

‘OLD’ BRITISH VERSUS ‘OLD’ GERMAN ANTHROPOLOGY
The Kond case in Odisha (India)*

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ABSTRACT. A monograph by Frederick G. Bailey, written in the Manchester tradition, is compared with a book by Hermann Niggemeyer, a member of the Frankfurt school of cultural morphology, in order to select what is theoretically or ethnographically valuable from these two very different approaches and their time-bound fashions and limitations. Both works deal with the tribal Kond of eastern India, and both result from fieldwork conducted in 1955/56. Bailey offers an intricate theoretical scheme, though he confines his attention to the study of the political sub-structure and mostly avoids subjects like myth, ritual and kinship, whereas Niggemeyer tries to avoid any kind of theory whatsoever. He excels in the description of myths and technology, though his ‘culture historical’ speculations have little value to today’s anthropology. Bailey’s treatment of Kond society conceives it as a social whole, rather than presenting miscellaneous traits in the manner of his German colleague, who, as his unique contribution, is nonetheless able to offer invaluable data. The aim of the comparison is to point out the anthropological weight of these two mutually exclusive approaches in the light of later research efforts.

1. *APPROACHING THE FIELD*

In the history of the discipline, the schools of the mid-twentieth century are usually compared in a general manner. The dominant approach in the British Commonwealth is usually described as ‘structural-functionalism’, a brand of social anthropology that was at its most influential globally between the 1920s and the 1970s. Some principles of the discipline continue to be based upon the designs of the functionalists, and most of these scholars had a reputation as meticulous fieldworkers and ambitious theoreticians.

In the same period, the record of German-speaking practitioners in the discipline is less impressive, one reason being their general tendency to neglect ethnography in a methodological manner. If they undertook fieldwork at all, they did so as collectors, and perhaps even as hunters on occasion. Until the late 1960s, most departments taught ethnology as ‘cultural history’ of one kind or another. Their leading representatives were often not noticed, as they wrote mostly in German, and even if they were they were seldom valued, just as the ‘old’ German methods and theories, inspired by prehistory, have had next to no lasting effect upon the discipline. Taking these initial assumptions into account, any overall comparison will soon reach its limits. However, an examina-

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tion of the single contributions of individual scholars on both sides of the divide may demonstrate or relativize some of these striking qualitative differences. Thus one may ask whether the Manchester type of functional analysis, much inspired by the sociological role theory of Robert Merton (1949) and his teacher Talcott Parsons (1951), has recognized all possible types of social forces at work, including those of systems beyond the familiar Euro-American ones. Similarly one could ask whether the favourite ethnological activity of the culture historians, the compilation of indigenous artefacts and myths, was really such an entirely futile activity.

For me this issue has a personal relevance because of my preoccupation with tribal India,¹ especially the region where, by a rather unusual coincidence, a prominent representative of the British school happened to conduct his fieldwork among the same people and at the same time as a respectable follower of the German tradition. In my reflections, I will try to evaluate the scholarship of these two rather different men from rather different milieus, as similar issues are likely to be faced by others in other times and places.

The anthropologists in question are Frederick G. Bailey, born in 1924, and Hermann Niggemeyer (1908–2005). I will only discuss their field research in 1955/56 among the tribal Kond of Odisha, a province in eastern India,² as presented in a major publication of each author. Bailey had been a student of Max Gluckman. In a good number of later publications on different subjects he has become prominent among those for whom ‘political anthropology’ is a preoccupation, irrespective of where such studies may be conducted. Niggemeyer, a curator at the ethnological museum in Frankfurt/Main,³ had been a colleague and co-author of Adolf E. Jensen (1939) who lived from 1899 to 1965 and, in his days, led and promoted the Frankfurt school of cultural morphology. Being among the very few European anthropologists who had heard of these Indian tribal societies at all, let alone applied themselves to major research efforts in the region, both Bailey and Niggemeyer naturally inspired my own work in these hills from 1980 onwards.

Today, India’s tribal population numbers at least 100 million people, or eight percent of the total. It includes some 1.5 million Kond in the north of the Eastern Ghats, the mountain ranges traversing Odisha and adjoining provinces in a north-south direction. Within the wider world of anthropology, these tribal minorities have been ignored, which may have to do with the fact that the Indian lowland population was, until recently, not seriously interested in studying, subordinating, converting or integrating the inhabitants of the malaria-infested hills. During the mid-nineteenth-century, when the

¹ Between 1980 and 2002 I visited the tribal areas of western Odisha for two to six months in almost every year. For some results, see Pfeffer (1997, 2001, 2008).

² This province was founded under the name Orissa in 1936 to join together the hilly tribal areas in its west with the densely populated lowlands inhabited by conservative Hindus of the coastal strip on the Bay of Bengal and in the Mahanadi valley. In 2011 Orissa was renamed Odisha.

³ He became its director in 1966 (Kokot 2012).

British colonial power 'pacified' every corner of the subcontinent, European-led armies also engaged in extended and bloody military campaigns, the so-called 'Meriah wars', against the Kond in order to suppress their ritual of human sacrifice and, as one outcome, make them substitute a buffalo for the human sacrificial victim within this major and multivalent ritual.⁴ In their writings, Bailey and Niggemeyer both used personal accounts of the colonial officers in charge of the campaigns.

In relating these early British interventions, a short diversion into contemporary anthropological research is appropriate here. In a widely read and well-received monograph, Felix Padel (2000) denounces these colonial wars in the Kond hills while contesting the claim, that human sacrifice had existed among the Kond. Deviating from the British tradition, his work is not based upon field research. Had Padel travelled to the region in person, the Kond inhabitants themselves, as well as their tribal neighbours, would have informed him about their former tradition of human sacrifice. In each and every Kuttia Kond village,⁵ he would have found one of the ritual specialists as the guardian of the sacred *mala dupa*, the rusty old chains and other metal instruments of torture, that had been applied to human victims in pre-British times and that have been preserved to be displayed on ritual occasions in our own days. I have personally observed these demonstrations and talked to the ritual specialists. In 2003, while visiting Roland Hardenberg among the Dongria Kond further south,⁶ I learned that such rusty old remains are annually circulated in an elaborate exchange system and as such are coordinated within the highly complex and refined *total social fact*, the Kond buffalo sacrifice. In yet another context, tribal Kond elsewhere provided me with indisputable evidence of a case when, under extraordinary conditions, human beings had actually been sacrificed in the previous year of the millennium just then starting.⁷ In fact Niggemeyer (1964:195) meticulously documented the ritual litany during the buffalo sacrifice, in the course of which the sacrificer mentions the early British officers by name in referring to their explicit prohibition.⁸ Padel, however, perhaps because of the foreign language, did not make use of this information.

