'Who Are You, Brother and Sister?': The Theme of 'Own' and 'Other' in the *Go'ter* Ritual of the Gadaba

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For many years Georg Pfeffer has worked on the *go'ter* ritual of the Gadaba in highland Orissa (India).[1] When I decided to do fieldwork among them, the few contributions to the ethnography of this ritual were about all that was available, and the initial plan I took to the field was to contextualize this ritual within the total ritual system, to study Gadaba society by following the paths of rituals. As my supervisor Georg Pfeffer always encouraged me to prove him wrong, so maybe the best way to honour his efforts and achievements in the discipline is (if not exactly to prove him wrong) to continue his work and thereby to modify and possibly deepen ethnographic knowledge as well as the interpretation of the *go'ter* in the ongoing endeavour of understanding Gadaba society.

The Gadaba are part of the indigenous population of the highlands in Koraput in south Orissa, called Desia. Desia is also the name of the *lingua franca* of the area (an Oriya dialect) the Gadaba speak beside their other mother tongue called Gutob (belonging to the Austro-Asiatic family), which is particular to them. The Gutob Gadaba,[2] numbering around 15,000 individuals, subsist mainly on the cultivation of rice and millet. Throughout the area, the Gadaba are identified with the *go'ter* ritual although some groups of Dombo (weavers, musicians and traders) and Parenga also perform it.

Go'ter is the name of the ultimate death ritual. It is performed by a local group about once a generation and aims at transforming the liminal spirits of the deceased (*duma*) into permanent ancestors (*anibai*). The trick is done by transferring each *duma* into the body of a living buffalo and by giving all buffaloes away to be killed and eaten by 'others'. The buffalo-takers in turn provide the *go'ter* hosts with rock plates representing the bygone generation.

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (1943) was the first anthropologist to collect information on the *go'ter*. He gives a rough description of it and is interested mainly in its 'megalithic' features. He interprets the *go'ter* as a memorial feast that is meant to insure the ancestors' blessing and fertility of the soil. In 1952, Izikowitz (1969), who had worked with the Lamet of Laos before the Second World War, was the first professional anthropologist who actually witnessed the ritual. Considering the complexity of the ritual and the brevity of his stay in

the area, his description is a considerable achievement, and provided the basis for the ethnographic research of Georg Pfeffer from the 1980s onwards. After a first preliminary analysis (Pfeffer 1984) he published two very substantial contributions to the ethnography of the *go'ter* and offered a completely new interpretation (Pfeffer 1991, 2001). Together with his general contributions on Middle Indian society (Pfeffer 1982, 1997), they have been the foundation on which my own work on the *go'ter*, and on the Gadaba in general, was grounded.

In the last 25 years, Georg Pfeffer concentrated his academic efforts on the particulars of tribal social structures and ideology in the region between Ganges and Godavari, differentiating sub-complexes such as the 'Kond complex', 'Gond complex' or, in regard to Koraput, the 'Koraput complex' (Pfeffer 1982, 1997, 2006). While each complex has its particular features, all tribes also share very general characteristics. I will mention three aspects here which are important to my argument:

1. Affinity is a central value in Middle India and has a diachronic and collective quality.
2. Related to this and of particular relevance in this paper, the social universe is divided into totemic patrilineal and exogamous descent categories (*bonso*) leading towards the opposition of 'own' (agnatic, non-marriageable) and 'others' (affinal, marriageable). This classification cuts across tribal boundaries within any particular tribal complex. Among the Desia of Koraput this opposition is called *bai bondu*, the agnates (*bai*, 'brother') and the affines (*bondu*), and eight descent categories are distinguished. Of this set the Gutob Gadaba employ only four: cobra, tiger, sun, and monkey.
3. Another ubiquitous feature of Middle Indian society is the value-idea of seniority, which is in evidence at various levels of the social structure.

The present essay offers new ethnographic data on the *go'ter* and provides an interpretation that focuses on the role of agnatic and affinal relationships.[3] In the following, I will first outline the theme of the paper and then sketch the life-cycle rituals preceding the *go'ter*, before offering a distinct example of a *go'ter* and my interpretation of it.

The Theme: 'Own' and 'Other'

The opposition of *bai* (agnates) and *bondu* (affines) is the very foundation of Gadaba and Desia social order. When Gadaba refer to their society as a whole they speak of *baro bai tero gadi*, literally meaning 'twelve brothers, thirteen seats'. This unity is always evoked when the social order or tradition (*niam*) is at stake. In this representation an agnatic whole[4] is complemented by an affinal category,

the thirteenth seat. On this most inclusive level of ideology it is thus stated that agnates just cannot exist without their 'other', their complementary part. A story narrates how the *baro bai tero gadi* came into existence when sacrificial food was sufficient only for twelve Gadaba brothers, who thus became the Twelve Brothers. The ones excluded from sacrificial commensality became 'others'. Today the Twelve Brothers are represented by twelve agnatically related villages, which, however, only on rare occasions become relevant as a unit of social, particularly ritual and commensal, action.[5] On the single occasion I witnessed, the *baro bai tero gadi* had to intervene as the situation following an improperly conducted death ritual of a local Sisa group threatened to get out of control. Even then, only one group (the external *tsorubai*, see below) was called to sacrifice in the name of the whole. Twelve shares of raw sacrificial meat were attributed to the respective villages. The affines, the 'thirteenth seat', were also relevant. Sacrificial meat from a different animal, which was given to and sacrificed by the internal affines of the Sisa hosts, was put aside for all those villages the local Sisa group had previously sent women (*ji bouni*, 'daughter–sisters') to for marriage. In contrast to the twelve agnatic receivers, their number was not fixed but depended on this particular context. I cannot go into further detail here (cf. Berger 2007a: 183f, forthcoming), but it is clear that the complementary relationship of Twelve Brothers and affines also implies a hierarchy. The eternal unit of the Twelve Brothers, those included in sacrificial communion, represent the superior value, while the affinal category is a necessary complement of lesser value. In the empirical situation I just sketched this was expressed, among other things, in the fact that the number of affinal sacrificial portions did not matter.

The story of the exclusion from sacrificial communion is one account of how brothers turned into others, how the distinction came into existence. We find another striking example of such a transformation, of siblings into spouses, in a creation myth I recorded among the Gadaba and variations of which are well known all over Middle India (cf. Gregory and Hardenberg in this volume). The myth leads us to those features and questions that stand in the centre of the interpretation of the *go'ter* I will present; that is, types of relationships, their qualities, and capacities. In other words, one crucial question that is posed in the following myth as well as in the rituals is: who is 'own' and who is 'other'? And, what do these relationships imply, what do they effect, and what is their value? I shall summarize here the myth that is fully quoted elsewhere (Berger 2007a: 186f).

In the first part of the creation myth the God-King (*roja maphru*) was born on a hill and made the earth hard with the help of a cobra, a tiger, and an earthworm. All around him was a great flood. He then became aware of being all alone and wondered whether there were humans somewhere. A bird that he sent searching for humans spotted a gourd floating on the water, containing a brother and a sister, and brought it to the god. 'Who are you, brother and sister?', asked God and the siblings replied, 'We are brother and sister'. God, astonished

and shocked by that answer, struck them with smallpox and then asked again, obtaining, however, the same reply. 'These two just do not understand', he said and again struck them with smallpox. Being thereupon asked for the third time the two siblings did not recognize each other anymore. God gave them a house (with the implication of sexual intercourse and procreation) and twelve groups (*kul*, *jati*) descended from this couple, among them the Gadaba.

Both examples, the exclusion from sacrificial commensality and the story of the primordial incest, give ample evidence of the tension and ambivalence between brothers and others, a theme we will encounter in the *go'ter*. At this point I should emphasize that in this paper I will not be dealing with the relationship of siblingship and spousehood as such—that is, the relationship of B/Z and H/W—but will discuss agnatic and affinal relationships in general, the relationships between groups and the values implicit in these categories. Before we turn to the *go'ter*, I briefly want to highlight some features of the preceding life-cycle rituals.

Ritual Transformations of the Person

In Gadaba society, rituals are the realm in which social relations in the widest sense are manifested, represented, and transformed. A key feature and the medium of expressing and transforming relationships is food—particularly sacrificial food called *tsoru*, since almost all rituals contain sacrifices—and one of several modes of consumption: feeding, sharing, or devouring. Gadaba distinguish three domains of rituals, implicitly but clearly, through their ritual practice: the domain of annual rituals (where sharing of *tsoru* dominates); of healing rituals (concerned with aspects of devouring); and of rituals of the life cycle (mainly involving feeding/eating processes). I will be mainly concerned with the latter here, as the *go'ter* belongs to this domain. However, these domains have no rigid boundaries and particularly the interrelations of these domains are highly relevant (Berger 2007a). The *go'ter* is a case in point, as will be seen.

