Such a permanent opposition is substantialised in the form of tribal moieties, clans and lineages. The Timaka clan of the Kuttia Kondh, for example, is the "youngest" of all. Because of this status, other Kuttia deny commensality to their Timaka branch, even though they intermarry and leave the highest ritual obligations to the Timaka[8]. Similar classification is found among all other tribal units. Status differences are omnipresent.

Barriers of commensality are a general issue. During the marriage feasts I have witnessed in a number of tribal communities, I have always noticed separate hearths and seating orders for different categories of participants, be they of the same or of a friendly tribe. Separate cooking is also regular practice during ordinary memorial feasts for the dead among most tribal communities. At the grand *gotr*, or the secondary funeral of the Gadaba[9], numerous cooking and eating arrangements are made for the different categories of external agnates and affines who must participate. In fact, the ground is segmented into different commensual quarters.

The proper company of diners is as important as the proper food, a much neglected question in tribal studies. Again "situations" in tribal Koraput may be significant. Frequently, I have seen young men carrying a cow's hindleg on the way back from a wedding feast, i.e. the groom's traditional share of the animal he had to "give" for the bride. At the same time, many indigenous people refuse to eat beef. During a recent tour, Bhumia villagers related[10] the myth constituting the separation of those three tribes who abstain from beef and those three who do not. All six intermingle freely on all sorts of occasions, but do not interdine or overlook the status differences. Since the days of Koppers (1944: 78) such barriers have been seen as indicators of some "Hinduisation."

TRIBAL HIERARCHY

The important - if unmentioned - premise of such theses of "acculturation" is the concept of some originally egalitarian tribal culture without

ritual barriers. Since all of us observe how temples, television, and tourists transform the culture of the tribal population, the concept of "Hinduisation" is a daily experience, and yet - at least in my eyes - we have no proof of tribals "adopting" certain rules of diet and we have ample evidence of tribals ignoring appeals against alcoholism or other "impure" consumption. It should also be clear that those tribals abstaining from beef do not observe other "Hindu" rules of diet. The major flaw, however, lies in the concept of tribal egalitarianism. The idea - unless taken in the simplistic sense of the political economy - is falsified wherever we happen to look. It should be dropped once and for all.

At the root of the false notion of tribal equality is the "modern" confusion of status and power. If it is Dumont's (1966/1980) achievement to distinguish the two in "traditional societies," the method must also be applied to those classed as "nonmodern" by him. In the tribal order of middle India the difference of status and power is in fact more evident than anywhere else. Outsiders maltreat tribals, because the latter lack power even if they ascribe the kind of status that is unintelligible to the intruders from the plains. At all levels, "senior" status is raised in relation to "junior" status, and at no level this is equivalent to a difference of power. The idea of seniority implies greater proximity to the world beyond as well as greater wisdom as the result of an existence that encompasses the life of juniors. Nothing more. Such status difference goes together with elaborate rules of marriage and commensality, and if the latter are popularly associated with a process of "Hinduisation," I see no reason not to reverse the argument and propose "Hindu" commensality and endogamy to be of tribal origin. One of the traditional offices of the Gadaba, for example, the position of the *kirsani*, not only implies cooking the sacred *tsoru* food for the community, but also excommunicating those who have broken ritual rules, and readmitting them after their purification has been ascertained.

The position of the *kirsani* is associated with the local line of the same name carrying sacred status. A second local line - that of the *sisa* or sacrificers - is also sacred, whereas those named *boronaik* and *munduli*[11] imply secular duties. I have seen individual *naik* and *munduli* receive officials of the administration, and in recent times, they usually act as so-called *ward members* of the Block Panchayat. I have also met them in police stations, informing the officers of major rituals and the like, but I have never witnessed anyone following their orders. In fact, these elders qualify for the position of Sahlins' "petty chief," a "duly constituted authority," distinguished by "pettiness" and "officialness" (1968: 21). Their status is "junior" when compared to that of the sacrificers and of the guardians of sacred commensality. All Gadaba belong to any one of these local lines, but the individual "offices" - usually hereditary - are juxtaposed by a charismatic position of overwhelming influence, that of the *dissari* or astrologer. He sets the time for all sacred duties, indicates what sacrifices are due to the divine authorities. I have also seen him as a healer and a sorcerer. As such he is always at the heart of community and personal rituals, surpassing in influence all other positions. An individual receives a supernatural call for such a position and is accepted by his neighbours. Quite frequently, however, a *dissari* would not operate in his home village, but would on invitation conduct events in distant settlements. Beyond the above mentioned public figures, a number of so-called *gurumai*, both male and female, become active as media and healers in each village in an overt or covert manner[12]. Thus it should be clear that secular lines and offices imply status rather than power, and that their status is lower than that of sacrificers and guardians of commensality. As individuals, religious virtuosos - to use Weber's phrase - rather than political or economic leaders remain unsurpassed.

