

Reflection of a Culture — a Short Introduction to the Santal Collection in the Ethnographic Museum, Oslo

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Introduction

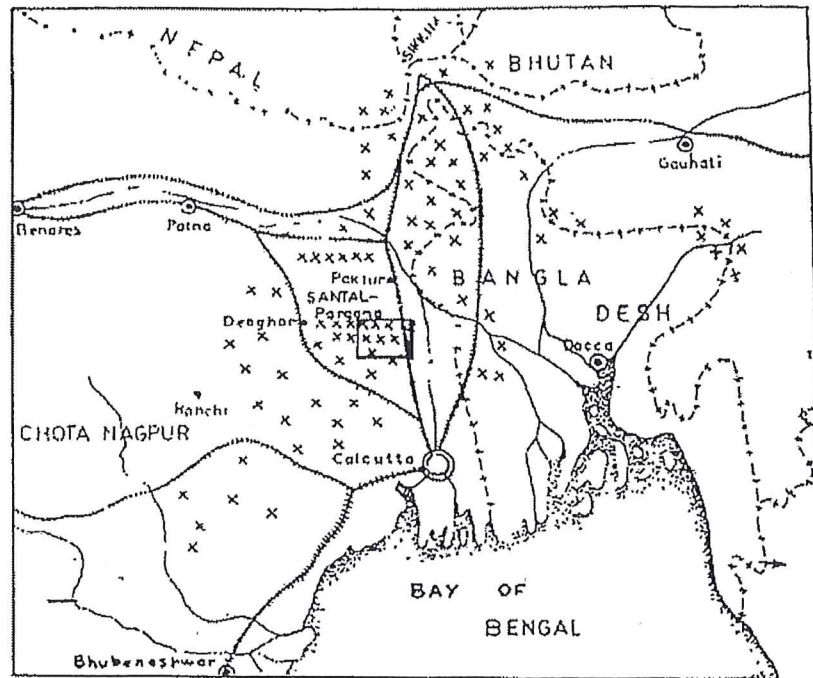
It is a well recognized fact that the development of the science of anthropology has been facilitated by the growth of ethnographical, ethnological and culture-history museums (Gautam 1969, Urry 1972). With the opening of anthropological departments in universities, foundations and ethnographical museums in the nineteenth-century attempts were made to study 'man in his cultural environment'. It became easier for anthropologists to communicate ideas about alien cultures through the means of collections. Around 1900 European anthropologists working in the museums or in the university departments started collecting the ethnographical objects systematically. Field research was encouraged and organized; and material culture was seen in relation to men's socio-economic and religious activities. The ideals of societies reflected by their diversified forms, symbols and objects could be seen in museum premises. By then the task of the museum was not only to collect, store and restore objects but also to examine, study and analyse the material in respect to underlying behaviour patterns of the human groups. Finally the collected objects and related information were stored and arranged systematically on the basis of existing anthropological theories. This occurred in the form of research publications for the students of anthropology and professional scholars on one hand, and the display of exhibits for the public on the other hand. The museum of ethnography had become a unique institution of international understanding of human activities and communication of anthropological information. This was the basis on which famous anthropologists conducted field research in various parts of the world in the first quarter of the twentieth century and their results contributed in formulating the theories of 'function' and 'structure' in anthropology (Malinowski 1922, Rivers 1906, Radcliffe-Brown 1933). By this time the museum collector of ethnographical information knew specifically his selection of the objects

and the nature of anthropological enquiry. Further the collected material helped him to clarify many unsolved scientific riddles and mysteries about alien cultures. To the museum visitor the anthropological material in the form of objects, illustrations, photographs, models, etc. provided a sense of fellowship in understanding alien culture and helped to eliminate biased notions, mistrust, and culture-shocks in the minds of many people.

Inspired by ethnographical research, eminent explorers, administrators, scientists, travellers and missionaries took interest in field collections and often brought back valuable possessions. The Royal Ethnographical Museum of Christiania, or the present Ethnographic Museum, University of Oslo, was founded in 1857 (Gjessing & Johannessen 1957). In this museum, although a collection from India started as early as 1863, two unique collections appeared in the first decades of the twentieth century. A collection from South India was presented in 1902 by Frederik Hunt, a British Judge of Trevendrum and Travancore. Another famous complete collection was contributed by Rev. P. O. Bodding, who was a Norwegian missionary working in the Santal Pargana, or Santalia, or Santalistan, as it was known at that time in Norway. Bodding's collection came in seven parts; the first started before 1903 and the last one was presented in 1934. In this article I shall consider Bodding's Santal collection, its uniqueness, and present condition. Before we proceed further a word on Bodding is necessary to illustrate his personality. With what ideals did he collect this material? What was his anthropological training? How did he select his informants? What has been done with his collection? Finally in what way could such a collection be helpful in anthropological research, to students and to professional anthropologists? How can its display be used to educate the public? Lastly, what can one learn about the Santal way of living by studying this collection?

Paul Olaf Bodding

Paul Olaf Bodding was born on 2nd November 1865 in the town of Gjøvik in Norway. It is said that his religious awakening and inclination to missionary work started in 1882, when he met Lars O. Skrefsrud, a Norwegian missionary, who in 1867, together with the Dane H. P. Børensens had already founded an Indian Home Mission to the Santals in North India. Later the name of the mission was changed to The Santal Mission of Northern Churches, which still exists. After finishing his training in theology on 16th January 1890, Bodding—a young man of 25 years—arrived in Bengaria's Ebenezer mission station in Santal Pargana² (Gausdal 1937, Nyhagen 1968). From Bengaria he was sent to Mohulpahari (see