Life-cycle rituals in Gadaba society may be described as an accumulation of social relationships, achieved through the feeding of sacrificial food or *tsoru*. In a parallel movement, the person and the rituals concerned with his or her transformation become increasingly more 'social' and collective. Birth itself is a minor event managed by women themselves and the midwife. After about one week, the impurity period ends and the infant is symbolically fed *tsoru* for the first time by a ritual specialist called *dissari*, with food cooked by the local group. Such specialists are engaged by certain individuals for particular occasions and although the specialists often have regular clients, it is generally not a permanent relationship based on 'kinship'. If a *dissari* does not perform with success one seeks the help of another. The *dissari* also plays a role in the next step, which aims at protecting the child against evil forces. When it starts to walk, he will cut the child's hair for the first time.

The next major transformation is the process of marriage. From the Gadaba perspective, marriage is a symmetric transaction between local groups, particularly villages, as is also evident in the relationship terminology (Berger 2007a: 170; Pfeffer 1999: 25). Matrimonial exchange is conceptualized as a transfer of 'milk'. The Gadaba articulate a preference of 'cross-cousin' marriage; however, there is no positive rule. A group that gave a girl for marriage to another will not insist on getting a girl in return and there is no accounting of give and take (a difference in comparison to the exchange of buffaloes in the *go'ter*), though in practice I found an approximate balance of brides given and received at the level of the village. Significantly, a balance of affinal exchanges is ritually created by bride-wealth prestations: the group of bride-takers returns the 'milk' by giving a calf, the ritual equivalent of the bride.

In the process of marriage, the *dissari* plays an important but not a major role. At the heart of the wedding ritual lies the feeding of the couple with *tsoru* by different social relations. Bride and groom are fed *tsoru* by their respective mother's brothers, the bride's father, the groom's group of Four Brothers[6] (his village agnates) and the previously introduced Twelve Brothers. This final *tsoru* is the most important one, is very restrictively handled, and brings together representatives of twelve agnatically related villages (sharing the same descent category) that constitute as Twelve Brothers the most inclusive commensal unit. In the early stages of the life cycle, rituals have, at least partly, the quality of healing rituals, and individual specialists are in charge. In contrast, during marriage and death rituals, permanent and collective social relationships are most important. After the wedding ritual, the couple, as ritually complete persons, will set up a house. As has been hinted, the house connotes human procreation, but is also the nodal point of all kinds of social relations with the living, the deities, and the dead (Berger 2007a, 2007b).

The Ritual Process of Death

Death rituals aim at dissolving the web of relations a person has become part of due to the ritual actions of the preceding life-cycle rituals (Berger 2001). Through the first three steps of death rituals—*morla din* ('day of death'), *mach pani* ('fish water') and *bur* (meaning unclear)—the two principal ritual actors are the deceased's mother's brother (*mamu*) and the *tsorubai*. The *mamu* should be the actual ('own', *nijoro*) brother of the mother of the deceased, but if the latter died as an old man or woman, the *mamu* would be most likely already dead, in which case one of his sons or grandsons assumes the ritual position of *mamu*. If the deceased *mamu* was without sons, any male member of the local subline (*kutum*) of the actual mother's brother can assume the role, and, if necessary, so can any senior male affine. The attitude towards one's mother's brother is marked by respect and prohibition of joking (*kiali*). As previous provider of a bride he is considered to be a 'milk-giver'. Explaining the position of the *mamu*, informants pointed out to me that 'we drank his milk' (*tar kir ame kailu*). It is this

gift of milk that explains his superior status and his rights and duties relating to the offspring of his 'milk-gift'—his sister.

The relation of *tsorubai* is an enduring brotherhood between two groups, generally of different villages. They should be of the same descent category (*bai* means 'brothers') and their principal duty is to reciprocally cook and feed sacrificial food (*tsoru*) for one another. They do this on different occasions, particularly in the context of death rituals, but also in cases of excommunication, when a person has been temporarily excluded from the community and has lost the Gadaba status. *Tsorubai* are said to 'restore the order' (*niam korbar*) and they may act in the name of the Twelve Brothers, that is, the ritual unit of highest authority.

Again, we can encounter the theme of own/otherness here. In terms of descent category, *tsorubai* clearly are 'brothers' and own, but their belonging to a different village introduces otherness at a different level. However, as will be seen, many groups have *tsorubai* within the village, because they are on demand quite regularly. These intra-village *tsorubai* are then regarded as 'junior' to the 'senior' *tsorubai* of a different village. The fact that the 'senior' *tsorubai* are those from outside clearly emphasizes that *tsorubai* should be from different localities. Nevertheless is it possible to have *tsorubai* within the village. Two local lines (*kuda*) of one village that are related as brothers in the group of village agnates (the Four Brothers) and act as one unit and commensal group during annual village festivals may thus add a different level to their relationship by becoming *tsorubai* and therefore, to a degree and in a specific context, mutual others.

In the first three stages of death rituals, *mamu* and *tsorubai* feed the deceased person. They cook *tsoru* and feed him—or her, death rituals are generally the same for men and women—at the cremation ground and also at different places in and around his house. Not only do they feed him with *tsoru* and—particularly the *mamu*—with liquor, but they are his commensals. Feeding in the death rituals thus achieves the inverse effects from those that it accomplishes during, for example, wedding rituals. They dissolve the relations with the deceased, who is asked to leave the living alone and not to create trouble. Subsequent to the third stage of death rituals, which frequently takes place some months after a person's death, the spirit (*duma*) has grown quiet, pacified by the food, drink and attention offered by his village agnates, *mamu* and *tsorubai*. But he is still around, living on the outskirts of the village, particularly in the cremation ground. This aspect of the dead person, which is the focus of death rituals and is called *duma*, can be described as his social quality. After death, the deceased's body is cremated and returned to *jom raja* (king of the dead), who also gives bodies to newborn humans. The life-essence or 'breath' (*punda*, *jibon*) of the dead person stays with the *duma* for some time after death, during which period the *duma* is considered most dangerous. But eventually it attaches itself to a young woman and is reborn in a person of the alternate generation. The *duma*—devoid of a body and of life-essence—stays on, however, until the *go'ter* is performed. Gradually the numbers

of liminal *duma* of a local group increase and so does the pressure to perform the ritual that brings about the final transformation.

The *Go'ter*

In the *go'ter* ritual, the deceased (*duma*) of a local group (a village or its segment; a local line, a local subline, or even a single house) are raised, transformed into the bodies of buffaloes, fed, mourned, dressed, and then led out of the village. External 'brothers' of the hosts, bringing stone plates in return, take away the buffaloes to kill and eat them in their villages in the following weeks. Predominantly, these brothers are not the *tsorubai*, but the *panjabai*, a different kind of permanent agnatic relationship between local groups. While *tsorubai* figure in many different contexts (including the *go'ter*) exchanging ritual services, the *panjabai* only have their appearance in the *go'ter*. They reciprocally eat each other's dead and replace them with stone slabs in the hosts' village. Although *panjabai* receive the lion's share of buffaloes, as will be seen, other kinds of agnatic relationships, such as the *tsorubai*, may also receive buffaloes. After being led away and eaten, the dead are said to be 'gone'. This is the basic outline of an extremely rich and complex ritual of which I will now, in some detail, provide a concrete example.

Go'ter in Ponosguda[7]

As every ethnographer knows, research results depend to some extent on good fortune. The *go'ter* is an event that takes place at long intervals, about once a generation for each local group, and the resources needed for such a 'senior' or 'big work' (*boro kam*)—as the Gadaba describe major rituals—are very considerable. I had always hoped to witness the *go'ter* in the village of my research, which I call Gudapada here, because in a familiar context it would obviously be much easier to grasp what happens. This did not happen, however. The local Sisa group of Gudapada had celebrated a major *go'ter* (with about forty buffaloes given away) roughly three years prior to my first arrival in 1999. The local Kirsani group, the biggest group in Gudapada and the internal *tsorubai* of the Sisa, was long overdue in performing the *go'ter*. 'They have [accumulated] so many *duma*', I was told many times by my Sisa hosts, who were eager to get back the same number of buffaloes as previously given to their *tsorubai*. But to this day the Kirsani have not performed the *go'ter*. In November (*diali*), after the harvest, rumours abound annually in the villages and on the regional weekly markets that this or that village will perform *go'ter* in the coming February (*mag*). But when the hosts are asked about the suspected future *go'ter*, not a word of their assumed intention is voiced. To announce a *go'ter* and then to be forced to postpone it would be too embarrassing. In the first weeks of my research in 1999 I had the

opportunity to witness the main day of *go'ter* in two villages. But for several reasons my data and understanding of the proceedings were superficial. No *go'ter* was staged in the area in 2000 and I had already accepted my fate that nothing would happen in 2001 either, when sudden decisions were taken in the village of Ponosguda.

