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Berger, Peter; Georg Pfeffer

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Brill's Encyclopedia of the Religions of the Indigenous People of South Asia Online

Gadaba

(8,023 words)

Gadaba

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The Gadaba are often included in the generic and rather vague category of Poraja (“Subject”), which refers to a number of indigenous communities of south Odisha. Another term used for and by the indigenous people of the Koraput district of Odisha, among them the Gadaba, is Desia (“People of the Land”). In a more specific sense, the Gadaba include two communities, the Ollar Gadaba speaking Ollari and the Gutob Gadaba speaking Gutob. Gutob is an Austroasiatic language of the South Munda branch (Goud, 1991; Griffiths, 2008; Rajan & Rajan, 2001a; 2001b; 2001c; Subba Rao & Patnaik, 1992; see also Parkin, 1992), whereas Ollar refers to the Dravidian Ollari language (Bhaskararao, 1998). Both languages are endangered, and many Gadaba nowadays only speak the *lingua franca* of the region, Desia, an Odia dialect (Gustafsson, 1987; 1989; Mahapatra, 1985; Malten, n.d.). It has been suggested that Gutob means “Earth Creatures” (Griffiths, 2008, 675), whereas the meaning of Ollar is obscure. Gadaba themselves have little to say on the meaning of these terms but often relate the name “Gadaba” to the river Godāvarī (Godabir), their mythical place of origin. There seem to be no significant differences between the two communities, either in their general lifestyle, social structure, and economy or in their religion. Due to their proximity to the Jodia Poraja, another tribal community of the region, some Ollar Gadaba are, however, reported to also celebrate festivals that are usually associated with that community (Thusu & Jha, 1972, 112–113). The Gadaba belong to the cultural area that roughly corresponds to the former Koraput district situated in the mountain range of the Eastern Ghats in the state of Odisha. Nandapur is essentially the spatial divide between the Gutob Gadaba in the west and the Ollar Gadaba to the east of this former capital of the Jeypore Kingdom (some Ollar villages are also found north of the eastern extension of the Gutob area; Berger, 2015, 5; Nayak *et al.*, 1996, 2; Thusu & Jha, 1972, 9). The

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Currency in a System of

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Gadaba are part of an all-encompassing region of central India where indigenous or tribal communities are prominent, sharing significant features in terms of ideology and social structure. The Gadaba maintain a close relationship to the noncultivating community of musicians, petty traders, and (former) weavers called Ḍombo in the region (Odi. Ḍom or Pāṇa) and Goren by the Gutob Gadaba. The Ollar and Gutob Gadaba should thus be understood as belonging to a larger sociocultural regional configuration consisting, on the one hand, of cultivators like themselves, who usually inhabit a certain territory and, on the other, a number of communities not engaging in agriculture but performing various specialist tasks. Among these are, in addition to the Ḍombo, potters (Kumār), blacksmiths (Kamār), gardeners (Mālī), herders (Gauḍū), and liquor-distillers (Sūṇḍī), who are commonly found in Gadaba villages (Berger, 2002). The census of 2011 lists a total of 84,689 Gadaba, but this number has to be considered only as a rough estimate as it does not distinguish between Ollar and Gutob Gadaba. A reasonable estimate would be that there are around 15,000 to 20,000 Gutob speakers (Rajan & Rajan, 2001a, 9), whereas the number of Ollar Gadaba would be significantly higher. While the majority of Gadaba live in the area described above, they have also migrated to West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh. One reason for the early migration of some Gadaba might be that they functioned as palanquin bearers, which even gave them the name Bhoi Gadaba (“Carrier Gadaba”). They not only fulfilled this function for their king in Jeypore (and for British colonial officers) but also seem to have been “exported” for this task to the kingdoms of the Bastar plateau in present-day Chhattisgarh (Russel, 1969, 9; Sundar, 2007, 67), and Bobbili in Andhra Pradesh. In the latter place, they are found in significant numbers (more than 10,000 people in the Vizianagaram district; Subba Rao & Patnaik, 1992, vol. III, 4–6). At least since the early 20th century, Gadaba have also been recruited to work in the tea gardens of Assam, and many live and work there today. The Gadaba’s livelihood is mainly based on a mixed subsistence economy. Their most important subsistence crops are rice (Des. *dan*; Gut. *kerong*) and finger millet (Des. *mandia*; Gut. *sa’mel*; Berger, 2018). Rice is cultivated in permanent terraced fields in the beds of the rivers, with a perennial supply of water; millet is grown on the dry fields surrounding the villages. Men and women also gather tubers and forest produce for their own consumption. While Gadaba hunt occasionally at other times as well, this activity is mainly restricted to its ritual articulation in the context of the *chait porbo* festival, the agricultural and hunting festival celebrated in the month of *chait* (Mar-Apr), common throughout the whole region. With the other Desia of the region, Gadaba share a form of clanship, that is a set of patrilineal exogamous totemic descent categories (*bonso*), which divides the social universe into brothers (*bai*) and others (*bondu*, potential affines). The notion of brotherhood is found of various levels of the social structure and may entail a ranking in terms of seniority, that is, an elder, senior (*boro*) versus a younger, junior (*sano*) segment. While *bonso* categories are not ranked in that way, the two communities constituting the Gadaba proper are. Thus the Ollar Gadaba are considered the younger brothers of the Gutob Gadaba. Also ranked in terms of seniority are the status categories (*kuda*) distinguishing different kinds of sacred and secular dignitaries that cut across the classification of clanship. While hierarchy is thus clearly a feature of Gadaba society in terms of