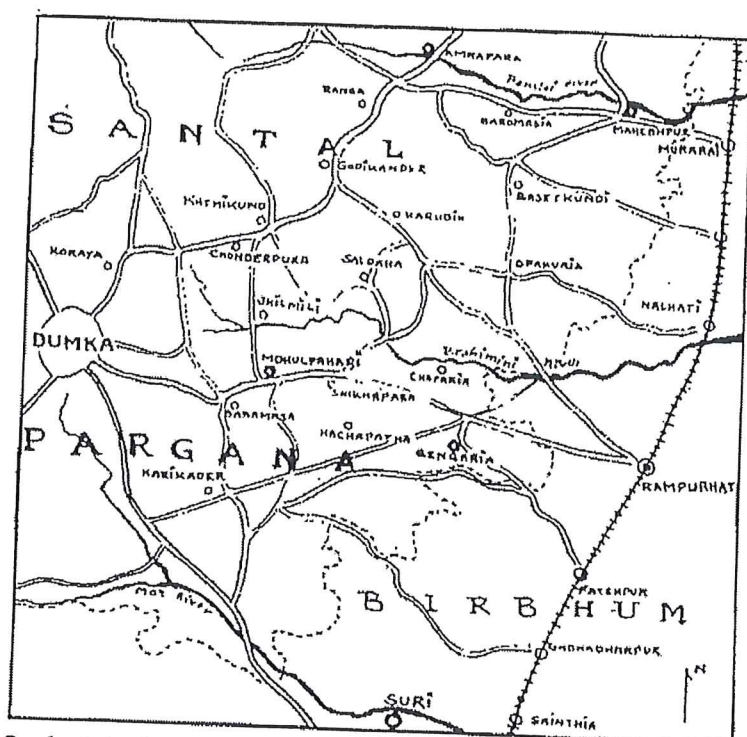
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Bodding's field area

the map of Bodding's field area), a village fifteen miles east of Dumka town, to preach the teachings of the Bible to the Santals and other local inhabitants. The first thing Bodding did after coming to Mohulpahari was to study the Santali language with the help of the local Santal mission informants. To get a good knowledge of the community he thoroughly read Skrefsrud's Santali book on the Santal traditions and institutions, known as *Horokoren Mare Hapramko reak' Katha* (1887). This was the book which inspired Bodding to devote a whole life to the cause of the welfare of the Santals. With the help of Santal informants Bodding started visiting the surrounding villages. He observed the minute details of the Santal way of life, their socio-economic and political life and rituals—the mystery of the Bongas.³ He started his work, setting out on his bicycle to recheck the Santal customs, visit the villages, and speak to the Santali.

Bodding's earlier training was in theology, but after reading Skrefsrud's book on Santali traditions he turned into a sort of social welfare worker. This was also due to the miserable position of the Santals in Indian society (Gautam 1970) and their exploitation by the Dikkus or Dekos (neighbouring Hindus). To help free the Santals from the grip of poverty, he started contacting the British administrators. Contemporaries who had some anthropological training in England helped him to learn the ethnographical methods necessary for concrete anthropological enquiry. Carstairs,



Scale 1 inch = 8 miles

Map showing the places from where Bodding collected objects and information on the Santal

once a district Collector and in charge of the Santal Pargana; Bompas, Cole and Campbell, social missionaries; Sir Andrew Frazer, Governor of Bengal; and Grierson, administrator and linguist, were his friends. In such surroundings Bodding started developing his own style of anthropological enquiry, and as Grierson said one day, he really became 'the great authority on the Santals' (Nyhagen 1968: 230). He selected those Santal centres which worked as network contacts and communicational channels for the local people. He followed the participant observation approach to collect his information. For this he utilized *bats* (weekly markets), village councils, feasts and festivities, and agricultural events. He asked questions several times which were noted down by his informants only in Santali. On the basis of group interviews he derived his ideas, but still, like his predecessor, he relied on a few informants who were to some extent his teachers (*guru*). This, however, prevented him from having face-to-face contacts with the ordinary Santals. Whatever information he collected and used in form of articles provided a step further in understanding the Santal mind, ideals and realities. He even started his religious services under *mahuá* (*Asia latifolia*) and *sál* (*Shorea robusta*) trees, which are sacred to the Santals. He did all this strictly in Santali and thus escaped the problems of misinterpreted translations.

Bodding's Santali informant-teachers were responsible for creating in him this interest in the Santal community. They not only taught him the correct idiomatic usages of the language but also explained in detail the various aspects of the Santal institutions, customs, rituals, and socio-economic pursuits. At this point one should ask the questions: How did he select these informants? Was he sure that the informants' information was authentic and unbiased? In fact Bodding's earlier informant was selected for him by his predecessor Skrefsrud, who had acquired great respect from the local population because of his social welfare plans. Skrefsrud's method was simple. He never argued the validity of the Santal beliefs, nor did he scold them for their religious values. In fact he structured his arguments for Christianity on the basis of the Santal traditions and customs (Hodne 1966, Rønning 1940). Bodding's first *guru* (teacher) was Birom Hansdak, who was a Santali priest of great repute throughout the villages. He had been associated with Skrefsrud in writing down Santal traditions. For the first two years, i.e. from 1894 to 1895, he worked with Bodding. Because his physical condition deteriorated, he had to rest during the remainder of his life. He was replaced by a Santal leper, who extended his help to Bodding for nine years (1896-1905). By this time Bodding had acquired sufficient respect and responsibility and was able to select his future *gurus*. His criteria for selection, as Bodding's successor Gausdal once told me, was to interview a person thoroughly.⁴ Bodding used to ask questions of various kinds on the basis of Santal traditions and customs in front of other local mission informants. After 1900 he employed two *guru*-informants, Sagram Murmu and Sidu Besra Deshmanjhi (IHM, 1913-1914). The work of these informants can be seen through his collection of the Santal material culture in the Ethnographical Museums of Oslo and Leiden and written information and accounts in the Library of Oslo University.