Ponosguda lies at the eastern edge of the Gutob Gadaba area, towards Nandapur, at about a 15-kilometre distance from Gudapada, separated from the major portion of Gadaba villages by the Goradi river. The 'earth-people'—descendants of the first settlers who own most of the land and ritual rights—in this village are called Gumal.[8] They are of the tiger (*killo*) descent category and are represented by two local groups: the Kirsani and the Maji (see Table 17.1). As internal affines of the earth-people, villagers whose ancestors had come from Auripada, Deulpada, and Totapada, permanently live in Ponosguda beside other, non-Gadaba residents. An old, respected, and fairly rich man among the Kirsani—Ranju Kirsani—had died in December 2000 and his son wanted to hold a *go'ter*. Soon, the whole group, consisting of six brothers, decided to perform the ritual in February 2001, thus testifying to the flexibility of ritual elaboration and timing. The proper time for announcing the ritual (November) had already passed and even the third stage of death rituals—the one preceding the *go'ter* that usually takes place in December—had not yet been performed. All relevant persons were informed about the coming event: the buffalo-takers of the hosts (Table 17.2) as well as the mother's brothers (*mamu*) of the deceased. As I will now explain, mother's brothers can optionally play a major part in the *go'ter*.

Table 17.1   *Local Groups in Ponosguda*

'Earth-people' (Matia):	'Late-comers' (Upria):	
Kirsani (*go'ter* hosts) Maji (both groups: Gumal, tiger)	Internal Gadaba affines from: Auripada (cobra), Deulpada (cobra), Totapada (cobra)	Others: Dombo (traders, weavers, musicians), Sundi (liquor distillers), Kond, Rona, (former king's militia), Kamar (blacksmith)

Table 17.2   *Buffalo-takers of the Kirsani*

	Panjabai	Tsorubai (External/senior)	Tsorubai (Internal/junior)
Village local segment	Tikrapada (not relevant)	Chandalamanda (not relevant)	Ponosguda Maji
Number of buffaloes	7 buffaloes	3 buffaloes	3 buffaloes
Status	'Elder wife' (*borli*)	'Middle wife' (*moja*)	'Junior wife' (*sanli*)

The *mamu* of Ranju Kirsani, the man whose death triggered the whole ritual, happened to be Domru Sisa of Gudapada, then one of my neighbours. To be more precise, Domru, already grandfather himself, was Ranju's MBSS and thus took

the position of Ranju's *mamu* in that *go'ter* ritual. Although he has a physical handicap—due to a sorcery attack, as was commonly acknowledged—and could only walk with difficulties, he visited Ranju's family after receiving the news about the *go'ter* and announced that he would provide a so-called *purani*-buffalo for the deceased.

Generally, objects of exchange between *bondu* or affines are women (as 'milk'), brass items (*moali*) and cows. Agnates, on the other hand, characteristically exchange stone plates for buffaloes (each one containing one *duma*). The *purani*-buffalo, always and only given by affines, is therefore an exception to the rule. Affines can bring a *purani* as 'guest' (*gotia*) or as *mamu*. The counter prestation for a *purani* brought by a guest is likewise a buffalo. A *purani* brought by a *mamu* cannot be returned in this way, because this gift is connected with the original gift of the bride, a point I will return to later. Therefore, the *mamu*'s gift is rewarded with brass items (*moali*), the same type of gift that he received at earlier stages of death rituals.

When Domru Sisa announced his proposed contribution to the future *go'ter* hosts in Ponosguda, they tried to dissuade him from doing so, but to no avail. He insisted on his gift and back in his own village he boasted that he would take the 'whole house' of his sister's son. Probably it was exactly this attitude that the *go'ter* hosts had feared and, as will be seen, the situation in the *go'ter* turned out to be precarious.

Giving a *purani* does not just mean giving a buffalo, it is also the gift of a 'living dead'. The local group of the *purani*-giver hosts a mini-*go'ter* in their village, a parallel performance to the main events in the host village. It is thus impossible for an ethnographer to witness these parallel processes in both locations during the same *go'ter*. Finally, however, I was fortunate in two respects. Firstly, in that the village where I lived played a major role in a *go'ter* ritual, and secondly that my wife was with me in the field at that time and could stay in the village with the *purani*-bringers, when I had to leave for Ponosguda. For a better orientation, the main actions in Gudapada and Ponosguda are listed in Table 17.3.

Raising the Dead (*Duma Utaibar*)

Usually the *duma* for whom the *go'ter* is performed are informed about their coming final transformation and 'raised' (*utaibar*) three months before the actual *go'ter*. Because of the sudden decision to perform the ritual, the Kirsani of Ponosguda raised their *duma* not even two weeks before the main day—the *go'ter* day—took place. In the afternoon, all the brothers assembled in Komlu's (Ranju's son's) house together with a specialist who was engaged as the *go'ter dissari*. He had the function of determining the auspicious time (*jog*) for the ritual actions, to fend off evil influences, and to initiate important ritual actions. He drew a pattern on the floor of the big room and started an invocation, holding a black fowl. The brothers dropped husked rice on the pattern and uttered the names of their deceased's kinsmen (*na pokaibar*, 'to give the names'). Then the fowl was

Table 17.3 *Go'ter in Ponosguda and Gudapada*

Date	Ponosguda (Host)	Gudapada (Mamu, Purani-Giver)
27.1.2001		• Buying the *purani*-buffalo, name giving
29.1	• Raising the *duma* (*duma utaibar*) • Banning the 'forest *duma*' with medicine	
30.1.	• *Rau*-sacrifice • Planting of the *simli*-branches	
6.2.	• Transferring the *duma* into the buffaloes (through sig-rice), • After that: feeding of the buffaloes by the hosts	
7.2.		• Repairing of drums
8.2 (Thurs.) (full moon)		• *Duma*-sacrifice (*duma balo'**)
9.2. (Fri.)	• Feeding of the buffaloes (by affines)	• Planting the *simli*-branches • Transferring the *duma* into the buffalo (through *chuti*, *sig*-rice)
10.2. (Sat.)	• Everyone feeds the buffaloes (*gada mara*) • *Tsoru* for Ranju (as part of the third stage of death ritual, *bur*) • General feast (*boji*) • Arrival of buffalo-takers (*tsorubai, panjabai*)	• Guests (*gotia*) feed and mourn the buffalo • *Duma*-sacrifice
11.2. (Sun.)	*Go'ter din* (day of *go'ter*) • *Rau*-sacrifice • Parcel (*chuti*) distribution • *Jur*-rice for buffalo-takers (?) • Taking the buffaloes to the external platform • Arrival of the *purani* • Ritual killing of the *purani* • Taking the buffaloes away	• Washing and dressing of *purani* • Journey to Ponosguda • Arrival in Ponosguda • *Tsorubai* of *purani*-giver return to Gudapada
12.2. (Mon.)	• Bath of buffalo-takers and affines • 'Sitting on the mat' (*tati bosbar*), distribution of *moali*	
13.2. (Tue.)		• Return to Gudapada

killed by the *dissari* and its blood sprinkled on 'medicine', consisting of hackled thorns of various bushes and on a kind of iron nails (*luar kuti*) that belong to the usual equipment of any *dissari*. Having thus been animated and made effective by having 'eaten blood', the nails, filled with the medicine, were beaten into the ground at various places: in the houses, barns, on various thresholds, and paths leading out of the village. While the *duma* of the deceased's kinsmen were raised, other 'spirits' of a malevolent type, like those who had died in the forest, had to be banned and kept away from the village.

Drums were then beaten to announce the coming events, and after sunset, the *dissari* and his junior assistant left the village to collect the first branches of the *simli* and *palda* trees.[9] More branches of these trees were later needed for the two platforms to which the buffaloes would be tied, but only these first ones were ritually cut by the *dissari* who was welcomed with *tika* (a rice mark pressed on the forehead) at the house by Ranju's widow. The branches would be planted at the stone platforms after the sacrifice for the *rau*-demon in the morning.

Rau Sacrifice, Planting of Branches, Fteeding the 'First Rice'

For the Gadaba, one of the most vicious agents of disaster is *rau*, who eats the life force (*jibon*) of people and thereby kills them. To appease him, two sacrifices take place during the *go'ter*, at the time that is appropriate for this demon, the 'time of *rau*' (*rau bela*) before sunrise. Before the first cock's crow, the *dissari* left the village with some of the hosts to a spot which lay towards the east, and a white cock was killed and the medicine buried on the spot.

Every local group in a village has its own stone platforms, inside the village (*ga munda*, 'village platform') as well as outside the village in the dry fields (*poda* or *go'ter munda,* 'dry field' or *go'ter* 'platform'). They consist of flat and upright stones that were brought to the spot on previous occasions of *go'ter*. Because the big branches planted there sometimes strike roots, trees may have grown at such places. On return from the *rau*-sacrifice at dawn, the *dissari* erected the *simli* and *palda* branches at the stone platforms. He first did so at the village platform; then the small group left the village again to do the same at the external platform in the fields.

Afterwards, the *dissari* and the hosts assembled around a pot of heated beer behind Komlu's house to discuss the next steps to be taken. The *dissari* wanted to postpone the main *go'ter* day, because he considered the day to be inauspicious. But the hosts disregarded his opinion and the ritual was scheduled as soon as possible. They wanted the burden of performing the *go'ter* to be over soon and Ranju's widow aptly described their situation: 'We have a mountain on our heads'.