In the newly independent India of the 1950s, foreign anthropologists were received warmly, and official support for their research was extended to both Bailey and Niggemeyer in numerous ways. This may have been due to the excellent reputation of the amateur anthropologist Verrier Elwin (1902–1964), a personal friend of the then

⁴ The two Scottish officers and rivals who led the operations at different times were S. Charters Macpherson (1852; see also the book his brother, William MacPherson, published in 1865) and John Campbell (1864).

⁵ Kuttia is one of several Kond subunits inhabiting the area of the Belgarh Police Station, where I spent three months in 1980/81 and several weeks on later occasions.

⁶ Dongria is another Kond subunit inhabiting the Niamgiri Hills of the Rayagada District.

⁷ For obvious reasons, I will not reveal more.

⁸ The Kond have their own pronunciation of the Scottish names, which nevertheless can be recognized as the original ones. Niggemeyer reports the mentioning of Macpherson as 'Mukmol Sahib' and of Campbell as 'Kemel Sahib' (1964:195).

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.⁹ In subsequent decades, however, foreigners gradually became less welcome in the hills and were frequently suspected of missionary activities. The last twenty-five years have also witnessed a massive entry of land-grabbing lowlanders into mountainous western Odisha, which had previously been the rather isolated homeland of the Kond and many other tribal societies. Since 2007, bloody communal riots, instigated by these outsiders have more or less continued and led to hundreds of casualties and thousands of displaced persons in the country of the Kond.¹⁰ Neither Bailey nor Niggemeyer had reason to anticipate such developments in their own days.

Niggemeyer seems to have rather modern views on transparency in that he reveals a good number of details regarding the circumstances of his fieldwork (1964:4). Thus he notes how Dr and Mrs Bailey, who had earlier conducted a different study (1957) in the area, received Mrs Niggemeyer and himself in 1955 and offered them essential help. Bailey's interpreter from his earlier days in the field, D. Krishnamurti, was encouraged to continue his work with the German couple. The latter also adopted Dinabandu Naik,¹¹ Elwin's primary go-between, who translated the Dravidian tribal language of the Kond into the Indo-European provincial language called Oriya, whence Krishnamurti turned the text into English for the German researcher. This rather detailed description of important local aides, language barriers and other field conditions differs from Bailey's discretion, more in tune with the general fashion of his time, an attitude that was criticised at length by 'new' anthropology in later decades.¹² In his book and in the many that followed it, Bailey never mentions Niggemeyer, whereas the German ethnologist politely refers to Bailey's academic contributions. In the following, I will begin by discussing the work of the Manchester social anthropologist and later compare it with that of the Frankfurt curator.

2. BAILEY'S ARGUMENTS

Like his previous monograph, Bailey's 1960 book is theoretically ambitious and offers a neat methodological introduction followed by detailed but stringent arguments. The volume is subtitled "A study of political activity and political change in highland Orissa"

⁹ Elwin studied theology at Oxford and came to India as a missionary, but fell out with his bishop before marrying a Gond tribal woman and leaving Christianity altogether. His books on several tribal societies in middle and northeast India were widely read. Nehru appointed him his advisor on tribal affairs. Of several biographies and memorial volumes, that of Ramchandra Guha (1999) is the most informative on the details of Elwin's career.

¹⁰ Of the numerous sources on the riots, the report of the governmental National Commission for Minorities, visiting Odisha in January 2008, is likely to be the most reliable. See National Commission for Minorities (2008).

¹¹ Given the name and the circumstances, I would bet a significant amount on D. Naik belonging to the Pan community.

¹² See, for example, Conquergood (1991).

and is divided into a part on the Kond (1960:1–120) and another on their 'dependents' and their 'masters' (1960:121–196), followed by the concluding third section on 'structures in action' (1960:197–272). The word 'structure' is Bailey's key term, used because it 'emphasizes regularity' (1960:6). The central formula of the British school has it that structure 'assumes that the various roles (or institutions) in which persons or groups are engaged are connected with one another in such a way that what happens in one institution, or role, will regularly affect what happens in others' (Bailey 1960:6).

Clearly, Bailey is a behaviourist. He studies actions or social roles demanding actions. Observed behaviour is his topic. This 'action approach' or 'actor perspective'¹³ is far from time-bound and rather popular in contemporary anthropology.¹⁴ For present purposes, I will add that Bailey pays little attention to different worlds of meaning. He may refer to the ideas of specific informants concerning specific occurrences, but the ideas and values ('morality') of the Kond in a general sense, or those of any another collective, are never abstracted from ethnographic experience. Whatever he conceives as the rationality of people he describes is in line with his own rationality. Values do not differ. The Kond, their clients, immigrant lowlanders and the ethnographer himself seem to share the same principles, which are always materialistic in kind and which always induce them to act in one way rather than another. In assuming such a universality of value-ideas, the author is in a position to argue why either the Kond or others, given a specific situation, behave in a certain manner. In the style of the Manchester school, Bailey selects, presents and debates extended case studies of individual actors to explain the causes of their respective behaviour within a general setting. His scholarly aim is to advance such causal explanations convincingly.