Bodding's first informant, Birom, came from Bhalka village near Morrelva. He was baptized in 1874 and died in 1897 (Nyhagen 1968, 154). With his help Skrefsrud developed Santali writing. A religious book was published jointly under the name of Skrefsrud & Bodding (1899), with the help of Birom.⁵ Sidu Besra came from a small village near Basetkundi. Sidu and Sagram collected information for Bodding which illuminated Santal clanship, folklore and other traditions. Bodding's informants were mainly to help him in religious translation. However, simultaneously he also collected material on Santal folk tales (1925-1929) and composed a Santal dictionary (1932-1936). Around the turn of the century Bodding sat down to recheck and observe the change in Kolean's accounts of Santal

tradition (Bodding 1942, 1).⁶ He wanted to know how far Kolean's accounts were still valid and could be expressed in detail. Before 1907 Bodding prepared a questionnaire of fifty questions to describe the nature of Santal *khunt* (sub-clan), which plays an active role in sacrificial rituals and marriage relations (Gausdal 1960, 9). This work was deputed to Sagram Murmu, whose detailed accounts in four parts are well preserved in Oslo University library's manuscript section. These manuscripts were not written by one person and show that Bodding must have accepted help from other informants. Bodding wanted to name this intended book *Hor Hopon'reak' Leg Car Katha* or *Puthi*—the book of customs, traditions and clans of the Santals. The burden of administering the mission and Skrefsrud's illness prevented the printing of this book. It is also stated that Sagram Murmu objected to its being printed (op. cit.). This extraordinary material is still available in Oslo University library and needs someone to carry out ethno-historical research on it.

This was also the period in which Bodding established his ideals and set up his future task for ethnographical research. To understand the mind of such simple people he stressed ethnographical information and documents both in the form of material culture and theoretical information. This he collected with the help of informants from the villages around Mohulpahari mission centre. In this manner he could observe them easily. Together with the collected objects of the Santals' day-to-day life he provided written information, mostly in Santali, on various aspects of Santal culture. He used a holistic approach and saw the tribe as a single unit.

As early as 1903 he sent a part of the collection of Santal ethnography to the Royal Ethnographical Museum of Christiania, Norway. He wanted to use this collection in teaching missionaries who wanted to go to Santal Pargana. Indirectly the public benefited as well by becoming aware of the activities of the Norwegian mission and the Ethnographical Museum, Oslo. They often contributed financially to mission projects. Bodding was convinced that the museum objects of the Santal culture contributed by being 'very instructive' and because they 'help to teach [about] the mind of the uncivilized people' and 'how it works' (1911).

The Santal Collection

Around 1900 Yngvar Nielsen (1843-1916), a historian interested in geography and ethnography, was the Director of the Royal Ethnographical Museum of Christiania (Gjessing & Johannessen 1957). He showed interest in Bodding's work and through correspondence it was decided that Bodding

would collect material for the museum. Bodding's material arrived in Oslo in separate groups. This collection can be divided into four parts, according to the Oslo museum inventory, where it is registered in series.

Year of arrival	Number of series in the Inventory	Number of objects
Not known	1) series no. 10367 to 10383	17
1903	2) series no. 11658 to 12309	652
	12531	1
	38924 to 38926	3
	38904 to 38908	5
1907	3) series no. 15437 to 15506	70
1911	4) series no. 20665 to 20895	231
		979 Total number

Bodding sent three more series composed of objects of archaeological nature including a few items from Tibet. Since these series have nothing to do with the Santals I shall not consider them in this discussion.

All these series together illustrate various aspects of Santal culture. In various categories the series show village life with its household objects, kitchen utensils, furniture, storage facilities; hunting, fishing and gathering with certain weapons, nets, snares, traps and a digging stick; the category agriculture includes techniques of ploughing, irrigation, use of cattle; and crafts include carpentry, iron-smithery, basketry, pottery; food and drink reflect domestication of animals and birds; dresses and ornaments; feasts and festivities; recreation and make-up for amusement shows, musical instruments, toys; ritual sacrificial knives and marriage dress as part of their religion. 'Social acceptance' is illustrated by objects of relationship: the lime pot, tobacco pouch, combs and water pipes.

The collected objects were provided with tags on which Bodding wrote legibly the name of the object in Santali, the place from where it came, and the number in the series. On other sheets of paper he gave an explanation of the use of the object in question (1911).

This collection serves another important aspect of research because Bodding gives information about other local ethnic groups which also use the same objects. This point raises an important question: if these objects are also used by other groups, can we then call it a purely Santal collection? I think anthropological research can throw sufficient light on this issue and explain the interdependence of the Santals with other local groups. Perhaps because of this relationship it would not be unjustified

to say that the Santals have been able to maintain their uniformity as a single culture unit in the Santal Pargana area.

At the beginning of this article I said that this collection is unique. What I mean is that there is no other complete collection on the Santals in any other museum, including museums in India. The other old Santal collections are scattered throughout various museums. The National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, the Netherlands, has a collection which was also presented by Bodding in the years 1909 and 1911, totalling more than two hundred objects. The National Museum of Copenhagen, Denmark, also has a part of the Santal collection. On one of my visits to this museum I counted about 60 objects. This collection came from the same area in which Bodding worked. In Lillehammer's Open Air Museum, Norway, a few Santal objects are also placed in the village house of Skrefsrud. A set of 71 Santal objects collected from Bodding's area are included in the new collections which Gausdal presented to Bergen Ethnological Museum, Norway, in 1956. In 1968 and 1972 the writer of this article also collected a number of objects from the same area for the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden. A part of this collection can be seen in the first decade of the twentieth century from a well-defined area of Netherlands (1973). A few Santal objects are housed in the museums of Cologne (Germany), London (U.K.), and in Minnesota (U.S.A.). Santal collections are not complete in India either. Varrier Elwin collected a few Santali objects which are housed in the National Museum, New Delhi.⁷ Other Santali collections are partially found in the Indian Museum, Calcutta; Orissa State Museum, Bhubhneswar; University Departments of Anthropology at Calcutta, Ranchi, Lucknow and Delhi; Museum of Culture Research Institute, Calcutta; Kala Bhawan Museum and Vishwa Bharti University, Shantiniketan; Asutush Museum of Indian Art, University of Calcutta; and Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh Museum in New Delhi (Roy 1967).