A week later, the 11 *duma* were transferred into the bodies of the buffaloes by feeding them 'first rice' (*sig bat*).[10] The buffalo for the most senior person among the deceased (*kuti por*) was fed first by the *dissari*, the others by their kinsmen. The food consisted of cooked rice, fish, and bamboo sprouts, the typical food for rites of passage. From then onwards, along with mourning, feeding with rice, millet gruel, and beer by the women continued until the end of the *go'ter*; first by consanguines,[11] then also by affines, and finally by everyone (*gada mara*).

The *Purani* in Gudapada

Domru Sisa bought a strong male buffalo, which is adequate for a senior male person, on the weekly market and gave Ranju's name to the animal. At dusk

(the time for *duma* sacrifices) a sacrifice for the *duma* took place in front of the animal that was tethered in Domru's yard. Two crabs were sacrificed for the *duma*, and one egg for the newly repaired drums, which were from then on almost continuously beaten.

The next morning a big *simli*-branch was cut, erected near Domru's house (inside the village) and the buffalo, which was not in a good mood and constantly 'angry' (*risa*), was tethered to the pole. Domru was the first to feed him with husked rice and afterwards with 'first rice'. The animal was now considered to be the *duma* and was mourned and fed like his doubles in Ponosguda. Having been brought back to Domru's yard for the night, the buffalo was again tied to the *simli* branch the next day, and while Domru's local group and other 'guests' fed the *purani*, the Kirsani (of this village) already had a close look at the animal. It may be remembered that the Kirsani are the (internal and 'junior') *tsorubai* of Domru's group. Later, in the role of '*panjabai*', they were to accompany the procession to Ponosguda and take away one half of the animal. While the elder Kirsani quietly sat around the animal at a safe distance, their young sons assumed the standardized *panjabai* behaviour: shouting and whistling, they danced around the animal in triumph. They would not come along to Ponosguda but had the chance to rehearse the appropriate behaviour for future occasions.

On the morning of the main *go'ter* day, the *purani* was bathed with turmeric water, dressed in a man's cloth (*lungi*), and about noon the delegation around the *purani* started its way towards Ponosguda, the sister's son's village.

Back in Ponosguda

When we (my assistant Manto Pradhan and I) returned to Ponosguda two days before the main day, the feeding of the buffaloes was well under way. All thirteen buffaloes were now standing in a row tied to a fence that had been constructed around the *simli* and *palda* branches at the place of the village platform. Dombo musicians played the *moiri* (a kind of oboe) and beat the drums near the place where the animals were tethered. Komlu, the initiator of the *go'ter*, politely and proudly introduced each buffalo/*duma* to us. He had given two for his father and later insisted that the two animals would be given away to the same party. He looked at the animals and explained to us: 'as much as the buffaloes eat [now], the *panjabai* will eat [tomorrow]'. Like all hosts, he had a calm and tense attitude and remained sober throughout the *go'ter*; quite in contrast to everyone else. The internal *tsorubai* of the hosts—the Maji—particularly, were already drunk and danced in front of the buffaloes, part of which they were to receive later.

The day before the main day more guests arrived, who were not only the hosts' affines—some of whom presented cows to the hosts—but guests of other local groups in the village as well who chose the occasion to pay a visit. The whole village was bustling with people. Because Ranju had not received the third stage of death rituals, his *tsorubai* (the Maji) had to perform a small version of this

ritual and cooked *tsoru* for him in front of his house. Later, the Maji made another appearance as they were the first of the buffalo-takers who brought stone slabs. Around early afternoon, they carried the stones to the village platform of the Kirsani, and while they were jokingly smeared with colours and mud by village women on their way, they were duly received with *tika* at the village platform by the women of the host's family. The village feast (*boji*) started with much delay and hundreds of people had to be served in the dark.

Finally, the expected external groups of buffalo-takers—the *panjabai* from Tikrapada and the *tsorubai* from Chandalamanda—arrived in a martial fashion. Drumming, chanting, and swinging long sticks, they entered the village and went straight to the village platform where they dropped and erected the stones they had brought. The buffaloes were not brought to the individual yards that night and continued to be fed by the women. All buffalo-takers wildly danced around the buffaloes, slapped their backs, and tried to snatch away their food and beer to consume it themselves. This went on until the early morning hours.

The '*Go'ter* Day'

The second sacrifice for *rau*, at around 3 a.m., was the first event on the main day of the ritual, when the buffaloes would finally be sent away. Again the *dissari*, along with some men, moved out of the village and—unusually—a white ram was sacrificed for *rau*.[12] The animal was killed, however, in a way that is common in this context and which is similar to the *purani* as we will see. Its belly was sliced open, the intestines torn out, and the tongue cut off.[13] Then the ram was cut transversally and the parts were kept aside to be given to the buffalo-taker groups later, but I could not follow up where they actually went.[14]

In all three *go'ter* rituals that I attended, I witnessed a remarkable change of attitude from effervescence to concentration among the buffalo-takers in the early morning hours. Following the sacrifice to *rau*, after about six hours of wild shouting and dancing, they sat down together with the hosts, who were sober and controlled throughout, to debate the distribution of the buffaloes. While at another occasion the parties concerned were quarrelling a lot, in Ponosguda the hosts tried to control the situation right away. Obviously they were able to do so because they had no debts and, with the current transfer of buffaloes, no party had any open claims left.[15]

The three groups of buffalo takers were referred to as 'wives' by the hosts. According to seniority, the *panjabai* were regarded as 'senior wife' (*borli*), the external *tsorubai* as 'middle wife' (*moja*) and the internal *tsorubai* as 'younger wife' (*sanli*). One of the younger but forceful brothers of the hosts calmly addressed the small group of men that had assembled in his house in the following words:

> I say it straight away, we have 13 buffaloes, no more. We don't have debts (*run*), we have no credit (*udar*). The [agnatic] *moitr*[16] get nothing, we don't hide anything [he turned to the *panjabai*]. The *tsorubai* get three buffaloes each, that is six, you have

more than the two together, isn't that enough? Take the seven buffaloes and do not ask for more, don't be greedy (*dugra dagri*). Do not fight for the buffaloes on the way.

No opposition came from any side and he then asked each group if they would agree. As answer they took the calabashes with beer that had been given to them and set the seal on the distribution by drinking the beer. As a token of their share, each group received as many small packets (*chuti*) with husked rice as buffaloes had been assigned to them.

After this distribution, all groups of buffalo-takers were provided with raw food which they had to prepare for themselves, which is referred to as *jur* rice. I will return to the word *jur* again later: it means to tear, to ripen; but also to loot and plunder, and it is the latter meaning that Kornel (1999: 66) attributes to the *jur* rice, because the buffalo-takers can demand and eat as much as they can. This also goes along with Komlu's statement about the *panjabai* eating as much as the buffaloes on the *go'ter* day. However, I did not notice what they actually received. Each group of buffalo-takers should get a longitudinal half of a cow, together with innumerable other items. An informant from Gudapada vividly described the general duty of the hosts to give *jur* rice.

> On the *go'ter* day, they [buffalo-takers] do not eat at the feast—we don't cook a feast at all on the *go'ter* day. Those who take buffaloes, to them we have to give everything, on the *go'ter* day, in the morning. We give them the packets (*chuti*) at three a.m. … After we have given the *chuti*, we give rice, salt, chilli, turmeric, oil, simply everything. To two persons [that is, groups] we give one cow. … Our brothers, *tsorubai*, *panjabai*, *moitr*—to them we give one cow, like this [shows the longitudinal cut on his body] it is divided. We give them one half with everything: intestines, stomach, everything, liver, heart, simply everything. … In addition, one basket [of rice], one small basket, three, four pots, big spoons, a knife—we give them everything. They take it, cook and eat it, on that day.

While the buffalo-takers prepare their food, the hosts' families are busy washing and dressing their buffaloes in their yards. Each buffalo receives clothes and other items according to the sex, age, and personal inclinations of the deceased. Besides clothes that are wrapped around their bodies, umbrellas, pots, schoolbooks, and tobacco, among other things, are tied to the animal's horns to take it along to the other world (*jom pur*). Feeding of the animals and wailing by the women may continue throughout these preparations for the departure of the *duma*.

Later that morning, *panjabai* and *tsorubai* brought two stones and big *simli* branches to the platform in the fields, erected a fence like the one at the internal platform, and, around noon, all animals were led in a procession out of the village and tied at this 'field platform'. While the women continued their mourning, bowing down, and talking to their deceased husbands, sons or daughters, the

buffalo-takers danced and cheered around the platform as they had the night before inside the village.

Slowly, people from the whole area assembled and, around midday, dozens of small shops selling tea and biscuits and hundreds of people had gathered in the open fields around the buffaloes. Everyone was waiting for the advent of the *purani* groups from other villages. There may be several *purani* being brought from different villages. In Ponosguda, only one *purani* was brought, as expected, from Ranju's *mamu* of Gudapada.[17]

The Climax: Ritual Killing of the *Purani*

The delegation from Gudapada, the *mamu*, his affinal and agnatic supporters, and his *tsorubai*, covered the distance of about 15 kilometres to Ponosguda almost continuously at running speed. Only on the last hill before a depression that stretches out towards the 'field platform' and the village behind it up to the foot of the steep mountains around Nandapur, the fastest runners waited for the rest of the group in order to jointly hurry down into the plain. Whistling, drumming, swinging sticks, and shouting, the group, with the buffalo held tightly by ropes in their midst, headed towards the platform, was there joined by other men, and continued its way into the village right up to Ranju's house. Here, his widow received and greeted the *purani* with a rice mark on its forehead. At the same speed, the whole crowd turned around and took off again to the platform in the fields.