In the Kond hills, as everywhere else, Bailey's concept of structure refers to a higher level of social analysis, an implied totality which is ultimately consistent and cannot be self-destructive,¹⁵ though structural analysis regularly deals with conflicts. Any such structure includes several 'sub-structures' which are defined by their content as being either political, or economic, or as referring to kinship, ritual and other domains. Even if such separate sub-structures are found to be consistent in themselves, they may contradict one another in the sense that, for example, a general ritual role pattern may diverge from the role pattern in the political arena. According to Bailey, this type of contradiction cannot be understood within the framework of a single social structure (1960:7, 8), since it indicates social change. Inconsistency of role behaviour is thus explained by a plurality of structures. Consequently the major argument of Bailey's book on the Kond refers to the presence of several simultaneously existing social struc-

¹³ Bailey writes that '[t]he starting-point of the analysis is the actor' (1960:11).

¹⁴ At the same time, Merton (1949) and Parsons (1951) and their systematic role theory do not figure in contemporary debates.

¹⁵ Bailey himself supplies this emphasis (1960:7).

tures in highland Odisha which he identifies in the title of the work as those of "Tribe, caste and nation".

Of crucial importance is Bailey's selection of political activity as a sub-structure of any social structure: this is the only domain he is interested in (1960:12). He does concede the importance of ritual, kinship and other relationships, but generally he wants to leave them aside, though he is not always quite successful in doing so. In fact, this exclusivist approach may have been the reason for some rather unreliable data. For example, Bailey maintains that Kond buffalo sacrifice is a clan cult, though also saying that it is no longer practiced on that level. In the rare cases observed only hamlets or individuals are said to be the sponsors (1960:51), 'although it draws people from a wide area of the country side' (1960:81). In the context of the buffalo sacrifice, Bailey continues that 'the corporate activity of the founding clan [...] has vanished' because it is 'both expensive and [...] frowned upon by Hindus' (1960:83). In other words, the financial burden of the ritual and the weight of India's mainstream religious opinion are Bailey's reasons for the Kond having abandoned their central religious ritual.

Most Westerners can easily follow such an argument, but one wonders why earlier the same indigenous people had fought extended and bloody wars against the British for several decades in attempts to preserve their total social fact. I was also surprised to find a photograph of the buffalo sacrifice in Bailey's book (1960:236), apparently taken by him personally, though he does not attempt to describe, let alone analyse, the ritual. So, contrary to Bailey's statement (1960:81), the sacrifice cannot have been abandoned, but must have retained some importance.

Twice in 1981 and on another excursion in 1990, I was able to attend such a buffalo sacrifice as a regular feature of the Kond local ritual calendar, and Hardenberg, during his long-term field research among several different Kond groups in 2002/2003, witnessed this four-day-long intricate event in person some fifteen times, describing and analysing it in his book in great detail (2006). In other words, the ritual is not, whether for financial or political reasons, a matter of the past, as Bailey had claimed more than fifty years ago, nor has it become an individual affair. Moreover, Hardenberg's and my own observations confirm that this sacrifice is not, and never has been, a clan cult as Bailey understood it to be. I argue that this author's focus on the political field, 'in which men compete for prizes: to control one another; to achieve command over property and resources',¹⁶ induces him to remain within the kind of materialistic rationality which he assumes to be universal and which makes him ignore central values of the non-materialistic kind in other cultures.

Bailey wrote on the Kond during the heyday of British lineage theory and before critical minds like John Barnes (1971) concluded that African systems cannot be found in highland New Guinea (nor in several parts of Africa, for that matter), and long before Adam Kuper (1982) removed lineages from anthropological discussion entirely. The lin-

¹⁶ Bailey (1960:10). This definition of the political domain is repeated several times in Bailey's book.

age system, introduced by Evans-Prichard (1940) as a mode of classification, was transformed by Bailey and many of his British contemporaries into one of corporate groups on the ground. Accordingly, he is bent on finding such substantial groups in the form of 'lineages'. Of the 334 individual Kond in the village he studied, '79 per cent can be shown on an agnatic genealogy', and Bailey continues: 'I shall call this group lineage'.¹⁷ The same chapter, however, shows that many of its individual members do not share a common forefather at all. Some of them are agnates, others have been formally adopted unless differentiated as 'sisters' sons' (1960:27), while yet another group may be linked to the first by ties of ritual friendship. Finally, some other individuals are known to have been incorporated into the first group earlier. A common lineage ancestor, or even a simple concept of such an ancestor at the head of a ramifying genealogical construct, is nowhere to be seen.

Thus Bailey's account involves words, observations and meanings which must be clarified: in fact, all Kond conceive of agnatic categories which I would call 'clans'. If, following Bailey, such a clan is said to contain lineages, the latter would have to be lineal constructs and also encompassed by the clan through lineal constructs. According to Bailey's own words, this is not the case: individuals do not recognize a common forefather. If some are 'sisters' sons', their clan or clans must differ from the clans of their 'mothers' brothers' and *a fortiori* their alleged lineages. If, on the other hand, a lineage is not a lineal construct, the very name is grossly misleading and should be abandoned. The point is that numerous British authors of the 1950s did come across elaborate genealogies to discover certain categories of descent, just as they observed corporate groups in action on the ground. Mistakenly these scholars somehow identified the categories with these corporate groups and called them 'lineages', even though they could see that the action groups and the lineal categories were obviously not identical.

Among the Kond – and generally in all of tribal middle India – I found that extended public and ramifying genealogical constructs are altogether lacking and I have failed to find such constructs in any other ethnographic source. The Nuer type of lineality is nowhere a matter of public discussion. And yet Bailey writes about lineages, despite the ethnographic reality that empirical people do not discuss ramifying family trees. If some are classed as the 'sisters' sons' or the 'ritual friends' of others, they cannot be the genealogical agnates of the latter, even though they can join in the actions of their 'mothers' brothers'. Men of several clans (each one of which is always exogamous) may unite to act as a group, but then a group is not based upon genealogical constructs. Under these circumstances it is incorrect to name such a joint action group a 'lineage', since this technical designation would suggest lineal constructs as the unifying ties of such actors, while in fact such lineal ties will be absent.

¹⁷ Bailey (1960:21). The exact wording is significant. He does not write that the 79 per cent belong to a single agnatic group.