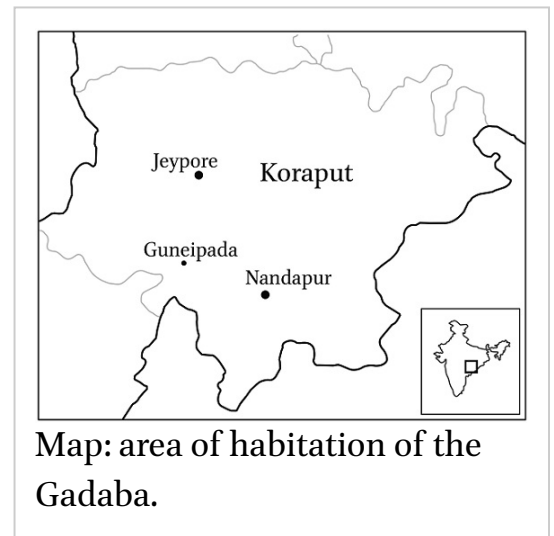
the principle of seniority, power is not formally centralized, and there is no political unit beyond the village. The tribal polity is thus acephalous, and village headmen are petty chiefs assuming formal roles without power.

Society on the Menu

Social Structure

A fundamental feature of the social structure, with wide-ranging implications and repercussions as to how the Gadaba perceive their own society and even their natural environment, is the division into clans, more specifically, totemic exogamous patrilineal descent categories called *bonso*. The Gutob Gadaba make use of four of the eight Desia categories common in the region: cobra (*hantal*), tiger (*killu*), sun (*kora*), and monkey (*golori*), whereas the Ollar Gadaba employ all eight: fish (*macho*), cow (*goru*), hawk (*pangi*), and bear (*kimdu*) in addition. These categories are exogamous, and this rule is strictly followed. A person receives *bonso* status by birth from his or her father and maintains it throughout life. This also applies to women after marriage, when they ritually belong to a different household (and usually village as well).

Bonso classification thus unanimously defines membership in a category of brothers (*bai*) and, in opposition, of affines (*bondu*), those whom a person can potentially marry. This *bai-bondu* classification is the fundamental and ubiquitous organizing principle of Gadaba society. Part of the landscape is also conceptualized in such terms (Berger, 2018). The wet rice fields are conceived of in affinal terms and the river deities regarded as bride givers (with the rice as bride), while the dry fields are related to the agnates of the village. Significantly, genealogical reckoning is unimportant for the Gadaba, and agnatic and affinal relatedness is instead defined in contrasting, horizontal terms (Pfeffer, 1997).



Map: area of habitation of the Gadaba.

Both in more abstract, higher-order terms and in more concrete, empirical territorial ones, the *bai-bondu* opposition organizes ideas and relationships. In its most encompassing expression, it formulates a vision of Gadaba society as a totality. In day-to-day conversations, *bai-bondu* may be referred to in order to denote everyone. However, there is a more specific notion that entails the idea of totality and at the same time introduces a hierarchy based on the most important ritual activity that will be elaborated on below: sacrifice.

The idea of *baro bai tero gadi* (lit. “twelve brothers, thirteen seats”) is evoked whenever Gadaba society as a whole is at stake, especially in connection with ritual transgressions, such as dying on the path between villages or marriages with members of low-status communities such as the Dombos. It refers to a primordial mythical sacrifice when sacrificial food (*tsoru*; Gut. *go’yang*) was only sufficient for 12 of the 13 brothers present.

On a lower, more concrete level, *bonso* categories are manifested in the structure of villages, which are crucial units in economic, social, religious, and political terms. In principle, villages are constituted by an agnatic core of one descent category. These agnates are regarded as the village founders (Des. *matia*, lit. “people of the earth”) and have the right to cultivate the fields and perform the duty to sacrifice for the deities of the territory, with whom they share sacrificial food regularly throughout the year. Any male Gadaba has the right to share sacrificial food at the village level but only in one location, his village of origin, no matter how many generations he and his descendants may have actually already lived elsewhere. Women are as a rule excluded from sacrificial commensality at this level of the social structure. All other inhabitants of a village are regarded as late comers (Des. *upria*). This heterogeneous category comprises Gadaba with a different *bonso* affiliation, who are internal affines of the dominant local group, in addition to the different service communities mentioned above. Although Kumārs (potters) or Mālīs (gardeners) may not be found in every Gadaba village, there is no major Gadaba village without a substantial number of Ḍombo inhabitants.