The men who first cut open the belly of the *purani* are frequently selected beforehand, even registered by the police, who are also present to prevent an outbreak of violence. But the action surrounding the *purani* is—as Izikowitz and Pfeffer have pointed out—rather unpredictable, and these animals may be attacked at any time, without regard for the ritual schedule. In the present case, a man I could not identify slashed the *purani*'s side as soon as the animal was near the platform and, for some quiet and long seconds, the animal stood by itself, blood pouring out into the ground, viscera hanging out of the big wound. Then a crowd of men rushed towards the animal, threw it over and each man tried to secure a part of the intestines while the animal was still alive. Anyone except the hosts and the group of the *mamu* may participate in this tearing out of the viscera. This was observed with cautious eyes by the *tsorubai* of the *mamu* and the *panjabai* of the host, who wanted to prevent the crowd from taking away all the vital organs as well. At some point one of the *mamu*'s *tsorubai* jumped on top of the front part of the buffalo to keep all other men away. The by now dead animal was then completely divided crossways and the *tsorubai* from Gudapada dragged away the front part (*sinkur*, 'horn part'), while the *panjabai* secured the hind portion (*lenj kulund*, 'tail-hip'). Immediately afterwards, the hosts' buffaloes were untied and the taker groups rushed away with the animals towards their villages. Then the *tsorubai*, soon after the killing of the *purani*, carried their share back to Gudapada. All the remaining people slowly returned back into the village to be invited to, and to invite others to, rounds of beer.

Aftermath: Joking and *Moali* Distribution

The next day started slowly with drinks of heated beer and preparations for another feast given by the hosts. In the afternoon, some men of the external *tsorubai* and *panjabai* groups had returned for the final day and the women of the hosts' houses brought big pots with warm water to the open space behind Komlu's house. The Dombo, who had now been playing for the fourth day in a row, started their music and all the actors of the last day began—half dancing—to bathe each other. Male affinal and agnatic relatives of the hosts were pouring water on each other, when women started to throw mud. Soon everybody was engaged in a mud and water fight. Finally, new white cloths were provided by the hosts for their external brothers and affines.

Then came the moment Domru, the *mamu* from Gudapada, had been waiting for: the honouring of all ritual actors by the hosts, called 'sitting on the mat' (*tati bosbar*). In the yard of one of the brothers, ritual participants representing their groups were seated in a long row on bamboo mats: the external *tsorubai*, the *panjabai*, the internal *tsorubai*, and the *mamu* of four of the deceased, among them Domru Sisa. He was supported by Sukro Challan, his wife's brother (also a resident of Gudapada), who sat beside him and a few other Sisa from Gudapada who were sitting behind him. Beer was served to each person sitting on the mat and brass items were placed in front of all *mamu* present. These gifts—consisting of a pot and a plate, *mota* and *tali*, which taken together is summed up as *moali*—a *mamu* typically receives at the death of one of his sister's children. He gets *moali* on two occasions, on the day of their death and at the third stage of death rituals—the *bur*-ritual preceding the *go'ter*. These gifts are obligatory. A *mamu*, however, can increase the amount of *moali* gifts given, by prestations given to the family of the deceased. The *purani* is such an opportunity, because, when given by a *mamu*, this gift has to be reciprocated with *moali*. Knowing the relative wealth of the *go'ter* hosts, Domru thus previously had announced to take their 'whole house'.

Domru ignored the beer that had been served and the *moali* gifts that had been placed in front of him. He voiced that they were inadequate considering his contribution and not acceptable. Because Domru refused to drink, all other honoured persons sitting on the mat also had to wait. Then a long debate evolved and members of the hosts' families—one after the other, at times several together—came up to Domru and his supporter to persuade them to accept the gift. A small silver bracelet was added to the gifts lying in front of Domru but he asked for another big brass container for carrying water. Explaining that such a gift should only be given in case of a female deceased, and arguing that they had no such container anyway, the hosts disregarded this request. Finally the old widow of Ranju came to plead that they could not give anything more. As time progressed, the situation became more tense, while the other men on the mat got impatient. Food was placed in front of all those sitting in the row but Domru's plate was left untouched. Eventually, Domru and his supporter got up and told the hosts

to 'behave as if their *mamu* had not come'. Discussions continued and Domru made a strategic suggestion. He told the hosts to redefine his status as 'guest' and thus to return a buffalo at a later date and not to reciprocate with *moali* as would be appropriate for a *purani* brought by a *mamu*. The hosts flatly refused because this would have meant to debase the *mamu*. They agreed to give in addition an old wooden bed that was elaborately decorated with carvings. To the relief of everybody, Domru ultimately agreed and took his seat again. One other *mamu* got on his feet and distributed some of his rice to the plates of all the others, thereby emphasizing the fact of sharing the food that was offered to them. Domru duly accepted and consumed everything that was offered to him.[18]

On the next day, Domru and his group returned to Gudapada, the women carrying the parts of the bed on their heads. Once they arrived, he invited all his supporters to a beer party in his yard, where he sat on his new bed that was too big to fit inside his house.[19]

Interpretation

In my interpretation, I will pursue the direction of Georg Pfeffer—that is, I will be primarily concerned with relationships, exchange (relationships in action), and the implications of ritual acts. Having done long term fieldwork with the Gadaba, I am in a better position to locate the *go'ter* in its general context than the previous contributors to the ethnography of this ritual. However, modifications and shifts in emphasis notwithstanding, the key aspects of Pfeffer's argument are supported by my work. As became increasingly clear in the course of my fieldwork, social relationships are expressed and acted out in terms of consumption. The life cycle, of which the *go'ter* is the spectacular end, can be understood as a transformation of a person by being fed and, finally, being eaten. Not only was Pfeffer aware of the importance of the alimentary aspect, but he also made the crucial step of comparing the two major ritual complexes of the life cycle: marriage and *go'ter*. In both cases, exchanges are at the heart of the matter, as is the problem of who is own and who other, that is, the question of incest. Marital exchanges prescribe clan (*bonso*) exogamy, but the exchange of buffaloes representing the dead is 'intra-agnatic', and thus incestuous. But in both cases, village exogamy, particularly village 'exophagy', prevails (Pfeffer 1991: 90, 2001: 109). The consumers of buffaloes are, as Pfeffer (1991: 90) says, others, and necessary reproductive partners, but also own, because they share the same descent category.

Reproduction, Assimilation and Replacement:
Agnatic vs Affinal Exchange

Comparing the ritual processes of wedding (*biba*) and *go'ter*, what is immediately striking and points towards their relatedness, is the fact that both rituals take

place at the same time of the year. Generally, the time after harvest (January to March) is the time for major life-cycle rituals, but only these two rituals take place at the same time—the full moon of *mag* (February)—and a local group either decides to perform one or the other. Obviously, in the case of marriage, the affinal exchange of women as 'milk' dominates, but agnatic relationships are of utmost importance as well. In particular, this is seen in the feeding of sacrificial food by the Four Brothers (village agnates) and the Twelve Brothers (agnatic village confederation). Likewise, it is apparent that in the *go'ter* the agnatic exchange of buffaloes as the 'dead' is in the foreground, but affinal participation is crucial as well.

When compared, the objects of exchange, the movement of objects, and the implications of agnatic and affinal exchange are fundamentally different. The transition of a woman from one village to the other in the process of marriage is brought about by the feeding of sacrificial food (*tsoru*). For the last time in her life, a woman is fed *tsoru* in her father's house. This brings about her social and particularly ritual exclusion from her natal house and village. In her new village—during the wedding—she is fed *tsoru* and becomes a member of her husband's group (while retaining her descent category). Where death is concerned, it is striking that although feeding *tsoru* is very prominent during the first three stages of death, which effect the withdrawal of the *duma* from society, sacrificial food does not figure prominently, and sometimes not at all in the *go'ter*. The buffalo that is given to a *panjabai* or *tsorubai* is not separated by a last feeding of *tsoru*, nor is the buffalo fed *tsoru* after arriving in the new group. After the buffaloes are taken away from the hosts' village, they should not be sold or used for ploughing and in this sense they are neither ordinary buffaloes, nor are they treated as the dead anymore. They are fed as usual and sooner or later slaughtered (not ritually killed) and eaten. I would suggest that in contrast to women at marriage, the dead do not face yet another transformation—the premium transformer for which would be *tsoru*—but are led to dissolution. To feed *tsoru* in order to disconnect a relationship would imply the creation of a new relationship at some later stage. The feeding of the *duma* during the first phases of death rituals separates it from the living, but only temporarily. Relationships with the *duma* have to be revived in the *go'ter*. Then the *duma* are replaced by ancestors represented by stone plates, and the *duma* need not and should not be transformed again, but rather, should cease to be. In the words of the Gadaba, they are 'gone'.