Thus Bailey certainly conceives a corporate group on the ground and calls it a 'lineage' in the fashion of his day, but this unit does not comprise (as in the ideal African cases) the agnatic descendants of a named forefather and is not part of an overall framework of agnatic descent involving systematic genealogically guided segmentation. Instead, several substantial groups of which the members are belonging to different agnatic categories are brought together in a locality for pragmatic reasons. Bailey might have explained the differences in the course of culturally specific interactions in a convincing manner by a reference to ritual relationships (as did Hardenberg in 2006). These, however, are beyond his interest or the scope of his 'political sub-structure'. He also reports that, in facing outsiders, the village groups stand together, even though internally they do not. For Bailey the reason for this disunity is 'because it is to someone's advantage to keep alive the differences' (1960:46). Again the author draws on familiar notions of politicking individual actors in a power game while ignoring the possibility that the value-ideas and the arrangement of genealogically defined units among the Kond might deviate considerably from the anthropologist's own notions.

What the members of a single group really have in common is their prohibition of intermarriage, a rule with far-reaching consequences, too far-reaching to be discussed here. Such a criterion, however, may have been conceived by the author as belonging to the sub-structure of kinship and thus as going beyond that of political activities. Furthermore, at the time of writing his book, Bailey was also involved in a debate on 'tribe and caste in India' (1961) with Louis Dumont. In yet another piece of research, the latter had proposed 'marriage alliance' (Dumont 1957) as a central feature of South Indian social structure and contested the overall relevance of descent as proposed by Bailey and most other proponents of British social anthropology at that time. Though our author took issue with Dumont over the nature, and even existence, of the difference between caste and tribe, it may not be too far-fetched to imagine that, apart from the general British bias towards descent at that time, he might have had additional motives for ignoring Kond affinity.

Beyond the village, the Manchester scholar discovered Kond agnatic clans and their respective clan territories, on which Kond clan members settled along with other people. One might wrongly expect a single clan to include the lineages mentioned above at the village level, but the exact relationship between the two is hardly clarified by the author: 'The link which binds different village clusters into one clan is the same as that which exists within one village cluster. It is a complex of institutions: exogamy, land-holding, and the cult of the Earth and Mountain. In one sense this is a segmentary descent system' (Bailey 1960:52).

Bailey does not want to go into the kinship or ritual systems, yet he mentions exogamy and religious ceremonies as defining features of the clan, his political unit. However, as noted above, I suggest that the cult of Earth and Mountain (i.e. the buffalo sacrifice) is not a clan matter and never has been, while exogamy as such is an aspect of affinity, a subject our author situates within the kinship order or one he has chosen to

avoid. At the same time, he is bound to admit that the entire eastern region of the Kond hills is subdivided into a moiety system whereby the Kond conceive of one another as either agnates ('elder brothers and father's younger brothers') or affines ('bride-seizing-folk'; Bailey 1960:53). Thus readers cannot really discover how segmentation is supposed to operate within a descent system characterised by the clan.

What remains is the issue of land-holding. Bailey, the functionalist, presents a sub-chapter under the title "conjectural history" (1960:63–69) in which he suggests that wet-rice cultivators invest more than others and, because of these investments, possess these fields as 'something that is worth fighting for'.¹⁸ Such materialistic reasoning in its turn makes them unite into 'larger and larger groups' (1960:67), or into the clan and even into coalitions of clans (as moieties) to obtain substantial fighting forces. Thus he conceives of clans and moieties as corporate groups and also as an outcome of the material interests of the individual actors involved. Though similar clan systems are found on different continents in the context of different modes of production, Bailey offers a materialistic explanation for their existence in the Kond hills.

This kind of reasoning refers to an imagined past when the clan was supposed to have been 'a larger corporate group' (1960:5). For his own time, however, Bailey registers the 'decay of the localized clan' (1960:69–88) in the subsequent chapter. His 'conjectural history' offers the causes ('something worth fighting for') for the former existence of territorial clan groups, which, after the arrival of the colonial power and the new administration, are supposed to have decayed by the 1950s. This may, of course, have been the case, but Hardenberg's recent research (2006) among the rather isolated Dongria Kond in the almost untouched and remote areas of the hills has not discovered corporate groups on the clan level, even though (due to the absence of the state) feuding and militant actions are a fairly regular feature of their existence. These Kond, like all others, operate with clan categories but without clan groups, yet they have hardly been touched or influenced by the state administration. The clan, as Hardenberg observed among the Dongria Kond and I among the Kuttia Kond, is an exogamous social category of great importance provided one recognizes the relevance of affinity. The clan is also associated with a specific territory, but it is not a corporate social group involved in any kind of observable actions for the sake of material or immaterial gains.¹⁹ – To clarify the point: for Bailey the clan, before its 'decay' in modern times, was a larger corporate group and the outcome of interest-bound actions that united smaller groups into a larger one, whereas I contend that it is a given socio-centric category defined by concepts of affinity.

¹⁸ Bailey (1960:66). 'Conjectural history' was the major and most convincing accusation of the 'old' British functionalist school against the 'old' schools of cultural history in German-speaking countries.

¹⁹ For Dongria Kond clanship, see Hardenberg (2006:188–245); for tribal middle Indian clanship in general, see Pfeffer (1997:14–18).

Another controversial issue is raised in the context of one of Bailey's extended case studies relating to a marriage feast that ends in a row between the Kond hosts and certain uninvited guests (1960:128). The quarrel leads to later meetings with heated debates and far-reaching threats. Those who commit the provocations belong to a social category called 'Pan'.²⁰ According to Bailey, 'Pans are untouchables'.²¹ Elsewhere he states that 'all Pans are beggars' (1960:130) because during a Kond feast they ask the sponsors for food. The author discusses the case at length but mentions only Kond informants and no Pan ones.