The uniqueness of the Oslo collection also lies in the supplementary information given by Bodding in his written accounts preserved in the University Library and photographic illustrations in the Santal Mission of Northern Churches in Oslo. Moreover, together with the Leiden, Copenhagen and Lillehammer collections, the Oslo collection was acquired in the first decade of the twentieth century from a well-defined area of Mohulpahari and its surrounding villages. In contrast to this old collection, the present recent collections at Bergen and Leiden had been collected from the same area but after a gap of 40 to 50 years. A comparative study of this collection will not only throw light on the process of change but

also on the influence of modernity including the money economy and markets. From a theoretical point of view recent research on the Santal identity has already provided us with the ideas of change in Santal culture in the sense of a movement towards 'sanskritization' or 'great tradition', as pointed out by Dutta-Majumdar (1956) and Orans (1965) or 'santalization' as I shall call it (1973 A). Moreover answers to questions like why Santals have discarded traditional objects and symbols and accepted the new ones, would elucidate the relation of Santal ideals with actualities. Finally, how far have socio-economic and ecological conditions been responsible for such changes? The answers, if handled anthropologically, would explain the new trends in Santal economy and technology, the interdependence with neighbouring groups and their formation of new value systems which have created a dynamic new appearance in their behaviour patterns and adaptation problems.

Having considered the value of the uniqueness of Bodding's Santal collection I shall analyse it in categories. The collection can be divided into following parts.

1. The Household Life
2. The Economic Life
 - a) Hunting, fishing and gathering
 - b) Agriculture
 - c) Craftmanship
3. The Socio-religious Life
 - a) The kitchen and the hearth
 - b) Dresses and ornaments
 - c) Life-cycle events and the Bonga rituals
4. Feasts and Festivities
 - a) Musical instruments and dancing
 - b) Make-up and recreation
 - c) Gestures of social acceptance and relations
5. Miscellaneous.

In this article I shall not explain questions like: 'Who are Santals? What is their ethnic socio-economic organization? I shall only try to see these groups in relation to material culture as available in the Oslo Museum. Moreover, I shall only give a short comment on each of these groups. The present article is not meant to describe all the objects, but will try to select a few important ones which characterize the Santal culture.



Fig. 1. The general location of a Santal village, situated south of the Bansloi river near Kuschira, surrounded by scattered trees and wet-rice fields. Photo: M. K. Gautam, Leiden.

The Santal household life

Unlike other Bihar *adivasis* (Indian term for a tribal group), the Santal villages in the district of Santal Pargana, Bihar (see the map of the Santal distribution), are often found situated on ridges and hill slopes, surrounded by scattered *sal* and *mahua* trees and cultivated wet-rice fields (see Fig. 1). From a near view one could see their houses forming a long straggling street, stretching from east to west. The houses are constructed of raised mud walls, plastered with a paste of cow dung and coloured clay and thatched with straw or tiles (see Fig. 2). Every house has a cattle shed and a pigsty always opens towards the village street which can be closed by a wooden bar or an iron padlock. There are a verandah, kitchen, *bhitar* (innermost place), a place for sleeping and storing facilities. Generally bamboo rain-coats (*gunggu*), hats, mats, traps (*pasi*), etc. are kept on the roof of the house. Through the ceiling one can see hanging a *jhampa* (bird's cage), sickle, affixed arrows, axes, etc. Inside the corridor of the outer door in the courtyard earthen pots, baskets, mats, *jana* (broom), *parkom* (bedspread) and *maci* (little stool) are often placed; and ploughs, shovels and other agricultural implements are near the outside walls. Inside the house, the kitchen room contains kitchenware of various sizes made of metal, leaves, stone and wood; an earthen fireplace with an opening, *ukhari* and