The dead are thus on the one hand replaced, while on the other hand they are consumed and assimilated. This contrasts with the aspect of reproduction in affinal exchanges of 'milk'. Women are given as milk in marriage and they reproduce milk that may be returned later. The dead are not reproduced. Pfeffer's provocative statement that the *go'ter* makes men pregnant with the spirits they consume (1991: 88), actually made me fully aware of the difference between reproduction and assimilation. Men assimilate the dead by consuming the

buffalo, but contrary to women, they do not get pregnant and do not reproduce. As Pfeffer writes in his recent article, the dead are consumed and re-consumed (2001: 120), or, as I say, assimilated, a process fundamentally different from reproduction.

The difference between agnatic assimilation and affinal reproduction becomes even clearer when we look at the counter prestations, which imply the oppositions symmetry/asymmetry, mobility/immobility. Bride-wealth consists (besides cloth woven by the Dombo) of two cows: one for slaughter, while the other, a female calf, is given as a direct equivalent of the bride. It is given for reproduction or, as it is said, 'for drinking milk'. In other words, women and calves are endlessly circulating in opposite directions but, ideally at least, the exchange is symmetrical. In contrast, the point in exchanging buffaloes for stone plates is that the ancestors (*anibai*) are not equivalent to the dead (*duma*). Contrary to the 'milk', the stone plates are placed once and for all and do not enter the exchange cycle again, and the same is true of the dead that are assimilated and 'gone'.[20] The process of replacement in the *go'ter* turns the liminal, individual dead into a permanent and collective representation of a whole generation. This image is especially strong in case of the central assembly place of each village, called *sadar*, an ensemble of flat and upright stone slabs. In the case of Ponosguda, as I have described here, there were no stone plates added to this place during the *go'ter*, but generally, it seems, this should happen. For example, I have been told in Gudapada that when the Sisa of this village performed *go'ter*, their *tsorubai* added one pair of stones to the central village platform. This, furthermore, was said to happen only when the most senior village segment (the Sisa as village sacrificers) performs *go'ter*. Thus, the *sadar* can be seen as an abstract representation of all generations of earth-people since the foundation of the settlement; and it lies in spatial opposition to the shrine of the earth deity, the 'village mother father'.[21] The stones, rooted in the ground, are a sign of the continuity of the earth-people and their 'consanguineal' relation to the territory.[22] The value of affinal exchange, on the other hand, lies in reproduction, which is no less continuous because affines are in principle connected through the generations. Figure 17.1 summarizes the difference between the two types of exchange.

The Second Gift of Fecundity

How does this difference between agnatic and affinal relationships help to understand the prestation of the affinal buffalo, the *purani*? Georg Pfeffer was the first who, in the turmoil of an actual *go'ter* performance, identified the affinal gift of the *purani*, which he interpreted as an affinal challenge to agnatic status. In performing a mini-*go'ter* and in giving a buffalo, and not a cow as is appropriate for affines, the *purani*-givers were claiming the status of agnates and this was what led to the aggression between the participating groups (Pfeffer 1991: 81f). I believe the *purani* to present a challenge to the hosts but in a different way

Figure 17.1 *Agnatic and Affinal Exchanges in Go'ter and Marriage*
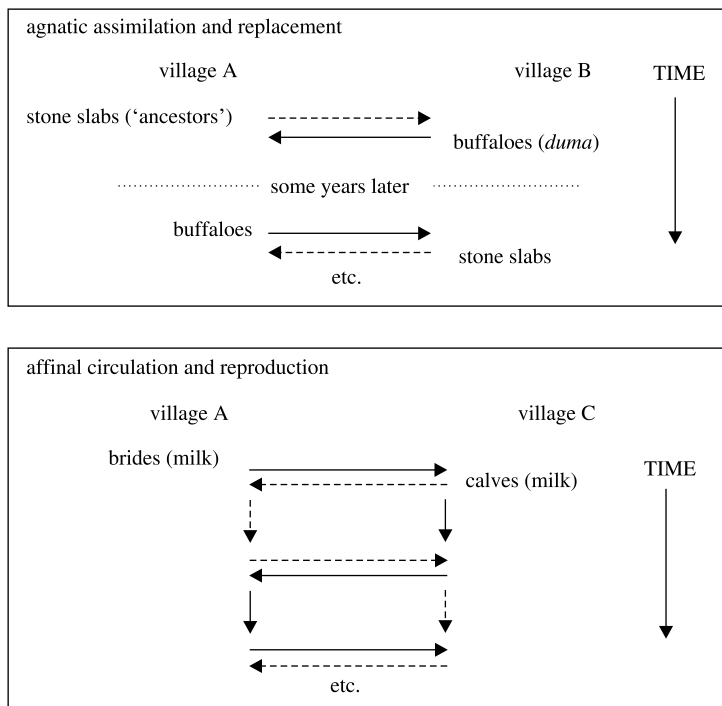
than suggested by Pfeffer. I partly return to a strand of interpretation intuitionally suggested by Izikowitz. Although he neither knew the name of the buffaloes, nor did he notice that they were brought by affines, he wrote:

> Perhaps the most difficult thing to explain is why certain people bring buffaloes which are later torn to pieces by the crowd. One thing has already been mentioned, that is, that the buffaloes' entrails are credited with great power and that they increase the fertility of the fields. … It may also be possible that there is some connection between this [*go'ter*] and the Khond tribes' so-called *meriah* sacrifice. When they were forbidden to tear a human being to pieces, they began using buffaloes. (1969: 147)

There are several conspicuous features of the *purani* for which a convincing interpretation would have to account. One of them is the fact that the donor of the *purani*, under normal circumstances, is long dead. In this regard, I think, the example from Ponosguda was representative. The grandson of the original *mamu* took his part in the ritual and acted in his stead. This feature, the fact that the *mamu* is the *purani*-giver, can only be explained if the gift of the *purani* is linked to the 'original'[23] prestation of the bride. This first gift is a gift of fecundity. When giving his sister as 'milk' to his affines, a man has the right to get a female

calf in return, an ideal equivalent to the bride and equally a reproductive agent. The relationship between bride givers and takers is thus balanced, as is further emphasized through reciprocal visits and the exactly equal gifts accompanying them (Berger 2007a: 241f).

But this gift has a long aftermath and the *mamu* has the right as well as the duty to play a crucial role in the life-cycle rituals of his gift's offspring—his sister's children. He plays a central role in transforming their persons, particularly in the rituals of marriage and those of death. During marriage, he sacrifices for them and feeds them sacrificial food, which, along with other feeding actions, turns them into ritually complete persons. During the first three stages of death rituals, his actions are absolutely crucial in separating the dead person from the living. In these contexts, he receives the brass items called *moali*. Finally, the *mamu* has the option—not the obligation—to turn his sister's son or daughter into an object of exchange (like his sister) and take him or her as *purani* to the *go'ter* hosts' village.[24] In a sense, he is repeating his original gift, and, after having played the role of the transformer for a long time, he is now again in his original position as a giver of fecundity.

The *purani*-prestation introduces asymmetry in the affinal relation, which had previously been carefully balanced. In contrast to the first gift of the bride, which was balanced with an ideally exact counter-prestation, the *purani*-buffalo cannot be symmetrically reciprocated with another buffalo, but only asymmetrically with brass items and other valuables. The superiority of the *mamu* is thus firmly established, and I would argue that this is one reason for the *purani*-prestation being regarded as a challenge to affinal relations.[25]

On the other hand, the *purani* is not only an affinal challenge but a service. It is a gift of fecundity and, following the first gift of the bride, could be regarded as the second bride given by the *mamu*, or his local group respectively.[26] This time it is not human reproduction that is aimed at but the fertility of the fields and the reproduction of crops (besides general vitality that is attributed to the intestines when consumed). Because reproduction is at stake, affinal involvement is required. In the myth, the siblings had to be turned into a married couple for legitimate procreation, or at least their consanguinity had to be disguised. This kind of 'othering' takes place in the *go'ter* as well. The dead cannot be killed and eaten by their own people, hence they are given and consumed by those who are, on one level, others, that is, external agnates (*panjabai*, *tsorubai*). Further, the killing of some of the revived dead for the sake of fecundity depends on an affinal prestation. The *purani* is a double of the dead person resurrected in the hosts' village. Both (in the Ponosguda case all three) buffaloes *are* the dead person, but only the *purani*, as an affinal product, is killed. Although neither the hosts nor the group of the deceased's *mamu* are involved in the killing, the affinal contribution is its precondition.[27]

If we then ask who the actual recipient of the gift of fecundity is, we have to take into consideration other conspicuous features, the manner and place of

killing, as well as the possible meaning of the term '*go'ter'* itself. I want to address the issue of location first.