Villages are thus identified with their dominant agnatic group of Gadaba cultivators belonging to one descent category. The major villages and their founders bear specific names and constitute territorial subunits of *bonso* classification, which have been described as “village clans” (Berger, 2015, 102–103). The village of Guneipada, for instance, referred to as Inde’el in Gutob, belongs to the *bonso* category of cobra. Like most large villages, Guneipada has been split up into different satellite villages or hamlets, bearing different names, while ritually they all belong to one unit.

Village unity is materially represented in a stone platform in the center of the main village called *sadar*, which is usually located opposite the stone (aniconic) shrine (*hundi*) of the village deity. The *sadar*, consisting of horizontal and vertical stone slabs, often slightly elevated toward its middle, is both a ritual and a political center. It is here that all issues of the village are discussed and negotiated. The village herald (*barik*), who is always recruited from among the Ḍombo members of the village, assembles all male members of the village (women come without being asked) when something needs to be discussed, such as the organization of an upcoming festival. Another village dignitary coacting with the *barik* in all kinds of negotiations within and between villages is the headman (*naik*). For instance, in bride-price negotiations, *barik* and *naik*, accompanied by other villagers, play crucial roles. However, as is common in such segmentary tribal societies, the *naik* is a petty chief and cannot command anyone. Power is not centrally institutionalized in any way, and charismatic Gadaba without any such function often have more influence on village affairs than the headman. Above the level of the village, there is no other form of political organization, unit, or office. In the 2010s, the Gadaba Samaj (Gadaba Society) was founded, but not all Gadaba are aware of its existence.

Neither the *bonso* categories in general nor their concrete manifestations in villages are ranked by the principle of seniority. Even though the cobra and tiger *bonso* by far outnumber the monkey and sun categories in demographic terms among the Gutob Gadaba, they are not in

any way considered senior. However, seniority does structure the different groups within the village (such as the *kuda* groups, kinship units related to certain offices such as sacrificer or cook; Berger, 2015, 81–93), as well as, in part, different relationships between villages.

Every Gadaba village is part of a dense network of agnatic and affinal relationships (Berger, 2015, 166f.; Pfeffer, 2001). Residence is patrilocal, so young women usually leave the village after marriage. While in theory young women leaving the village for marriage can be given to any Gadaba village, in practice matrimonial exchange regularly takes place between established exchange partners, and villages are therefore diachronically related through affinal exchange. Bilateral cross-cousin marriage is the preferred pattern among the Gadaba. Due to the classificatory nature of relationship terminology (Pfeffer, 1999), however, any person of the opposite sex and different *bonso* category counts as a cross-cousin and potential spouse. As mentioned before, genealogical relationships are largely irrelevant.

Two kinds of reciprocal and collective agnatic relationships connect villages (or sections thereof) through time. Both relationships are especially connected to ritual, sacrifice, and food. One relationship already bears the special kind of sacrificial food in its name. Every local group, usually a section of a village, is connected as *tsorubai* (sacrificial-food brothers) with another such section. During life-cycle rituals and in case of conflicts, excommunications, or transgressions, they are called on to cook and feed their brothers sacrificial food. In doing so, they reinstall and maintain the sociocosmic order (*niam*), they (re)make order (*niam korbar*). Since *tsorubai* are needed quite often, such relationships often exist even between different segments of a Gadaba village. However, these are regarded as junior (*sano*) *tsorubai*, while the senior (*boro*) relationship of the same kind exists between villages and segments of different villages. In times of real trouble, for instance in case of an accidental death, the senior *tsorubai* are always called on.

The other agnatic relationship is only relevant in one ritual context, albeit a crucial one: the last stage of death rituals, called *goter*. In that ritual, the spirits of the deceased are reawakened and transferred into the bodies of living water buffaloes (one buffalo for one spirit).

Religion

Because of its thoroughly performative character, it would be misleading to begin an outline of Gadaba religion with abstract entities such as gods (Des. *maphru*) or ancestors (Des. *anibai*), let alone religious dogma. Gadaba do not care much about what anybody believes in, and their general ideas about gods are vague. But they know what has to be done, how one has to deal with nonhuman agents through ritual, what particular deities “eat,” and what kind of behavior to expect from them.