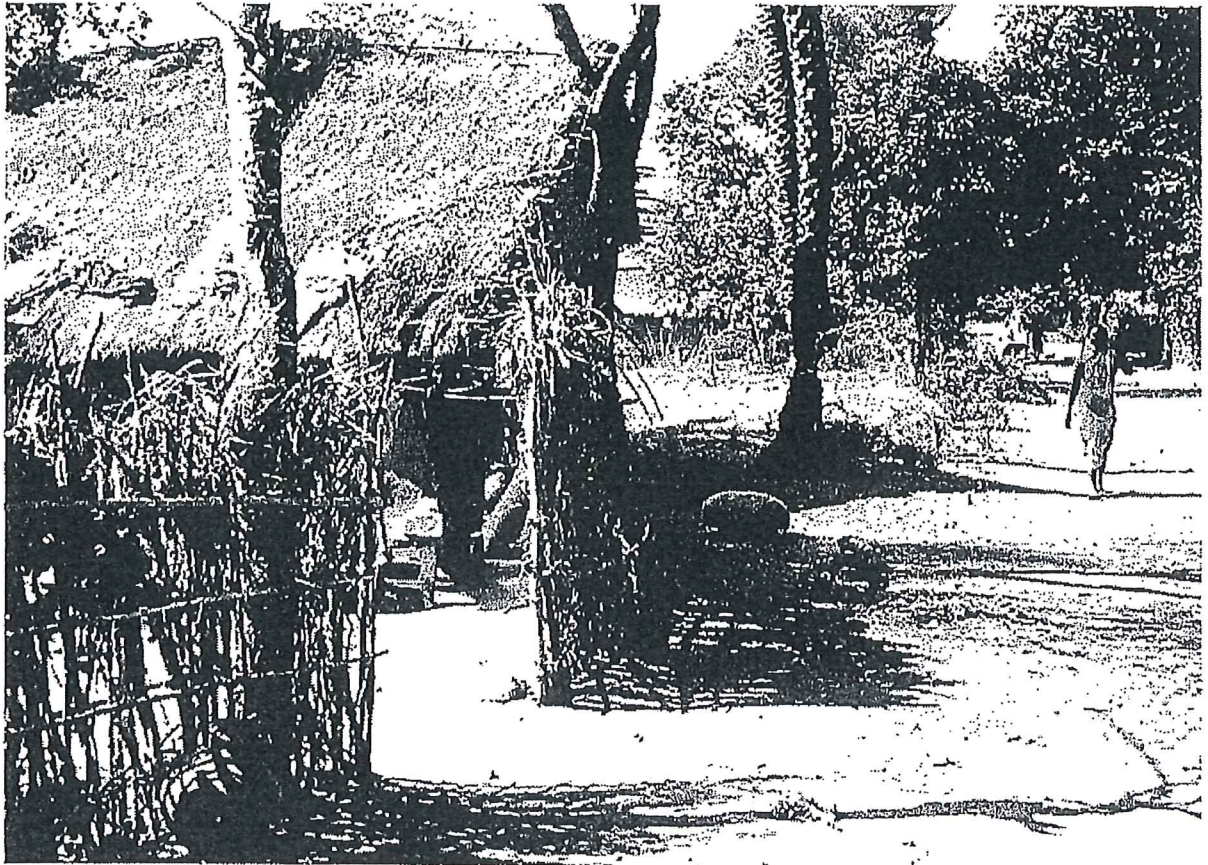


Fig. 2. Entrance of a Santal house in a village street. On the roof of the house, fishing nets, raincoats made of leaves, etc. are kept. In the courtyard in the foreground, earthen pots, mats and a bedstead are placed. A Santal woman is seen talking to someone behind the fencing. Photo: M. K. Gautam, Leiden.

tok (mortar and pestle), *dhenki* (for rice husking), *janti* (grinding mill), *hatak* (winnowing fan). The Santal keeps grain baskets, ornaments, clothing, weapons, etc. in the innermost room. If we look at the Santal collection of Bodding we can find almost all these objects mentioned in our description of the Santal household life, and with a diorama like one in Breda Museum, the Netherlands, one can visualize the appearance of life in a Santal household (Gautam 1973).

The economic life

The Santal subsistence can be divided into two types of economy.

- i) non-agricultural economy and
- ii) the agricultural economy.

In a non-agricultural economy, hunting, fishing and gathering activities play a vital role. In the Santal traditions, it is said that their wandering habits have been inspired by the search for new forests and lands. At a certain point they came to settle in Santal Pargana around the first quarter

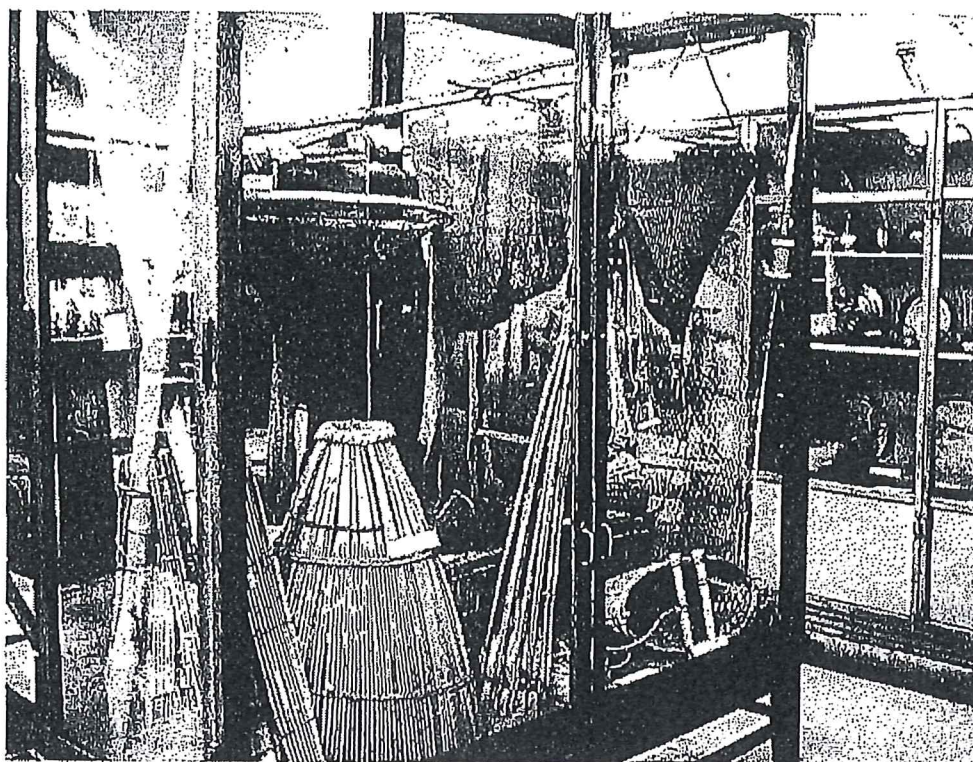
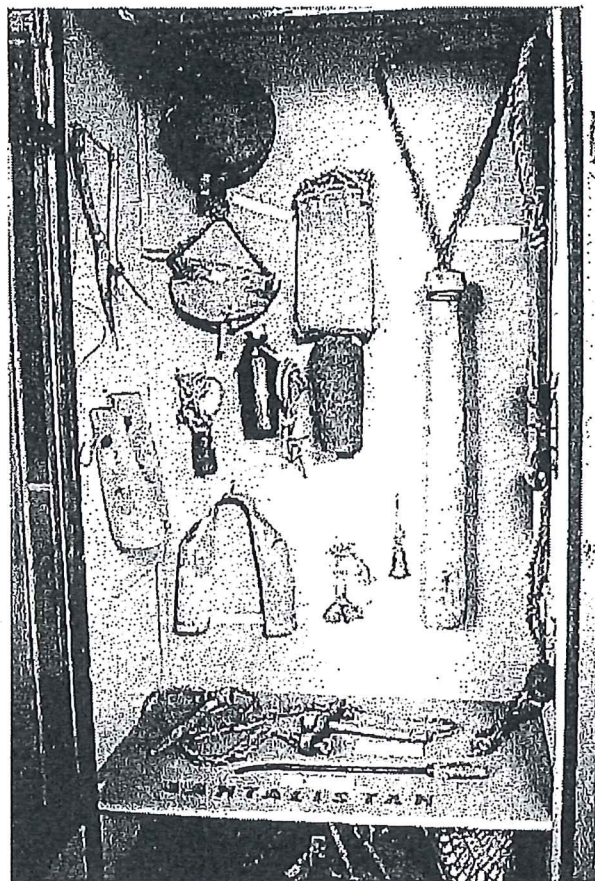