The final and most dramatic part of the ritual takes place in the dry fields, near the external arrangement of stones outside the village that are called *poda munda* ('dry field platform') or '*gotr langbo*' (Izikowitz 1969: 136f, *langbo* being the Gutob word for dry field). It is in the fields that the blood of the animal seeps away, and the torn out intestines are either buried in the fields or eaten (Izikowitz 1969: 141; Pfeffer 1984: 235; 1991: 82). Although I cannot go into the details of the classification of fields here, it is important for the understanding of the ritual to note that dry fields are associated with the earth deity and consanguinity, from the perspective of a village's earth-people, and opposed to the wet rice fields, which are classified as 'affines'. In the annual rituals, before sowing, the seeds for the dry fields (the most important of which is millet) are brought into close contact with local representations of the earth deity, which is not the case with the seeds of the wet rice. Wet rice—the most secure and highly valued crop—is reproduced in (affinal) exchange with the river gods, who receive sacrifices and in turn give their 'daughter', the wet rice harvest. In the reproduction of wet rice, we thus clearly have an affinal element which is lacking in the reproduction of dry field crops in the annual agricultural cycle. I would argue that such an element is introduced in the *go'ter* through the affinal *purani* which is killed in the dry fields. The *go'ter* is one ritual where domains of annual cycle and life cycle merge, where the 'chains of transformations' (de Coppet 1981: 178) of the person ends in the dry fields. A departed though living member (however, as an affinal product and gift, not fully or only 'own', as pointed out) of the earth people is thus ritually killed in and for the dry fields—the earth deity.

I am speaking of the *purani* as being 'ritually killed' because my informants made it clear that the treatment of the *purani* was no 'sacrifice' (*puja*, *biru*, or *gelgel*). A proper sacrifice has a specific location, a specified sacrificer, it starts with an invocation in which the animal is dedicated, continues with a test of its acceptance, followed by a controlled killing, and ends with an ordered distribution and consumption of meat. All these features are basically lacking in the case of the *purani*. The animal is killed somewhere in the dry fields, by the first person who is able to do so, and the intestines are torn out of the living animal by a crowd of men. Generally speaking, it lacks the order of a usual Gadaba sacrifice, and the absence of any invocation and dedication raises the question: who actually profits from the killing? Is it only the earth deity?

The *purani* buffalo seems to be a gift not only to the earth deity but is a prestation of fecundity or vitality to potentially everybody except the *mamu* who brought it and the host who formally received it. Considering this range of beneficiaries and the manner in which the intestines, the 'life power' (Izikowitz 1969: 147), are obtained by the men, we might amend the terminology coined by Maurice Bloch (1982) and describe this ritual killing as a form of 'generalized predation'.[28]

Maybe it is particularly this action that the name '*go'ter*' refers to. In the literature it is mostly spelled *gotr*, and Pfeffer derives the name from the Hindu descent category *gotra*, translating the term as 'lineage feast' (1991: 72, my translation). However, linguists who study the Gutob language write it *go'ter* (Rajan and Rajan 2001: 48). This word would seem to consist of *go'be*, meaning 'to cut', and *ter,* denoting 'to divide' (ibid.: 47, 53) and 'to distribute'. Arlo Griffiths (personal communication; cf. Griffiths 2008) pointed out that *go'ter* might actually refer to the cutting up and distribution of the *purani* buffalo. This thesis is further supported by a piece of information provided by von Fürer-Haimendorf (1943: 156). The main day when all buffaloes are led outside the village and when the *purani* buffaloes are brought by the mother's brothers is generally called '*go'ter* day'. Von Furer-Haimendorf's informants, however, described the day as '*jur* day', possibly the Desia version of the Gutob '*go'ter* day', which he translates as 'tearing to pieces day' or 'tearing day'.[29]

Conclusion

In my interpretation of this very complex ritual, I have focused on the theme of own and other, of agnatic and affinal relationships. As presented in the creation myth, the whole society, comprising different tribes, is founded on a primordial divine trick whereby siblings were turned into spouses. The differentiation of agnates or *bai* (those who share the same descent category) and affines or *bondu* (those who do not) is maybe the most basic of all distinctions in this society and the concept of society as a whole—the 'twelve brothers, thirteen seats'—is also structured by this opposition. Together with the notion of seniority (elder/younger), this distinction is the foundation of thinking about social relationships.

Matrimonial exchange should only take place between affines, otherwise severe cosmological (and social) sanctions follow. Likewise, the reciprocal consumption of the dead has to be what Pfeffer termed 'intra-agnatic'. However, the case is not that simple, because exchange partners have to be others and own at the same time. In the former case they have to be others (affines) but also own (same tribe), in the latter they should be own (agnates) but also others (different village). Further levels of 'otherness' can be introduced, when, for example, agnates of the same village, but of different local lines (such as Sisa and Kirsani) become exchange partners of the dead.[30]

Agnatic and affinal exchanges of 'milk' (brides and cows) and the dead (buffaloes for stone slabs) are principally distinguished, I have argued, because affinal exchange in marriage can analytically be described as circulation and reproduction, whereas agnatic exchange in the context of *go'ter* can be understood as assimilation and replacement. The liminal dead are assimilated by consumption and replaced by permanent representations of a generation of ancestors of any particular locality. The value of affinity is closely tied to capacity

for reproduction; the value of brotherhood is related to the idea of an eternal sacrificial and commensal community. This value is forcefully visualized in the assembly place of the village founders, where all generations of agnates are represented by the megalithic arrangement that is spatially always opposed to the village deity, the 'mother–father' of the living and deceased earth-people.

The most intriguing prestation in the context of the *go'ter* is the buffalo given by the hosts' affines. It is a violation of the rule that the dead/buffaloes are only exchanged between agnates. But like the first primordial violation of the rule of exogamy, this prescribed violation has a procreative result, because the ritual killing of the *purani* offers fecundity in the form of generalized predation. At the same time, the *purani* prestation creates a tension, because it reintroduces asymmetry, which has carefully been avoided in the transaction of the original gift of fecundity, the bride.

This essay is meant to honour Georg Pfeffer by critically continuing his work. However, he would not be satisfied by understanding any *single* ritual, because his ambition is to understand the general patterns of Middle Indian society. The *go'ter* also has to be seen in this perspective. So far, no systematic comparison of this ritual with the *guar* of the Sora or the *gunom* of the Bondo has been attempted. However, if we just briefly compare the *go'ter* with some features of the Dongria Kond's *meria*, of which we now have a thorough description (Hardenberg 2005), we immediately notice the conspicuous family resemblances. Among the Kond the sacrificed buffalo—previously a human victim—is a prestation to the earth goddess and the meat of the victims is, or used to be, buried in the ground (Niggemeyer 1964: 184ff; Padel 1995: 109ff). In the case of the Dongria Kond, the buffaloes sacrificed in a *kodru parbu*, 'buffalo festival' (or *meria*), represent the earth deities of the different clan territories and hence the numbers of buffaloes given is equivalent to the number of territories. Further, the buffaloes are conceptualised as 'brides' who are hacked to pieces and robbed by the hosts' affines. The plundered meat is hung by the latter at the *dharni*, the local representation of the earth goddess, and later cooked and consumed. Through the performance of the *kodru parbu*, the burying and eating of the meat, fertility of the earth is guaranteed not only in the hosts' but also in the affines' villages. In fact, the *kodru parbu* frequently follows a successful harvest and can thus be regarded as a counter-prestation for the earth goddess (Hardenberg, pers. comm.; cf. Hardenberg 2005, and in this volume). I cannot comment on the just sketched similitudes of *go'ter* and *meria* here. The value of a thorough comparison of such rituals in the region is obvious.

Notes

1. Research was conducted for 21 months between 1999 and 2001, and again for one month in 2002/3. It was financially supported by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG) and also by the FAZIT-foundation. Special thanks to Chris Gregory, Roland Hardenberg and Georg

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2. As elsewhere in Middle India (cf. Pfeffer1997), in Koraput tribal segments are structured by seniority. Thus, the Gutob speaking Gadaba are the 'elder brothers' of the more numerous Ollari (a Dravidian language) speaking Gadaba (cf. Thusu and Jha 1972).

3. Although the *go'ter* should be understood in relation to the ritual system as a whole, this task cannot be accomplished here (cf. Berger 2001, 2007a, 2007b).

4. The number 12 implies a whole. An informant once told me that there are 1012 Gadaba villages, which I understand to indicate on the one hand a multitude (1000) and on the other a whole or unity (12).

5. Despite the omnipresence and significance of the category *baro bai tero gadi*, informants' opinions about how this category is actually composed varied considerably. Some, for example, suggested 12 agnatic units (such as from the cobra category) are opposed by 13 affinal ones (from the tiger category), thus making 25 altogether. Others laughed, when hearing of such an opinion. As I see it, twelve agnatic units are complemented by an affinal category, which is numerically unspecific and may include representatives from all three other clan categories. This view is also supported by the one empirical situation I witnessed, which is briefly mentioned here. Because I worked in a 'cobra-village', this is the perspective I can talk about with most confidence. For example, I do not know whether the numerically equally strong tiger-villages also assemble as the Twelve Brothers in the way that the 12 cobra-villages do (or should do for sharing *tsoru* at marriage, see below). What I know for certain is that this category is highly relevant for all Gutob Gadaba, irrespective of descent category. This also holds true for the people of the single existing monkey-village of the Gutob Gadaba, who are obviously unable to produce 12 clan-representatives of different villages. In this case, most probably, the monkey-villages of the neighbouring Parenga tribe are included. Thus, the category is important for all Gutob Gadaba and for other tribes of the region as well. In practice, inconsistency and variations do not matter much and even a single individual may represent the Twelve Brothers (cf. Berger 2007a: 106f, 183ff, 279ff).