Gadaba religion, then, is about the management of social relationships – including nonhuman agents – through ritual in order to maintain and guarantee well-being. Again, this well-being is general, including the health and fertility of humans, animals, and crops, and the rituals show how porous, malleable, and interchangeable these categories are at times. In some ritual contexts, plants or crops are brides or children, while buffaloes are deceased kinfolk. If well-

being is not merely a matter of human physical health, neither are illness and misfortune. Basically, illness and misfortune are relationships gone wrong – angry spirits, neglected deities, and jealous neighbors – in short, precarious relationships that need to be carefully treated ritually. The ritual system clearly distinguishes two domains – on the one hand, the moral sphere of relationships that are *bol soman* (good and balanced), and, on the other, the domain of relationships that are *bipod* (dangerous and threatening). Two ritual cycles – the life cycle and the annual cycle – are mainly concerned with maintaining and recreating benevolent relationships, the moral order of *niam* that was initially instituted by the gods, whereas another field of ritual activities deals with averting threats. What they all share is, first, the focus on sacrifice and blood as the principal vitalizing force that enlivens objects and agents of all kinds; second, the relevance of food, in particular food produced in the sacrificial process called *tsoru*; and third, alimentary metaphors that describe the processes, relationships, and values involved.

The life cycle and the annual ritual cycle of the village are intertwined in complex ways (Berger, 2015). As indicated above, in the ritual processes, not only do animals represent deceased humans, but the human dead are also ritually transformed into crops. The life cycle thus merges with the annual cycle of the village and the cultivation of rice and millet. Moreover, the life cycle produces persons who are eligible to join the local sacrificial community of agnates sharing food with the local gods and thus ensuring their benevolence as the basis of existence.

Feeding is the main way in which persons are produced and grow ritually. Only a few days after birth, an infant receives his or her first sacrificial food, as well as a name by a ritual specialist (*dissari*, diviner). During the marriage ceremony, this process of feeding is consummated and the complete person constituted. In this context, bride and groom are fed by different agnatic and affinal relatives, among them the *tsorubai* as well, who cook and feed in the name of the 12 brothers. After marriage, men can share the sacrificial food at the different village shrines on various occasions throughout the year, from which women are generally excluded. When humans die, the converse process starts, and they – both men and women – are fed out of the human community again. During the first three stages after death, the deceased spirit is fed with sacrificial food, in his or her house and on the cremation ground. Through the final ritual (*goter*), which occurs roughly once per generation in any particular location, the liminal dead are finally transformed into ancestors, collectively represented by stone slabs planted in various places inside the village and out in the dry fields. The buffaloes representing the living dead are taken away by the *panjabai* (a long-term ritual relationship between groups that reciprocally eat each other's dead in the form of water buffaloes) and *tsorubai* back to their villages and killed and eaten in the weeks that follow. Buffaloes belonging



Fig. 1: feeding *tsoru* – after the young woman has received her last *tsoru* in her father's house she ritually belongs to the village of her future husband (photo by author).

to a specific affinal category, however, are killed in the dry fields in front of the hosts' village, on the spot where the millet will grow again only a few months later (Berger, 2010; Das, 1999, 61f.; von Führer-Haimendorf, 1943; Izikowitz, 1969; Pfeffer, 2001; Thusu & Jha, 1972, 98f.).

While the aim of life-cycle rituals is to transform humans – individually or in groups – from one socioritual status to the next, the collective annual rituals of the village safeguard the well-being of the people and the growth of the crops. Gadaba distinguish three seasons (hot, rainy, and cold), and in each of these seasons falls one of the major village festivals (Berger, 2015). Two ritual specialists or village dignitaries are crucial in this process: the *pujari* (Oll. *vendit*) as village sacrificer and the *randhari* as sacrificial cook. They lead the sacrificial activities at the various shrines in and around the village, the most significant ones being at the shrine (*hundi*) of the village deity in the center of the village and at the shrine of the village deity Pat Kanda, the sun-moon deity (Gut. Si Arke, among other names), outside the village proper. With their inside/outside contrast, these two shrines manifest the general cosmological opposition between the earth (*bosmoti*) and the sun-moon deity (*dorom*). Sacrificial food is produced and consumed on all such collective occasions. In many contexts, the head (including the blood and liver) of the sacrificial animal is prepared as *tsoru* to be consumed only by the married founders of the village, belonging to the respective village clan, while the body of the animal is distributed among and consumed by all villagers considered junior, whether they are Gadaba of different clans or other ethnic groups. Such collective sacrifices are then followed by rituals on lower levels of the social structure (kinship groups or houses). Moreover, as part of the festivals, *pujari* and *randhari* initiate the crucial agricultural activities – such as the transplantation of the paddy or the first plowing – by making sacrifices and performing these agricultural activities in miniature, being followed in this by all households. During all village festivals, therefore, there is a constant movement between the whole (village) and the part (houses) in terms of sacrificial as well as agricultural activities. As with rituals of the life cycle, in



Fig. 2: feeding on the cremation ground – three days after death, the spirit of the deceased is fed by men from the village (photo by author).



Fig. 3: feeding the revived dead – by now temporarily in the

the annual round of village festivals, social units, boundaries, and relationships also become visible, manifesting the sociocosmic order of *niam*.