Fig. 3. An old gallery of the Ethnographical Museum Oslo, showing a number of objects related to fishing activities. In the background the show window contains household and kitchen utensils. Photo: M. K. Gautam, Leiden.

of the nineteenth century to clear up the huge jungle of Damin (an old name of the area surrounding the Rajmahal hills in the Santal Pargana district). Contractors and District Administrators encouraged them to drive out dangerous wild animals from these forests in order to reclaim new cultivable lands. This suggests that once upon a time the Santals used to practise shifting cultivation or axe cultivation by clearing the forests and then planting seeds with the help of a digging stick, most probably the *Khanta*. Because of being situated in an ecological surrounding of forests and animals, they were forced to develop a unique system of hunting weapons used especially during the clearing operations (Gautam 1970). In times like the rainy season they depended on fishing activities. Their gathering activities remained constant throughout the year. Wood, herbs, roots, fruits, flowers, leaves of the *sal* tree, etc. are still collected. The Oslo museum collection provides a complete series of hunting, fishing and gathering objects varying in size and nature (see Fig. 3). In general this non-agricultural economy provides the Santals with food, drink, fodder; raw materials and minerals for household and agricultural implements; and shelter in difficult times for food and a place for propitiating rituals and sacrifices. Furthermore it has also provided unlimited resources in the form of domesticated animals, wild birds and game. The animals

Fig. 4. Another section of the Ethnographical Museum under the old name of Santalistan, showing agricultural objects related to the cattle, like cattle bells of wood and metal, wooden block, tattooing rod. In the lower section of the show case rain hats are visible. Photo: M. K. Gautam, Leiden.



are hunted either individually or in organized hunting expeditions and are used for sacrificial rituals and food. Capt. Sherwill once wrote about their hunting ability, 'the Santals are very expert with bow and arrow, so expert that nothing with life is to be found near their villages of any standing' (1851, 55).

Because forests are gradually disappearing, the Santals have consolidated their agricultural economy either in the valleys or on the hill slopes. In one way, this has checked their nomadic habits because an agricultural economy needs more time and patience. Moreover, protecting themselves from animals and theft, and repairing the water lines for constant irrigation have become a long-term project. In the long run this process has forced the Santals to develop or borrow agricultural implements suited to their local needs. A section of their agricultural objects can be seen in Fig. 4. Ownership of land has also played an important role in their economy. There are two types of land ownership traditionally recognized by the Santals.

- i) That of the original founder and clearer of the land, and
- ii) That of the later settler, who was either invited for agricultural help or for his crafts.

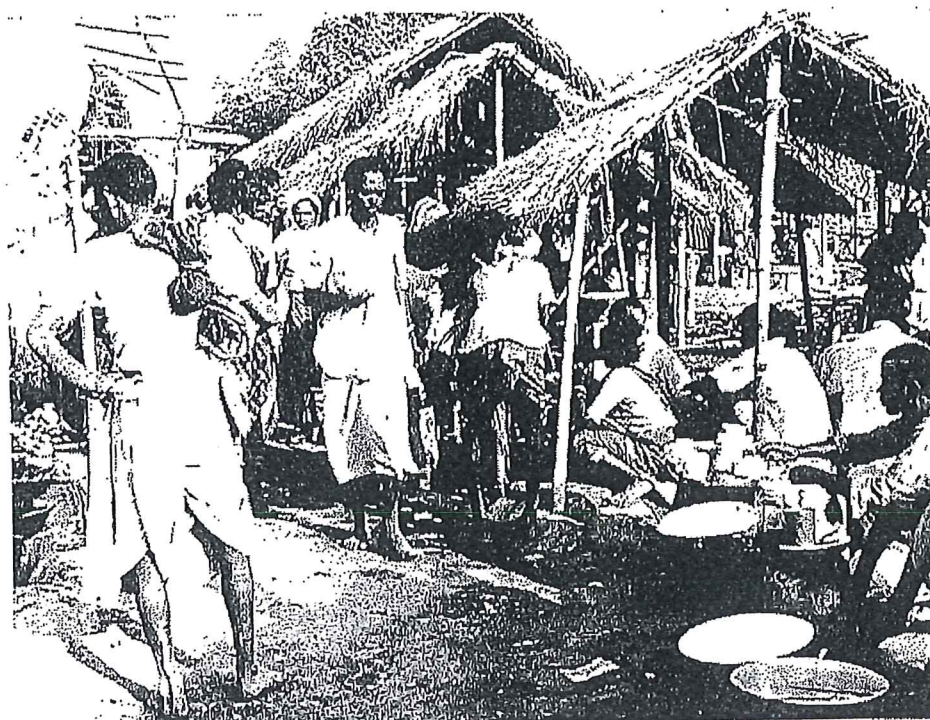


Fig. 5. Santal hat (weekly market) where people are buying sweetmeats. The market is composed of temporary thatched huts which can be hired for selling the goods. Photo by courtesy of The Santal Mission of the Northern Churches, Oslo.