Taken together, these considerations point to a type of tribal community whose members can hardly be distinguished in the fields of wealth and power. Immaterial status, however, or differential access to the transcendent existence, is highly developed. Social stratification may thus be absent while hierarchy - or unequal rank of interrelated parts with reference to the common whole - is omnipresent. Perhaps a typical situation in a tribal village can finally illustrate this difference better than any further discussion. Alcoholism may be a wide-spread addiction in

the coastal plains, but in caste society, it is always treated as a secret affair. Drinkers hide and cover up purchase and consumption of liquor. In any tribal settlement, on the contrary, villagers would openly strive to consume as much alcohol as possible. Public intoxication is a common sight. This state of the person does not imply deviant behaviour. Otherworldliness, or removal from the material existence, is on the contrary an aspired goal.

In a preliminary summary we may observe how the tribal design or the morphological structure in middle India does not contain the automatism of conflict resolution and predatory expansion, found in the "African" model, nor does the middle Indian order contain the draft of centralisation, the significant aspect of the "conical clan." Making use of the principle of patrilineal descent in a framework of endogamous, exogamous, and non-exogamous marriage rules, the tribal system of Orissa classifies categories according to temporality, linking seniority with differentiated symbols of relative purity and pollution quite irrespective of power. Following Weber (1956: 38) power - within a social relationship - is to be understood as the chance to enforce the own will against opposition.

Temporality is also the basis of the "African" and the "Biblical" models, since both of them depend upon pedigree and generational inclusion. The middle Indian model is lacking these two crucial features. Oppositions at higher organisational levels fail to influence those at lower levels. In fact, the levels are unconnected systematically and can be identified as such on a substantial basis only. The Gadaba are "senior" to the Bondo, one endogamous Gadaba moiety[13] is "senior" to the other, just as one exogamous clan or one sacred and one secular local line! is within the respective set of categories. But any one of these relationships is irrelevant for the others. The idea of seniority is the common denominator, but the social organisation remains uncoordinated.

If societies of hunters and gatherers are conspicuous by the absence of an overall organisation, by homogeneity and random distribution of power, the model of the middle Indian tribes is a reminder of such decentralisation. Where lies the difference? Starting from external factors, we observe permanent settlements and houses arranged in an overall order of a religious nature[14], i.e. beyond sheer pragmatic considerations. The inhabitants have a definite status - irrespective of their power - in view of one another and of other villages. Internally they are bound together by numerous daily, monthly, and annual rituals, just as they are involved in major gift-giving relationships across the village boundaries. All tribal communities oppose permanent collectives of agnates and affines, like the *dadabhai* and the *akomama* among the Gond, bound together by intricate rules of symmetric exchange.

Thus middle Indian tribal society is lacking the unified or inclusive design of other tribal models while having overcome the random distribution significant for the bands of foodgatherers. In search for causes, one would, of course, resort to Childe's theory of the "neolithic revolution" (1951), but such an explanation would ignore the "inner," or the ideological differences between tribes and gatherers. Regarding this religious world, Daniel de Coppet[15] once mentioned the "fear of entropy," the uncertainty of a final existence. Under these considerations, all supra-individual reasoning in the tribal world of middle India may be conceived as the promotion of certainty or permanence of existence as such, or as the reach beyond the ephemeral individual prospects. A tribal settlement is the home of numerous supernatural forces. The order of the house assigns space to several divinities. The crops of the fields are divine gifts and can be harvested and eaten only after collective religious performances. The domestic animals are raised as the co-creatures of the village, to be sold but not to be eaten by the human neighbours. During the annual collective spring-hunt, men must leave women for the sake of the goddess. Two months earlier, women and men are joined in marriage according to the permanent and diachronic rules of affinity, providing for the birth of the same kind of people. At death the collective reciprocal removal of pollution assures collective regeneration within the same tribal community according to a cyclical worldview. In Orissa, the tribal society provides for its own permanent existence without recourse to centres or agencies of innerworldly power.

EVOLUTION

The very vague concept of a "nonmodern society" (Dumont, 1986: 211) is on the one hand represented in India by the hunters and gatherers of the south. They are quite different from the people of the "tribal belt" in the vast hilly tract of middle and northeast India, exemplified here by the society of western Orissa and also "nonmodern." Apart from technological achievements, the ideological difference between these two categories is obvious. The bands of foodgatherers are said to belong to an "individualistic culture" (Gardner, 1966) while the holism of the tribal society is selfunderstood. This difference is, however, unsuited as an "axis in comparing them to modern societies," as Dumont (1986: 216) has rightly seen. The evidence from Orissa indicates another basis of societal comparison, the relationship between power and status.