The third domain of rituals concerned with misfortune and illness contrasts with the other two described above. Rituals of healing are markedly different in several aspects, since time (the night), places (e.g. cremation ground), specialists (healers [Des. *dissari*, *gunia*] and spirit mediums [Des. *gurumai*]), and instruments (iron weapons [Des. *jupan*]) involved all differ from those connected to the sacrificial performances described above (Berger, 2015, 475f.). While, in principle, all relationships can go wrong, and all human and nonhuman agents can become sources of disaster, a principal threat are demons such as *rau* (local form of *rahu*). They can be glossed as demons, because they are principally malevolent and strike unpredictably, eating the blood or the life force of humans. Most generally, people refer to the activities causing illness as practices of *nosto* (destruction) or, in the case of sorcery, *onkar* (envy). There is a rich vocabulary with reference to this domain (see Berger, 2015, 474–519).

When disaster strikes and leads to a situation of *bipod* (suffering and trouble), the first step is to identify the source of the misfortune. For this, diviners (*dissari*) and spirit mediums (*gurumai*; even though practitioners can be male or female, the term indicates a female, ending in *-mai*) are consulted to identify the attacking agents. For instance, objects sent by sorcery (*jontor*) may be located in the house, the fields, or in human or animal bodies, causing illness (*jor bemar*, lit. “fever illness”). Such objects are then destroyed, and sacrifices follow. In general, there are two ways in which the ritual specialists deal with the attackers on behalf of their clients. Either they try to pacify them with an offering of life by giving them blood, or the specialists retaliate, calling on the gods for support, following the principle “ask the help of god (*maphru*), bind the demon (*rau*).” A line of the spell addressing an aggressive spirit of a recently deceased person illustrates this well, since the specialist hisses, “you are the goat (*cheli*), I am the tiger (*bag*).” In addition to the spells, a specialist uses medicine (Des. *oso*, Gut. *sindrong*; it can include a variety of plants that are often made into a paste; in the context of sorcery, often plants with thorns or strong smell are selected), and iron weapons (*jupan*) are crucial in his or her fight against the attackers, both animated and activated by the blood of animal sacrifice. If the situation does not improve, these actions are repeated and other *dissari* and *gurumai* are consulted. Only reluctantly, and often too late, do people seek biomedical treatment. There are various reasons for this, one being that dying on the way is a particularly feared form of death. Two more things are noteworthy. First, often a whole cluster of causes is identified by the specialists, rather than a single one, and, second, in cases of sorcery, accusations against

bodies of water buffaloes, the deceased are feasted for the last time (photo by author).



Fig. 4: sharing *tsoru* among village agnates – the village sacrificer and cook (center) are the first who start eating *tsoru* next to the shrine of Pat Kanda (photo by author).

specific people are rarely voiced (usually they are assumed to be close agnates), but, if so, they are articulated in private, and no actions are undertaken to publicly punish the culprit.

Reactions are restricted to rituals that counter the attack.

Conclusion

Gadaba religion is constituted by ritual actions pertaining to three domains that – even though not explicitly named – are interconnected, yet clearly distinguished by the practitioners and through the performances themselves. As they all share the alimentary idiom, I have termed these domains feeding, sharing, and devouring (Berger, 2015; 2017). Active verb forms have been chosen as Gadaba religion is about doing, not doctrine. Feeding is the dominant alimentary mode in the life-cycle rituals, when a person is ritually constructed and deconstructed by being fed with sacrificial food. The sharing of sacrificial food constitutes Gadaba society on different levels and is the foremost activity of village rituals accompanying the cultivation processes throughout the annual cycle. Brotherhood is then reestablished on different levels of the social structure (house, local kin group, and village). Sacrificial food (*tsoru*) epitomizes Gadaba society in its imagined totality in the form of the 12 brothers, 13 seats idea, as well as concretely as groups on the ground. In that sense, Gadaba society is “on the menu” in their sacrificial practices. While both the domain of feeding and that of sharing aim at maintaining a moral order of reciprocity between human and nonhuman social agents, the third domain of violent aggressive consumption, devouring, undermines this striving for a good and balanced life. Accordingly, destructive agents do not sit at the Gadaba’s table. Sacrifices and surrogate lives are offered, but food is not shared with them.

Peter Berger



Fig. 5: healing ritual – a *gurumai* is getting ready to localize harmful objects in the house sent by sorcery (photo by author).

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Buffaloes as Gadaba Ritual Currency in a System of Total Social Exchange

The last stage of death rituals, called *goter*, may be understood as a feast of merit in social anthropology or as an occasion to improve or stabilize the rank of a set of people, and the event belongs to the category known as total social fact (i.e. an activity that has implications throughout society, in the economic, legal, political, and religious spheres; see Mauss 2002). These giveaway ceremonies are imbued with spiritual mechanisms and relate to the status of both givers and receivers, with implications for the entire society in the economic, legal, political, and religious spheres. Hundreds of people, or even more than a thousand, may assemble for such a ritual. The gatherings involve a public display of the sponsors' lavish expenses, which are not just intended to assert the social standing of certain groups and their individual members, or to direct supernatural powers for the promotion of well-being, but rather to achieve the temporal appearance of an all-inclusive – and otherwise invisible –

network of social relations linking and defining human beings who belong to a regional segment of an acephalous tribe. The latter is embedded in the universe of a contemporary tribal system, the general societal type in the central Indian highlands.