Are the Pan really 'dependents' of the Kond? According to my own experience, the relationship is more complex. Whereas their status is certainly lower, their power may be equal or even higher than that of their Kond co-villagers. Western observers like Bailey, who are exclusively concerned with what they see as the political sub-structure, may find it difficult to separate status from power. To illustrate the contrast, I will start by confirming that during Kond festivities their Pan neighbours ask for food and receive it, though when the Pan conduct their own specific sacrifices, I have personally observed and photographed several times how, in the same manner, Kond pass by to demand and receive food in their turn (Pfeffer 1997:8). This regular gift exchange has escaped Bailey. As the relevant point of status difference, Pan accept cooked food from Kond, who in turn only accept raw meat and vegetables from the Pan, since their superior status disallows any kind of commensality.²²

Are the Pan untouchables? The term itself is problematic, having been introduced by the British administration to suggest a fixed borderline between 'touchables' and 'untouchables' in India, whereas such an absolute boundary has never existed in the Hindu tradition. Hinduism conceives of numerous castes varying in status according to their relative pollution, though the idea that part of the population could consist of an absolutely separate block of 'untouchables' is an invention of the European colonial power. This administration had to deal with substantial groups and, when confronted with far-reaching forms of discrimination, marked absolute boundaries between such units in order to intervene with practical policies, whereas the relativistic Hindu system of classification conceives of gods, demons, humans, animals and plants or even metals

²⁰ In high Oriya the name is Pano, as found in Niggemeyer's book. Such linguistic difference between Desia, the dialect of the hills, and the standard language in the plains cannot be substantiated by references to textbooks, because no linguistic research on Desia has been published and only very little on Oriya. See, for example, Hardenberg and Panda (1999).

²¹ Bailey (1960:121). Whereas Bailey adds the letter 's' to the terms 'Pan' and 'Kond' to indicate the plural in the manner of the English (but not the Oriya) language, I refrain from such a practice.

²² Superficial observers may interpret this restriction of commensality as a typical caste rule. But it is also practiced as a status marker among the most 'remote' tribal people in India who lack any kind of contact with Brahmanism. Anywhere in the world commensality may be applied as such a classificatory instrument. Logically, Brahmanism may have adopted its restrictions of commensality from India's tribal inhabitants, just as the latter may have been influenced by the Brahmanical rules, or such norms may have existed in both cultures without a mutual influence.

as more or less polluting, some extremely so, and all in some but not in other relations with one another. Accordingly, I suggest that we must differentiate between the Hindu, the tribal and our own method to classify the social world.

Who are the Pan? For Bailey they are plough servants, casual labourers or serfs of the Kond. He states that the latter are only able to manage their wet-rice agriculture during the labour-intensive time of transplantation, and again at the time of harvesting, if the former work for them (1960:133–134). Thus the 'Pans supply the vital increment to the labour force which enables the cultivators to complete the work in the few short weeks of the planting season' (1960:136). Bailey gives this as the decisive reason for the Kond to accept Pan 'dependents' in their midst. The latter are also local musicians who play for 'pocket money' (1960:136). Bailey does not ponder over the fact that music is a relatively polluting activity and yet essential for all Kond festivals, like other forms of Pan ritual participation, or that the Pan might have been assigned for ever with the ritual duty of music-making. For his argument rituals are irrelevant, though they may not be irrelevant for the people concerned. On many other occasions and in times of crisis Kond and Pan depend upon each other, and Pan receive shares of the agricultural products in what Bailey calls a 'caste relationship' (1960:141). He conceives the two units as 'castes' because of the division of labour, the rules of endogamy and the difference in rank, but he does not bother about a particular caste ideology or about the fact that Hindu temples and priests are alien to both the Kond and the Pan.

My own observations, which began twenty-five years later, confirm many of Bailey's, though he was probably unaware of the fact that the Pan also support (and have supported in known history) Kond landholders in innumerable mountain villages further to the south of his research area, where no wet rice is planted and no plough cultivation is practiced at all, since the steep slopes permit swidden cultivation only. Thus his casual argument regarding the existence of Pan in the hills, based upon certain material conditions of a wet-rice economy, is falsified by the facts. In such settlements on the mountain slopes female and male Pan only work as craftspeople, cattle herders and petty (or not so petty) money-lenders and are willing to accept any odd job. They buy and sell Kond animals or agricultural products on a commission basis and in return supply the landholders with tools and implements, or whatever else is needed, from weekly markets and even from lowland towns. The Kond are the patrons and the Pan act as their clients, at times being richer and more powerful than these landholders of relatively higher status. To conceive of the Pan as 'dependents' is thus a somewhat partial view.

Since the village of Bailey's research was situated less than an hour's walk from a major settlement that was mostly inhabited by immigrant lowlanders (1960:3), and since it belonged to the police station of Phulbani, the administrative headquarters for the Kond hills, the author was probably unaware that Kond and Pan were the only status categories present in most Kond villages. However, a caste system containing only two castes is unknown in the literature on South Asia and should not be postulated

for the Kond hills. Everywhere, even in remote villages, both Kond and Pan are aware of the existence of numerous lowland castes, but their own particular symbiosis cannot be called a 'caste system', since it is lacking any kind of reference to the Brahmanical system of ideas.²³ In Kui and Oriya or in any other language, I have found that the client craftsmen conceive themselves as the juniors and the patronising landowners as their seniors, though such an opposition does not imply the prior arrival of the Kond: it is a simple marker of status. None of the reliable sources suggests that the Pan came later to the highlands than their Kond patrons, even though this theory is found in most of the European and Indian ethnographies that touch upon the topic. As to the question of 'untouchability' being the Pan's specific marker, it may be sufficient to note that both Kond and Pan regularly keep and kill cows in order to consume beef, the most polluting activity in the Hindu ritual context. Neither of the two is consuming milk products or keeping cows for this purpose. They thus avoid the most regular and desirable Hindu food habits – or core values – to jointly ignore what is sacred to caste Hindus.

Chapter VII on 'the Konds and their masters' offers the best insight into Bailey's work. Initially he refers to ambivalent social conditions. Immigrant Hindu lowlanders known as Oriya try 'to make Konds behave as a dependent caste, subordinate themselves in just the same way as [...] Pans are by tradition [...] subordinate to Konds' (1960:157), but the latter refuse to comply. The subsequent 36 pages describe the history of this struggle, though the account basically follows what Bailey has called conjectural history: 'For nine centuries or more the Konds remained a tribe and did not become a caste because they lived in a frontier territory [...]' (1960:175). Lowland kingdoms could not control the Kond hills, but in the nineteenth century, after the British gained the upper hand, Oriya chiefs were confirmed as the headmen of the administrative divisions (1960:178), and later became state officials (1960:180).