Among the hunters and gatherers, individual competence may be the major aspect or the constituting factor of status, which is always attached to the individual. My lack of ethnographic knowledge in this field prevents any further speculation. In tribal Orissa, individual Bondo or localised clans of the Dongria Kondh may appear in situations of outstanding physical violence, just as personal strength and competence is relevant in all fields, e.g. agriculture or hunting. But individual power and adroitness are incomparable to the compulsion of social relations, e.g. the obligations of a feast of merit or the positive marriage rules. The determining force of the supra-individual order makes all the difference in the comparison with the bands of foodgatherers. But political institutions and individuals - wielding legitimate institutional power - are nowhere to be found. The omnipresent status differences of tribal society exist irrespective of the enforcement of some public or private will. The significant value of these status assignments is otherworldliness, or the mental and material independence of immanent pressures or the total submission to transcendent forces.

Caste society may also depreciate attachment to the here-and-now, giving highest individual status to the ascetic and greatest collective value to the *varna* of the Vedic Brahmin scholars. The latter, however, also depend upon the institutionalised power-holders. Hierarchical inclusion of the opposite, while indicating the superior value of status, at the same time certifies the relevance of power. Beyond "traditional society," the modern one of individual achievements offers a dominant sector, i.e. the political economy, and a unifying indicator of both status and power, i.e. money. Whereas hunters and gatherers have synchronised religious and instrumental values in an overwhelming natural environment, the moderns are confronted with a jungle of offices and institutions, to be exploited by administrative skills rather than outerworldly devotion. Technical competence, one might argue, has become the religious value of modern society. In that case we would discover the synchrony of the hunting bands in our postindustrial world. The field of political and economic interests, or *artha*, may be depreciated by the order of caste, but it is recognised and given due place. In the tribal society of Orissa, we may find "Big Men," well versed in the game of gift-exchange with its constant investments and returns of major material goods such as buffaloes or food-stuff. But the goods are to be released, to be given away. Hoarding and accumulation are out of question. Social relations are really being accumulated. In a kind of superiority complex, societal values have overcome individual power and competence. The unconditional surrender to the transcendental forces is a societal endeavour and selfunderstood, even if it implies the lack of government or other innerworldly institutions.

The work of anthropologists not normally involves controversies over facts and flaws. Disputes arise over the weight given to observed situations and reconstructed social forms, conclusive systems of ideas and transformations of such systems. In India we have the unique opportunity to evaluate situations without written codes. We may struggle with morphological manifestations as well as ideological intricacies among gatherers and among technocrats, in caste and in tribal society. The latter, however, remains a little known entity when ideological issues are being raised.

NOTES

1. The occasion was the post-plenary session of the

Delhi World Conference of the *International Union of Ethnological and Anthropological Sciences* in Bhubaneshwar 1978. The organisers had asked the Forest Department to introduce the honourable foreign visitors to some shifting cultivators.

2. Today, these would be called "Scheduled Castes" and "Other Backward Classes."
3. The Koya have been discussed by Tyler in several articles such as Tyler (1969). The Dorla by Hajra (1970) and the Dhurwa by Thusu (1970) have been described in Bastar but live on both sides of the M.P./Orissa border.
4. The label "buffalo" includes the wild member of the species, i.e. the most ferocious known creature.
5. Having worked on the relationship terminologies of many tribes, I noticed that sons and daughters were never addressed by kin terms - or tokens of respect - but always by personal names.
6. My friend Albert Götzelmann has reported details of such normative behaviour among the Kuttia Kondh. Among the Koya I was told that the ZS rides on the menhir of the funeral celebrations. He seems to be the dominant figure in all Gondi death rituals (see Elwin, 1945: 95).
7. Parkin (1988) has published an excellent elaboration of this point, and - if I follow his esoteric system of references correctly - has even mentioned me as a source for some terminological equations among the Kuttia Kondh.
8. Albert Götzelmann first informed me of this status. The Timaka perform the great *meriah* sacrifice at *Sapanghara* where the earth Goddess gave birth to all Kuttia clans excepting the Timaka themselves.
9. See Pfeffer (2000a)
10. R. Hardenberg, accompanied by four others, was conversing with the informants.
11. The title is frequently substituted by the term *chalan*.
12. Tina Otten is engaged in research on healers at the moment.
13. Another common technical term in anthropology is "deme."
14. Peter Berger's doctoral dissertation on the Koraput complex will contain numerous ethnograhic details.
15. Oral communication 1997.

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