Accordingly, the ritual emphasizes the formal units of a societal whole that has always persisted without administrative categories and developed or upheld the relatedness of these units. Simultaneously, its details confirm land control and cultivation as the basis of dominance within an illiterate context lacking specific records of property and leadership. Ownership is conceived in terms of collective rather than individual rights. More generally, the rituals, and the concept of the tribal as a whole, negate the very idea of accumulating permanent private wealth through time in the form of individual property and privileges. What is, in fact, accumulated is social prestige.

As a manifestation of the sacred, the ritual negates gainful activity while comprising a variety of major and minor gift-giving obligations to be settled, which are far too many to be presented as a comprehensive balance sheet within the limited space of this entry. Since buffaloes represent the most valuable donations during the ritual, this entry will be restricted to the ceremonial gifts of these animals. The sacredness of the ritual as well as the major actors' explicit disregard for material gain simultaneously encompasses its very opposite in the form of people and strategies engaging in profit-making activities. Some ritual roles are presented as those of prominent public donors, others are assigned to receivers of return gifts, and yet others are impersonated by their clients, who obtain goods from the market world so as to transfer these commodities into the sphere of sacred gifts and achieve economic gain from such brokerage at the expense of status.

Several incidences of buffalo sacrifice have occasionally been mentioned, though not elaborated on, in the rather limited ethnographic literature on the vast tribal region of central India with its more than 100 million indigenous inhabitants. The reasons for this paucity of data may be seen in the fact that only very few foreign researchers have obtained research permits and conducted field studies in the area. Comparable to the work of geographers or agricultural economists, systematic surveys and interviews are the standard techniques of Indian anthropologists (e.g. Sundar, 2016), although they do not engage in long-term participant observation.

The first report on the *goter* was supplied by C. von Fürer-Haimendorf (1943) and the first eyewitness account by K.G. Izikowitz (1969). I could observe the ritual four times in the course of annual ethnographic excursions between 1981 and 2002. P. Berger (2015) later stayed in a Gadaba village for about two years to prepare his theoretical ethnography, which clarified many aspects of this ritual. The results are incorporated in this entry.

Social Structure

The Gadaba form a community that is closely integrated into the greater ethnic complex of the Koraput district, with the indigenous population of this highland region carrying the name Desia, which may be translated as "The Locals." All native inhabitants of Koraput share numerous features, even though they have never intentionally introduced such commonalities. Thus, the Gadaba and all other Desia are segmented into the same eight exogamous clans (fish, cobra, cow, bear, leopard, monkey, vulture, and sun), although fewer than these eight may be represented within one of the twelve different Desia tribes. The inhabitants of a village may not be restricted to those of one such ethnic units, although only those of a single tribe will dominate a settlement. Intertribal love marriages are occasionally observed. Clan exogamy, irrespective of the tribes concerned, is always observed, and the mere mentioning of an alternative is met with outright horror.

As is the case with clan categories, every Desia inhabiting a specific village belongs to a certain, named local descent group (*kuda*) of a clan that is usually further segmented into local subgroups (*kutum*). These units negotiate marriages, which will always connect one village with three or four others of the marriageable kind. Local descent groups bear the same four names everywhere but are only organized within a settlement, where they are assigned formal positions of senior (*boro*) and junior (*sano*) secular leadership, or the senior sacred duty to sacrifice animals and the junior obligation to cook the ritual food. Jointly, the four local descent groups of a single clan dominate a settlement (this is a formal number and name; empirically, a village may exceed or fall short of this number by one or two local descent groups) and bear the title *chari bai* (four brothers). Their elders join in consultations on all sacred or secular affairs of the village. Thus, all cultivators, as the lords of the land, carry such a title to be distinguished from the client commercial agents, mainly musicians and craftspeople who also inhabit a village but go without such an honorific appellation.

Given this pattern, any village is inhabited by the dominant local descent groups of a single clan, which are said to unite the descendants of the original settlers (*matia*) who initially cleared the forest, while members of other tribes and clans may also inhabit the place, though without rights and duties in ritual events; finally, the inherited clients appear as active participants ranked in subordinate positions. Though usually unequal in their membership numbers, the dominant local descent groups are, in all ritual matters, permanently tied to 12 other villages (*baro bai*, lit. "12 brothers") assigned to the same clan and to 13 settlements (*tero gadi*, lit. "13 seats") in which the groups of marriageable clans are the seniors. In anthropological terms, the 12 are called agnates, and the 13 figure as affines. Whenever serious ritual dangers, uncertainties, or disputes arise, these should assemble to jointly consume the sacred food (*tsoru*) before the elders attempt to find a consensual solution.