Bailey thus postulates the introduction of the caste system during this colonial period, but before this process could be carried very far, the balance swung back in favour of the Kond, because caste as a political system began to be undermined by the modern economy, the state administration and the numerical strength of the Kond competing within a modern representative democracy (1960:193; emphasis in the original). Again, the author separates the political from the 'cultural' aspects of the caste system and proposes that the political functions of caste have become obsolete, while those of other domains continue. In his argument, the Kond have earlier become the 'masters' of the Pan and the lowland Oriya the 'masters' of the Kond, though in the final result the Kond, being the majority in the region, successfully compete through the ballot box in the sphere of democratic politics, the foundation of the modern state.

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Thus I define the caste system as the plurality of interrelated caste categories in India, constituted and united by the Hindu system of ideas. The well-known American sociologist Kingsley Davis (1941) had a different concept and discovered a 'caste society' among the Amerindians known as Natchez and in the 'Deep South' of the USA with regard to relations between Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans. Others hold similar views to this day, whereas I follow Louis Dumont (1980).

Bailey's is a study of political change. According to his arguments, this means that different structures contradict one another. Historically he conceives the Kond as a tribe containing clans as corporate groups that are segmented into corporate lineages so that the opposition between such substantial units leads to warfare within an ultimately consistent social structure. He then conceives that these cultivators, in order to meet the labour requirements of wet-rice cultivation, call in 'untouchable' Pan from the plains as their menials or plough servants. After the European led armies conquered the hills, Bailey reports how incoming lowlanders acted as administrators who attempted to introduce the Hindu caste system. Ultimately, however, these ambitions were of no avail because the newly introduced representative democracy of independent India caused the Kond majority to gain the upper hand through the ballot box.

Even though the old structures remain partially intact, Bailey continues, conflict resolution takes a different turn. If Kond cannot succeed as landholders within their segmentary mechanisms, they assume the position of a dominant caste in relation to Pan 'untouchables', and the latter appeal to the laws of the modern administration to gain equality, as do the Kond when they resist the inroads of the Hindu lowlanders. Bailey calls such manoeuvring 'bridge actions' (1960:251): conflicting claims arising within one social structure (tribal, caste or administrative) are transferred to another. Adopting a somewhat evolutionist bent, the functionalist Bailey seems to suggest that the modern democracy of the all-India framework is finally prevailing in the Kond hills.

3. NIGGEMEYER'S ARGUMENTS

If Bailey's book, by referring to an intricate theoretical framework, is intended to offer reasons for behavioural regularities as observed on the ground, Niggemeyer seems to be entirely engaged in collecting information on the formal markers of Kond culture. Apparently, he also tries to avoid any kind of theoretical statement, though he does compare names, monuments, or types of ritual sites with those of some other middle Indian tribes or with similar markers in India's tribal northeast.²⁴ Certain commonalities of materials and shapes seem to indicate links of the diffusionist kind for him (1964:215–216), though he does not speculate what might have been diffused in a certain direction. The way he avoids all apparently risky statements beyond descriptions reminds me of my German student days during the 1960s, with the symptomatic reluctance of the teaching staff to articulate anthropological generalizations of any kind.²⁵ This is the striking difference from Bailey's approach.

²⁴ Unfortunately from today's perspective he is also trying to compare 'racial' types.

²⁵ I studied ethnology at the university of Freiburg/Breisgau.

Adopting such a tacit research policy usually resulted in simplistic observations on things social and commonsensical statements suiting the political climate of the day.²⁶ In the 1960s, observations on tangible phenomena such as tools and implements, along with the verbatim subjective views of individual interviewees, were appreciated as contributions to the discipline. This style of presenting the verbal statements of individual (and inaccessible) informants as authorities has remained in fashion to this day. However, the curator of the Frankfurt museum does succeed in conveying his outstanding competence in all questions of technology, thus providing most valuable source material for future generations. His meticulous ground plans of the Kond house, for example, which refer to techno-economic, religious and even gender categories, offer an opportunity to interpret these data in the light of findings half a century after the publication of the book.

Like his established colleagues in the first two decades after the war, Niggemeyer describes all outwardly visible and certainly meaningful substantial features such as the village layout, the buildings, the sacrificial site, the shape of the sacrificial posts and the very specific arrangement of the sacrificial stones. He thus offers the most important data on Kond cosmology, which Bailey would not even bother to take note of. With superb precision – and by providing many quality drawings and photographs – he introduces processes of work, house-keeping or music-making, just as he offers innumerable detailed notes on myths and ritual actions within the many major and minor ceremonies, of which there are plenty in Kond religious life between October and May. However, he does not conceive of Kuttia Kond culture as an ideological whole, and he technically fails to identify the different social categories involved in staging the buffalo sacrifice. Moreover, though Niggemeyer gives great weight to the gabled design of the eye-catching sacrificial pole, he does not notice that such poles differ in shape – gabled or not, and gabled in various styles – depending on the different sacrificial territories.²⁷ Throughout his description, he makes no attempt to identify the buffalo sacrifice as an intricate and total social fact, since, due to his ethnological training in Germany in a certain epoch, he may never have heard of Mauss (2007) or of a Durkheimian social fact.

Why did the Frankfurt scholar choose to conduct extended ethnographic field research in a tribal region of India that was almost unknown to the rest of the world and that would certainly not figure among the cultural complexes that were ordinarily taught in German ethnological seminars or displayed in German museums? Unable to gain access to written or oral information on this question, I can only speculate about his motives, but it seems reasonable to suggest that Niggemeyer had been encouraged by earlier ethnographic discoveries on the Molucca Islands in 1937/38, since, as a member

²⁶ This observation from hindsight may lead to the similar academic fashions of today, such as the post-modern dogma of rejecting all general theories to avoid dogmatic positions.