This is also visible in the Santal pattern of living. The original settlement consists of *Manjbithan* (headman's shrine) and *Jaberthan* (village shrine). The original land holders are housed near the headman's shrine. The new settlers are often found at the fringe of the village in what has become (in the long run) a *tola* (hamlet) of the main village. There are two dominant clans among the original founders, i.e. the Manjhi clan and the Naeke clan (the headman's clan and the priest's clan). Both contribute their secular and sacred functions to preserve the village patrilineality by regulating the village exogamy. In this way the village agnates and cognates gain their values regarding protection of land rights, inheritance, and succession through descent according to the patrilineal principle.

The complete collection connected with the later settlers shows not only how they used their implements in Santal society, but also the way they handled them. These craftsmen worked in carpentry, iron smithery, pottery, basketry, repairing of agricultural tools and hunting weapons, weaving, oil extraction, etc. The interdependence of the Santals with other local groups, such as the Mahali (basket maker), the Jadupatua and the Kamar (worker in the *cire perdue* technique and blacksmith), the Pal (potter), the Bhuiya (agricultural labourer), the Dom (leather worker and maker of musical instruments), the Teli (oil presser), and many others

show a series of exchange relations which generally take place in life-cycle events, feasts and ceremonies. The Santals buy or barter their necessary objects of daily use from the nearby weekly markets (see Fig. 5).

The socio-religious life

Many important objects can explain the socio-religious life of the Santals. The kitchen utensils, mostly *batti* (cups and bowls), *thari* (plates), *batloi* (brass pot for cooking rice), earthen pots of various types, and other objects of metal, stone and *sal* leaves, show their use and construction. The concept of hearth is an important notion among the Santals. The food has to be preserved from outside evil spirits, otherwise it may create calamity in the form of danger to the principle of patrilineality and land rights. Moreover, the use of food is related to the sacrifice to the Bongas during agricultural and life-cycle events. Bodding's collection of ritual knives like *merom mak' sonda* (for sheeps and goats), *kada mak' sonda* (for buffalo), *bogda churi* (for pigs) explains the types of sacrifices used in the Santal rituals. The size of the sacrificial knives varies according to the type of animals or birds. A proper study of all the ritual objects would not only reflect the function and structure of the socio-economic and religious life of the Santals but would also provide guide-line data regarding the social changes that have been emerging for the last century.

Another important part of the socio-religious life is the way people dress and wear ornaments and for what occasions and ceremonies. Moreover, they show the riches of the house, and the blessings of the household and village deities. The typical Santal dress is *pauci* (a thick loincloth) for a male and *bandi* (a piece of cotton cloth) for a female. *Dhoti* is a piece of cloth, about six metres in length, with a colourful border used by women. The heads of the girls are generally uncovered, revealing a mass of black hair tied into a knob at one side of the head, ornamented with flowers or with tufts of coloured silk ribbons.

Men wear a *lungi* or a small *dhoti*, which is a different type of a loincloth. A turban of white cloth is used to cover the head. Men also wear necklaces of colourful beads. The children's dress is just a small loincloth, otherwise they are left naked. Instead of ready-made shoes, *badha*—a sort of sandal—is worn by the Santals.

Ornaments are made of conch shell, silver, tin, brass, iron and gold metals and are often bought in the weekly markets from the Hindus and Muslims. They are engraved with flower and animal motifs; and are worn by both men and women. Santal women are fond of their hair styles and they often arrange their hair with various types of combs,

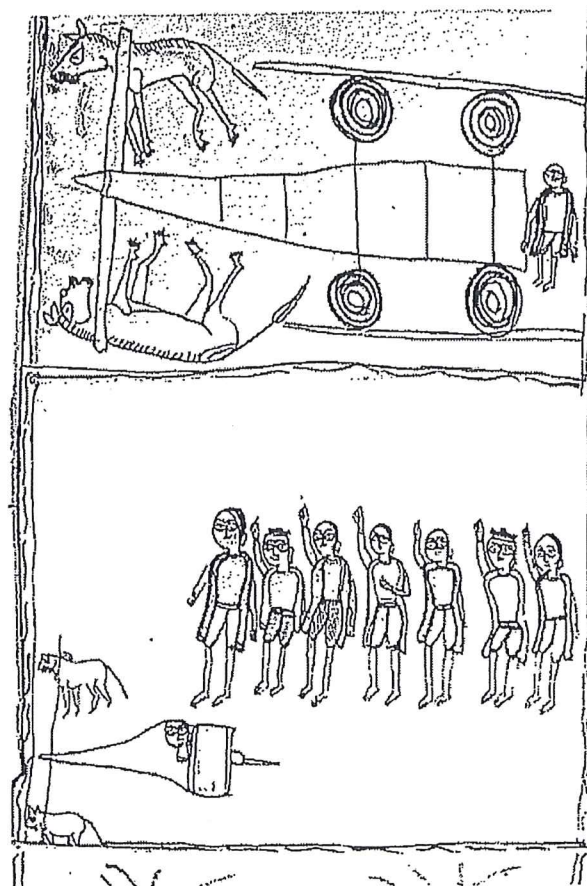
flowers and hairpins. On the arms, neck and ankles the Santal women wear heavy brass or bell-metal and silver ornaments. They are known as *curi* (bangles), *sakom*, *todor*, *khaga* (bracelets), *hansli* (necklace and necklet). Necklaces (*mala*) of coloured beads, strings, and perforated coins of silver are worn round the neck. Ear-rings of gaudy glass beads and silver decorations are also used. Boddington's collection of ornaments is very elaborate and consists of about 200 objects. On my last visit to the Santal Pargana (1972) I found that most of these objects have been replaced by new designs and forms. A study of these objects will not only throw light on their new forms and designs but will show a change in the Santals' likings and tastes. Moreover, on the aspect of folk and tribal art in India there are very few anthropological publications.