Meanings of *Goter*

The *goter* may be conceived as a secondary funeral, conducted long after the occurrence of physical death. The Gadaba themselves call it the senior type of marriage, since it involves quasi-incestuous exchanges between agnates who – in the ordinary sense – will under no circumstances be marriageable. These acts of reciprocity are conducted in the presence of the inherited affines, or of those external local descent groups who provide brides for the sponsors in every generation and take village sisters in return. In a more general context, the grand giveaway ritual also involves the veneration of the earth's fertility, which must be ensured by the formal social intercourse between those who have originally cleared the forest and the others of their clan. In short, *goter* means Gadaba sociocultural existence.

After death, the malevolent character of a Gadaba continues to linger on in the vicinity of the cremation ground, along with those of other deceased, all enraged by jealousy. Once in every generation, however, the villagers grow alarmed at the ever-increasing evil influence from this source and decide to do away with it. A year before the event, the *chari bai* decide to stage a *goter* if the harvest proves satisfactory. The event will always take place in February/March, or the month of marriages, after the harvest has terminated the lean season. The senior shaman (*boro dissari*), along with his junior aid (*sano dissari*), will fix the exact date by consulting the stars. Later, he will also transfer the soul of each deceased into the respective host animal.

In that year, maidens of the village will not be sent to their bridegrooms in affinal villages, and the villages will not send brides in return. Instead, the malevolent deceased will finally be driven out of the settlements by the external agnates, who, in return, will provide megaliths representing the dead as benevolent ancestors. The deceased individuals will be revived in the shape of buffaloes, a male for a male, a strong animal for a strong person, and a mean creature for a human of evil reputation.

Proceedings

The major sacrificial animals of a tribal village must be purchased from outside the community, through the services of the clients. In the case of the *goter*, the buffaloes will be brought in January and never used to work the fields. A Gadaba village is usually enclosed by a wall of laterite stones, and each quarter includes a rock platform for the respective local descent group and also smaller ones for the subgroups. During the *goter* days, the buffaloes are regularly taken to these major and minor rock assemblages to be fed and caressed by their human relatives. The number of rock platforms used at this stage corresponds to that of the participating local descent groups. At that time, the *simli* tree (bot. *Salmalia malabarica*) will display its bright red blossoms, and the sponsors of the event will cut off some large branches to insert them as poles within the row of stones outside the village enclosure (*panja munda*), to which the buffaloes will later be tethered. In the following years, these poles will extend roots and become new trees. Other branches of trees with red or white blossoms are intertwined with the *simli* poles.

The most meritorious male or female among the deceased will appear as the *kuttiboteil*, the largest of the animals, which will be sacrificed on the final day, while the buffalo representing the most disreputable will be given to Rohu, the demon of strife and natural calamities, in the second night of the events. In fact, the buffalo will be chased over a field and hacked to death by an agitated group of visitors, who appear dressed only in loincloths. With their long knives, they cut the animal in two. This action is performed as a gift to Rohu, in order for him to ensure a nonviolent course of the ritual, which will not always come true. To die in the physical scrambles during the event is the holiest way of terminating one's life.

Participants

The *goter* is sponsored by the *chari bai* of a village representing its clan, although occasionally one of the local descent groups may not participate. On the third day of the celebrations, local descent group by local descent group, the deceased in the body of the buffaloes are led from each of the internal platforms across the village boundary to the external row of rocks, in front of the village wall. Everybody else has been invited by the sponsors to witness the sacred passage of the malevolent souls, which means that non-Gadaba of any description may participate in the extensive feasting and drinking. The *chari bai*, as sponsors, welcome all witnesses.

On the evening of the second day, the groups of external agnates arrive one by one in the village. As the sponsors are preoccupied with organizational matters, these brothers from other villages triumphantly march through the hills. They beat *goter* drums in a specific rhythm while simultaneously howling, whistling, and aggressively swinging big sticks through the air. These outsiders are of two different categories: that of the *tsorubai*, who regularly share the sacred food with the sponsors, and that of the *panjabai*, or villagers connected to the organizers only by the mutual exchange of the deceased (both belong to the same clan; however, since one of the eight clans, that of the monkey, is much smaller than the others, this clan's external brothers carry different clan titles, although they come from places that have never entertained marriage relationships with the sponsors). Of the hosts, each local descent group entertains ties with several external units of the same agnatic kind, which means that altogether, some 20 to 30 different gangs of boasting, drunken, armed men may attend. Each of these visitors is saluted with great respect; village women apply a rice mark (*tilak*) on their forehead, shoulders, knees, and feet. After midnight, the men of these two external categories will compete with one another in chasing the evil buffalo and cutting it in half. One group will take the front piece, the other the rear end.