²⁷ According to my personal observation, the buffalo is tied to the pole, tortured over many hours throughout one night and eventually killed at dawn.

of Jensen's team, he had been there and published (together with Jensen) the major result of this famous Frankfurt Frobenius expedition, the myth about the female divinity Hainuwele (1939). Among other subjects, this story relates how the recipients of Hainuwele's wonderful gifts first kill her and later, how those who believe in her cut up her corpse to bury the pieces in different patches of earth, thereby causing all essential food crops to grow out of this 'seed' of flesh in course of time.

For Jensen, the Goddess is a so-called *Dema* divinity, and this ritual marks the introduction of planting as a miracle, seen 'culture-historically' as the socio-economic transition from gatherer-hunters to early holistic 'planter communities', as swidden cultivators used to be called in German academic language. Plants were the divine gift of the killed Goddess. Jensen (1966), the then leader of the Frankfurt school, thought the myth had spread from the Molucca island of Ceram into different regions of the world, and his students travelled to Africa and South America in search of its traces or of secondary versions of it.

Probably Niggemeyer chose middle India in order to examine the tribal myths relating to the former human sacrifice of the Kond. I could imagine that he had read James G. Frazer's "The golden bough", first published in 1890, and found within it the account of the Meriah human sacrifice, which always included the distribution and burial of the victim's flesh in order, again, to promote the growth of plants (Frazer 1983:571–575). Frazer had based his description upon information from Samuel C. Macpherson, the long-time colonial officer responsible for the suppression of human sacrifice in the Kond hills, who many decades later also became a source for the German scholar.

Niggemeyer seems to focus his research efforts on agricultural activities, myths and sacrificial actions, which he describes with great care. However, in the end he does not identify the female Earth Goddess of the Kond as a *Dema* divinity. Root crops, central to Jensen's hypothesis, are rather unimportant among the author's hosts (Niggemeyer 1964:212). The fact that he does not even mention Hainuwele or the *Dema* concept in his publication of 1964 may be due to the decline in the popularity of this grand speculation among his German colleagues, whereas it had attracted much attention in the early 1950s, that is, when Niggemeyer must have applied for his research grant.

While Bailey was conducting his research near the district headquarters where the influence of intruding lowlanders was at its height, the Niggemeyers must have made efforts to choose a site of utmost remoteness. They mention their stay in a rest house of the provincial forest service and were probably escorted by forest officers. A quarter of a century later I stayed for a night in the same wooden building after the experience, even in 1980, of only being able to reach the spot by jeep, and only after a strenuous tour of some six hours from the nearest road.²⁸ The track led through several rocky riverbeds,

²⁸ Today a bus takes twenty minutes to reach a busy market place inhabited by lowlanders only. Niggemeyer's forest bungalow has been removed.

and occasionally the vehicle had to halt because of fallen logs. Apparently the Niggemeyers were in search of the least influenced culture of the Kond.

Their hosts are known to outsiders as the Kuttia Kond, meaning mountain Kond. Similar sub-regional Kond communities, each united by systematic intermarriage and grand rituals, have other names.²⁹ Niggemeyer offers the hypothesis that 'originally' several tribes of different cultures lived in the region but were later conceived as a single people because they had adopted their common Dravidian language from the dominant Hindus of the lowlands (1964:214). In a rather different argument, Bailey considers the Kond complex to be a 'continuum' (1960:64) of different developmental stages ranging from *caste* Kond (in 'his' village) as the most developed to *tribal* Kond, which would include the Kuttia as the least advanced. One end of the continuum

is a society whose political system is entirely of the segmentary egalitarian type. And which contains no dependents whatsoever; and at the other end of which is a society in which segmentary political relations exist only between a very small proportion of the total society and most people act in the system in the role of dependents (Bailey 1960:264).

My own experience during more than two decades of regular visits to these hills does not support either view of the two scholars. I found a certain segmentary system among the Kond landholders, though it differed considerably from Bailey's version or that of British textbooks of the 1940s and 1950s.³⁰ The idea of an 'entirely [...] egalitarian' type of original tribal society is a typical Western concept and suits Bailey, since he fails to understand any form of collective inequality based upon status, or non-material inequality, rather than power. Moreover, the Pan ('dependents' in Bailey's terms) were present even in the remotest of Kond villages, as Niggemeyer also noted. But the latter's speculations regarding an 'original' diversity among the Kond groups cannot be maintained: everywhere Kond cultivators are seen by other tribal groups of the region as a single entity defined by the Kond's regional dominance and by the practice of buffalo sacrifice, which differs from the cults of other tribal communities, none of which is ever suspected of having practiced human sacrifice in former days. To conclude: Niggemeyer's Kuttia Kond are 'planters', but they share all major cultural traces with Bailey's Kond, who are plough cultivators, even though no Oriya from the lowlands had entered the remote Kuttia villages in Niggemeyers days.³¹ These settlements are also inhabited by Pan clients who used to work as weavers and still herd Kond cattle or extend credit to the tribal masters of the soil, just as they, and only they, play the oboe during Kond rituals and provide the sacrificial animals for the landowners.³²

²⁹ I came across the Kuttia and Dongria Kond, the Porja and Desia Kond, the Pengo and Mala Kond, but there must be more.

³⁰ This Kond system has been carefully studied and analysed at length by Hardenberg (2006).

³¹ Today, Oriya cultivators may construct their own settlements on Kuttia land.

³² Nowadays cheap factory textiles are sold by Pan women and men in the Kond villages. From what I noticed, the Kuttia Kond cattle-owners displayed little familiarity in their dealings with cows, since

For Bailey the Pan were 'dependents' of the Kond as well as 'untouchable Hindus' (1960:121). Like our first author, Niggemeyer defines them as a 'Hindu caste of very low social rank' ('Hindukaste von sehr niedrigem sozialen Rang' [1964:15]) and explains that they are found throughout the hills. Like Bailey, he is unable to supply any evidence for this historical statement. Apparently, our European bias conceives of any tribe as conforming to an equally isolated and egalitarian type of society. In reaction to the discovery of landholders like the tribal Kond co-existing with Pan craftsmen, who act as petty traders, there is a tendency to argue historically and define the latter as recent immigrants, though in this case this is entirely conjectural, since the Pan (and similar weavers elsewhere) are described as present in each and every village of the Kond hills even in the earliest external reports. The landholders have been able to preserve their tribal status because the traders have supplied them with metal tools and whatever else was required from the civilization of the lowlands.