6. Gadaba villages are ideally homogenous regarding the descent category. The descendants of the village founders are called 'earth-people' and because the village whole is segmented into four parts, a village consists of 'Four Brothers'. These local segments or local lines (*kuda*) bear the same titles in every village—Sisa, Kirsani, Munduli, Boronaik (besides some additional, much less common titles; Berger 2007a: 85–97) and further segment into local sublines (*kutum*, ibid.: 83–85).

7. This name is a pseudonym.

8. Every original village has an identity and a name of its own, based on descent category, territory, and sacrificial communion: I call this village clan (Berger 2007a: 104f, forthcoming). Thus, although there are many cobra-villages, the people of Gudapada are the Gudapadia or, in Gutob, the Gangre. There may be Gangre in other villages, but only in the original village they are regarded as earth-people and are allowed to share the sacrificial food.

9. The taxonomic name of the *simli* tree is Bombax malabraicum; the one of the *palda* tree is not known to me.

10. I could not be present on this occasion. I should also mention the other occasion, when 'first rice' is fed. After birth, when the new born infant is betwixt and between the world of the living and the world of the dead, the reincarnated *duma* (the notions of *duma* and *jibon* cannot clearly be separated here) of the child is fed with 'first rice' in the context of everyday meals (not sacrifices). Whether 'first rice' in the context of the *go'ter* is regarded as *tsoru* is unclear, informants' opinions on this point varied. Like *tsoru*, 'first rice' is prepared in a new earthen pot, but, unlike *tsoru*, it sometimes does not include sacrificial meat but contains bamboo sprouts and fish. According to Pradhan (1998: 300), who wrote a short and otherwise not very remarkable contribution on the *go'ter*, the buffaloes are fed with *tsoru* in this context.

11. The term 'consanguines' here refers to a group of agnates (men and women sharing the same descent category), including in-married women.
12. Usually a buffalo is sacrificed instead and later I heard two explanations for the deviation. Someone said the *dissari*—who had told me previously that he had been taught by a 'Brahman' and even called the *go'ter* '*sraddha*' (that is, the Hindu death and ancestor ritual)—had objected against sacrificing a buffalo. From others I heard that the hosts could find no consensus as to which one of their animals should be sacrificed for this occasion.
13. The cutting of the tongue seems to be of particular relevance in case of the *rau*-buffalo. Because it is considered to be very powerful medicine, men also fight for it.
14. Informants in Gudapada considered the following to be the appropriate division. The front part (*sinkur*) would be taken by the hosts' *panjabai*, the hind part by those Gadaba who had been beating drums since the beginning of the ritual (the *dolia*). *Tsorubai* would never take parts of this buffalo, they generally take the buffalo for the eldest of the deceased (*kuti por*).
15. One aspect of buffalo distribution in the *go'ter* is to cover old debts or to create credit, either by giving additional buffaloes to the buffalo-takers or to others who may not stand in a *tsorubai* or *panjabai* relationship at all. Those buffaloes are generally hidden away and not tied to the platforms to avoid quarrels with the legitimate buffalo-takers.
16. *Moitr* refers to a relationship of reciprocal altruism and honour. There are different kinds of *moitr* relationships (Berger 2007a: 173f) and only the agnatic *moitr* (those of the same descent category) may receive and give buffaloes.
17. Around this time, another sacrifice for the *rau*-demon could have taken place at the external platform, called *munda puja*—'sacrifice at the platform'. However, this was not the case in Ponosguda.
18. The whole situation would probably not have escalated, had the marital exchange between Domru's and Ranju's local groups have been repeated (which, in fact, did not happen) after Domru's FF gave his sister to Ranju's father. Maybe Domru would not have even considered giving a *purani* for the deceased Ranju in this case. If Domru's F had married Ranju's Z (a 'cross-cousin marriage', which would have been perfectly possible), Ranju would have been Domru's *mamu* and this would have confused matters. I am not sure whether the prestations of a *purani* would be possible at all in such a situation. Roland Hardenberg suggested in one of our discussions that the *purani*-gift may point to an original prohibition of the immediate repetition of intermarriage (today no longer active), which would then make such confusions and contradictions impossible. On the other hand, one has to consider that the *purani*-prestation is optional and on the level of practice prestations leading to a contradiction in the mentioned form (a *mamu* giving a *purani* to his *mamu*) would be avoided.
19. In the weeks following the *go'ter*, the hosts of the ritual are invited to the buffalo-taker groups and as honoured guests seated on bamboo mats, wined and dined. This is called *panji kaiba* ('to eat' *panji*) but I will not describe the one occasion I witnessed (the Kirsani of Ponosguda—and all other Gadaba groups of the village—being invited to their *panjabai* in Tikrapada) here (cf. Berger 2007a: 304).
20. I have indicated elsewhere that the transactions of brides and buffaloes also have basic characteristics in common, which may point to a different or more implicit model emphasizing the oscillation between villages and alternation between generations (Berger 2007a: 325f).
21. Izikowitz (1969: 130f) mentions that in the *go'ter* he witnessed a pair of stones being brought to the *sadar* on behalf of the village headman's deceased parents. By counting the stones at a *sadar* and estimating a generation span of 25 years, Izikowitz further assumes, the approximate age of a village could be determined (ibid.: 149, Fn. 4). Although I would be hesitant to calculate the actual age of a village that way, this statement makes clear that Izikowitz saw the relevance of the *sadar* as a representation of the bygone generations of earth-people.
22. Visually this image is also strongly enforced at the *go'ter* stone platforms, when the stones are surrounded, sometimes enclosed, by big *palda* and *simli* trees.

23. Not original in any strict sense, because in an ongoing process of exchange it is difficult to single out the 'original' prestation.
24. I have been told that *purani* buffaloes can be brought by a *mamu* for his ZS and ZD alike. However, I have no empirical evidence of the latter. There is the difference that in the case of ZS the *go'ter* hosts are always his former wife takers, which is not necessarily the case when his ZD dies.
25. Gustafsson (1989: 325), who studied the Desia language in the Araku valley, east of the Gadaba area, translates *purani* as 'the money paid to make up any difference in value in an exchange of goods' and *purani debar* (to 'give' *purani*) as 'to pay the difference'. This linguistic aspect thus contradicts my argument that the *purani* introduces asymmetry into a previously balanced relationship. Could the name of the buffalo be understood as an euphemism here? The Gadaba I asked could not say anything about the meaning of the word.
26. Some aspects of the *purani*-prestation, such as the aggressive demeanour and constant running of the group of *purani*-givers, are reminiscent of bride-capture, one of the possible ways leading to a marriage.
27. It may be argued that the *go'ter* hosts in fact do kill one of their deceased (if not personally) in their sacrifice for the *rau* demon, when one of the buffaloes is killed at dawn on the main day. The feature of fertility is also present here, particularly with regard to the animal's tongue. However, this sacrifice is a variation on the theme of substitution commonly encountered in rituals of healing in order to pacify the demons (e.g. Berger 2007a: 223). The *purani* as an affinal prestation is clearly different and a genuine gift of fecundity. Nevertheless, I concede that more clarity regarding the implications of the different categories of buffaloes in the *go'ter* is needed.
28. While discussing the thesis of life/vitality as 'limited good' in the context of death and regeneration (Bloch and Parry 1982: 7f), Bloch distinguishes two processes he calls 'positive predation' and 'negative predation' (Bloch 1982: 229). The aim of negative predation is to obstruct regeneration of another (enemy) group by, for example, stealing/destroying the necessary material (for example a human body). Positive predation, on the other hand, tries to obtain such material for one's own regeneration. In connection with these analytical terms, the ritual killing of the *purani*-buffalo might thus be called 'generalized predation', since vitality here is accessible to everybody except the mother's brother's group. The hosts might not directly participate in the killing or tearing of the intestines, but ultimately their village profits the most because killing and bloodletting is performed on their land.
29. *Jur* is also translated as 'to plunder, loot' (Mahapatra 1985: 224) and this is the sense in which Kornel understands the term ('robbing'; 1999: 66).
30. When the *go'ter* hosts referred to the different groups of buffalo-takers as 'elder', 'middle' and 'younger wife', they used the language of affinity and seniority in a rather playful manner. They certainly wanted to indicate the hierarchy among the buffalo-takers; that was expressed by the distribution of buffaloes itself. Another implication might have been the 'otherness' of the buffalo-takers in the context of the *go'ter*, because, in regard to descent status, wives remain others. I have not heard this way of addressing the buffalo-takers in any other *go'ter* context and the Gadaba from Gudapada to whom I mentioned it, were also astonished by this equation.

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