Thereafter, the other buffaloes are assigned (during the 1980s, I witnessed two *goter* celebrations during which more than 160 of these animals were given away to external agnates). The shaman prepares *chutis*, small packages of castor oil leaves containing cooked rice and pieces of jackfruit, representing each buffalo, to be given to the outsiders. Since these are gifts offered in return for the ones received on previous occasions, both *tsorubai* and *panjabai* haggle extensively and aggressively with the sponsors over the number of animals that each local descent group is to receive.

A third category of visitors will, like the other two, lead away buffaloes, but will not display aggressive behavior. They are the *moitr* (bond brothers) of the sponsors (not as individuals but as local descent groups) and, as such, are expected to be forthcoming and kind in any situation. They never exchange brides with their bondsmen, even though they belong to different clans: nothing but pure and selfless love characterizes this relationship. Like the other two categories, they march into the villages carrying large stone slabs that will be added to the platforms of the village assigned to the local descent groups and subgroups, respectively. One of these rocks will be set up horizontally, the other vertically, representing the seat of the benevolent ancestors, which may also be taken by a living villager on formal occasions. The *moitr* are welcomed as near and dear ones: wives of the sponsors wash these visiting males and dress them anew, as if the latter were their own husbands. One is totally identified with the other.

Besides the abovementioned three categories of visitors, which are of the nonmarriageable type and, as such, involved in the sacrificial exchange of the dead, most marriageable local descent groups from different villages also attend the celebrations. They act as public witnesses to the ritual, and also bring cows to be slaughtered and eaten, as well as sacks of rice and considerable quantities of beer and hard liquor for the continuing feast. They try to remain sober throughout the event, since they will have to help with the cooking and serving of the meals. All of them bring their wives, natives of the sponsors' village, and their daughters, who are likely to marry into any of the many marriageable local descent groups present at the event. Thus, throughout the ritual, all youngsters will spend their time dancing and flirting, quite independently of what goes on among adults.

A rather different type of affine constitutes the last category. Formally, this person is the maternal uncle of one of the deceased, though in practice, he might be this uncle's son or grandson. During fieldwork, I have separately observed five such relatives participating in the ritual. Each of them had formally challenged the right of the sponsors to perform the *goter* by conducting a miniature version of the ritual in his village, on behalf of a deceased sister's son. On the third day, each of them marched behind, or rather chased, a huge buffalo (*purani*), representing the nephew, to the sponsoring village. I have seen this animal just reaching the borderline of the settlement before its direction was reversed, redirecting the chase to a nearby millet field. Most of the assembled male outsiders ran after this *purani* to cut their knives into its belly and to pull the intestines out of the living animal, as they were said to contain enormous power. The maternal uncle who brought the animal will receive a brass pot and plate (*moali*) in return, although this is not considered to be an equivalent of the *purani* buffalo that he has provided to fertilize the millet field.

Final Events

After this dramatic scene, witnessed by all other buffaloes tied in rows, an external shaman (*dissari*) will sacrifice the *kuttiboteil*, the buffalo representing the worthiest of the deceased. Subsequently, the name of each local descent group will be called out to receive the

buffaloes, which will be driven to the respective villages where, in the course of the following weeks, they will be slaughtered as the new owners host a series of feasts for their respective affines.

Only those local descent groups that are marriageable for the sponsors will remain on the fourth and final day, when innocent fun and frolicking are called for. Women and men emphasize their joking relationship by smearing cow dung or mud over one another in laughter. Finally, sponsors and visitors, wives and husbands, calmly clean one another, then conclude the meeting with a simple meal and leave.

The *goter* of a village is conducted once in every generation. Three or four larger villages within a region, comprising 40 to 50 settlements, will host the grand ritual every year. Thus, the sequences of such dramatic events will unite the acephalous tribe in an extended social network. Buffaloes, the Gadabas' biggest animals, representing humans, are exchanged for rocks as symbols of eternal existence.

Conclusion

The secondary funeral and *goter* ritual of the Gadaba are a total social fact in that they merge all legal, political, economic, and ritual relationships of an anarchic society and ensure the existence of the sociocultural whole year after year. The impact of death, or of the spirits of the malevolent deceased, is a threat to society that is overcome by the removal of the jealous spirits, who are replaced by eternal rocks representing benevolent ancestors. The rocks are provided by external agnates of the same clan, so that the ritual is understood as a kind of senior marriage of the incestuous kind. In a similar manner, neighboring Desia communities of Koraput ritually celebrate their respective existence, although the details vary greatly. The Raṇa, who are said to belong to a former royal militia, are the seniors of the Gadaba and are associated with the royal *dasarā* celebrations, just as the junior Jodia Poraja are associated with their *nandi parab* ceremony, and the junior-most Mālī, former temple gardeners, with their *bali* ceremony, a seed-sprouting ritual in honor of Goddess Thakurani. In an undefined manner, the four events are conceived as complementary performances of the four major but hierarchically classified ethnic units of the region.

Georg Pfeffer †

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