Niggemeyer wrongly asserts that these clients are speakers of the Oriya language. In fact the Pan are multilingual, as can be expected from their position as culture brokers. I have heard some speak the Dravidian Kui language at home and others the Indo-European Oriya language. Although these traditional weavers of the hills (under one name or another) count several millions and have the same function everywhere (including the important ritual one of musicians), no other anthropological account has ever given these intermediaries more than a page or two. Until the recent Berlin research project in western Odisha (Pfeffer 2012), Bailey and Niggemeyer were the only authors at all who had noticed the socio-cultural relevance of the Pan.

The Frankfurt ethnologist also correctly states that the Kond he met handle money only rarely, a habit that had hardly changed by 1990, though the cash economy will have spread to their areas in the meantime to a certain extent. Members of the Pan community used to supply the cultivators with tools and household goods, animals and clothes, in advance taking the harvested crops in return, which they sold at the weekly markets and in the lowlands. Niggemeyer associates the Pan with the position of 'moneylenders' in a derogative sense and rhetorically opposes them to hardworking and long-suffering Kond, who, by their labours, 'renew or increase [...] their debts' ('erneuern oder vergrößern [...] ihre Schulden') year after year (1964:17). Several pages of this kind of prose may be classed as naïve at best. As his conclusion, Niggemeyer records the 'pressing dependence' of the Kond in relation to the Pan. Thus the latter are reported to be 'dependents' in Bailey's account and as exploiters in that of his German colleague.³³

Niggemeyer's lasting contribution is his observation that the Pan are very much a part of the myths and rituals of the indigenous people in the Kond hills. The female

they did not milk them. In case of a cattle disease they would immediately kill the animal concerned. Extending credit is mostly done without cash flow. Goods are delivered and taken.

³³

Since immigrant officials of the state, though generally uninformed, never tired to malign the Pan in my presence, I can imagine that Niggemeyer has been influenced by the policemen, foresters and development officers who must have provided him with transport and accommodation.

goddess who teaches the Kond the art of planting instructs them to depend upon the Pan for clothing and all trading activities, especially those relating to a sacrifice. 'Even if the Kuttia had a thousand chickens', reads one of his quotations, 'they would all the same have to sacrifice a chicken to the *dharni* which had been provided by the Pan'.³⁴

4. CONCLUSION

Niggemeyer presents a valuable ethnography because of his unique data. For example, he draws a map of the clan territories (1964:47) and traces the empirical marriage links of one village in respect of the incoming brides and of another village regarding the outgoing 'sisters' (1964:42–43). He even supplies the correct relationship terminology, though he never goes beyond the data-collecting stage. Interpretations are generally lacking, unless they are simplistic or problematic. Compared to Bailey's work, the German book may be viewed as a kind of quarry containing superb information on all technological and mythological issues of Kond existence. They are presented with due respect to these tribal people, but generalizations about Kond culture are either absent or in my view not worth mentioning. Only in this respect does Niggemeyer come close to the irrelevance of numerous contributions to 'new' anthropology.

Bailey's theoretical approach is as 'old' as the non-theoretical approach of his German colleague, yet I am impressed by his style of generalising, as well as by his courage in taking risks by opposing the theories of others, since such ambitious controversies produce anthropological insights, even if they happen to be out of fashion today. Bailey's concern to give the priority to social analysis is markedly different from the current trend to avoid levels beyond the situational or beyond the analytical tools of our common sense and our current political correctness. Bailey presents the Kond as a social whole within – allegedly – changing phases of tribal, caste and modern state societies. However, like Niggemeyer, he confines his approach to a 'descent' version of this whole and simply ignores the massive body of data pointing to affinity as the dominant mode in which the parts are bound. This bias is, of course, a time-bound one associated with his academic environment.

The basic difficulty with both Bailey's and Niggemeyer's work is not confined to 'old' anthropology: rather, it concerns the ever so 'new' question of whether a research project should conceive the world within one's own socio-cultural categories or proceed with the intention of discovering those of the systems under study. Bailey deliberately divides up the social structure of the Kond into familiar anthropological domains such as, among others, the economic, the ritual and the kinship sub-structures. He decides to

³⁴ 'Auch wenn die Kuttia tausend Hühner hätten, müßten sie doch an den *dharni* ein Huhn opfern, das von den Pano besorgt ist' (Niggemeyer 1964:15). The term 'dharni' stands for the stones at the sacrificial site representing the exit of the Earth Goddess.

confine his analysis to the political sub-structure, as if this were possible and informative when dealing with a holistic society of the Kond type. In this manner, his 'old' anthropology resembles the many contributions to the 'new' discipline in Germany that tackle issues like 'corruption' in a given country using the notions of the anthropologist's own political perspective and morals.³⁵ In retrospect, Bailey's conclusions about Kond social change have remained insignificant in light of the developments of the past sixty years and are unimportant in the history of the discipline. Niggemeyer's work, presenting the Kond through their settlement patterns, life crises, economy and religion, is less than challenging. As an outsider, he describes the central sacrifice in his usual meticulous manner, but does not understand the socio-cultural forces that bind together the different Kond categories of people and domains. If Bailey's preoccupation is the universally similar application of power by men who overpower other men, Niggemeyer's is the observable as such, though only as it appears within the familiar distinctions created by the anthropologist's own mode of classification. But there is more to the Kond sacrifice. Even the speculations of Niggemeyer's teacher Jensen, conceiving a cultural whole, came closer to the unfamiliar cultural wealth of an alien cosmology. Thus Bailey's and Niggemeyer's books have enriched the history of the discipline in very dissimilar ways, even though they both contain certain basic weaknesses.

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³⁵

'Corruption' is my hypothetical example. Anyone interested in current research on issues isolating a political domain as the only significant field of anthropological research may take a look at the list of workshops conducted during the recent conference of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde (DGV) held at Marburg in 2015.

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