Feasts and festivities

The Santal ceremonial life—the cycle of feasts and festivities, is always related to their economic activities, which serve as a viable link with religious sanctions. Relations between the seasons, months, and festivals are combined in the form of social gatherings for ritual observation and social recruitment like birth and marriage. The idea is that the ritual activity will protect the productive activity, provide an all-round prosperity, and protect the villagers from the wrath of haunting evil spirits. At such feasts the lineage members participate, and elaborate seasonal rites, invitations to the affine relations, exchange of presents, renewal of contracts with the other ethnic groups, sacrifices and presentation of gifts, etc. take place before the village Manjhi (the headman) and are consecrated by the village Naeke (the priest) in front of the Santal community.

Like other tribes, such as Mundas, Gonds, Oraons, and Asurs, the Santals do not have the institution of 'youth dormitory'. However it is a well known fact that the Santals are a musical people. Their favourite instruments are flutes, one-stringed fiddles, cymbals, horns, and many varieties and shapes of dancing drums. Generally they have their drums and flutes made in pairs with exactly equal pitch; if either of them is lost, it can easily be traced. The Santal feast often starts with offerings at the village shrine and at home, and consists of a food distribution, exchange of feasts, dancing, singing, and drinking. Various types of wind, percussion and string instruments are used at communal dancing in the *akhara* (open air dancing place). The master of a social ceremony is Jog Manjhi (the social head of the village), who often belongs to the Naeke clan. All the musical instruments are kept at his place just as in other

Fig. 6. Scenes for the Santal Pat (scroll) from the Ethnographical Museum, Oslo. The upper part shows a bullock cart, the only means of Santal transport in the interior of the Santal Pargana. The lower part shows a farewell to a Santal girl after her marriage. She is sitting in a bullock cart. Photo: M. K. Gantam, Leiden.



'youth houses' (*dhumkaria*) in Bihar tribes. The village youth assemble first at his place and then move to the house of the village Manjhi and finally to the *akhara*. People who come from other affinal villages (*bandhu pera*) are accepted with social gestures of feet washing by the girls, *johar* (saluting), a place to sit on the *maci* (little stool), offerings of lime from the lime pot (*cunaiti*) and drinking of *bandia* (beer). Some of the social gestures are reciprocated by either presenting gifts or providing a pot of *bandia*. Children play with their toys or play flutes, and beat drums. Whether it is a *Karam* (thanksgiving feast to the *karam* flower), or *Sobrae* (winter harvest), or *Baha* (flower feast) or family events like *bapla* (marriage), all the Santals amuse themselves, invite their friends and relatives, arrange games, sports, a hunt, and drink and dance together. There are also opportunities for the youth to select their mates and make love. Bodding's collection, if looked at minutely, covers all the possible aspects of the Santal's appearance which one would encounter in a field research. His specimens from the feast, life-cycle, recreation, social gestures, symbols of status and position, after-life, and rituals (a specific example is the Santal *pat* which is painted by the *jadupatua* for the deceased's family, Fig. 6) and many more, can throw adequate light on the Santals of the first decade of this century. Further, their use, tech-

niques of construction, forms and art motifs, the sources from which they are acquired, etc. will not only explain the collection but will tell us about the position of the Santals in relation to other groups. Finally it can show how all these together helped them to keep their identity as a cultural group distinguished from the other ethnic groups on one hand and the non-tribals on the other.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article I mentioned the development of anthropology in respect to the ethnographical museums. There, I stressed the need to study material culture because it reflects one of the most important aspects of the total culture, i.e. 'man and his environment'. To visualize this aspect of the material culture of the Santals is a difficult task for anthropologists in a university class. The only possibility is to create an atmosphere where the student of anthropology can feel the difference, as in the case of a participant observation. But to come to this understanding is even more difficult than translating theoretical and illustrative material into visual behaviour. The role of the museum has been important in this respect. It has not only raised problems for further research but has confronted anthropologists and the public with information, symbols and objects from other cultures. Bodding's attempts were focused specifically on this line. Before entering the field of research or missionary social work, Bodding wanted to orient people about a culture before leaving their own background, so that there would be less cultural shock, mistrust, and biased notions. He even introduced a field museum for the first time in India at Dumka, Santal Pargana, where he displayed the material culture of the local people and their environment. He provided supplementary information through his lectures. Bodding once wrote about the necessity for scholars and missionaries to

... spend some of their first time here, and such a collection of utensils, implements, and things of all kinds used by the Santals may be a great help to let newcomers quickly and easily learn part of the condition of the people they are to work among (them). I remember when I first started collecting how struck I was by the proofs I got of the Santal civilization. It gave me an insight into their state of development which I did not previously possess and would not properly have obtained otherwise so quickly (IHM, 1913-1914, 16).

Bodding to some extent succeeded in this task not only by providing a complete collection, but also by working on the material till the end of

his life. In 1930 he once wrote an article on the Santals' social life (1930, 90-103). Figs. 3 and 4 show his objects displayed in the Ethnographical Museum in Oslo. This was not a proper display, but served more as storage. Due to a thorough modernization of the museum, these old exhibits have been dismounted and the objects buried away from the general public, only anthropologists and other specialists having access to them. The history of a living human group will for a long time be closed to the public.

NOTES

1. The present article is based on information collected by the author in the Ethnographic Museum, University of Oslo. The study of the Santal collection was made possible by a scholarship from the Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities (NAVF) for a period of two months (August-September) in 1969. The author wishes to thank Professor Dr. Arne Martin Klausen for his cordial help and support in the museum. The help rendered by Mr S. Sørensen for sketches, photos and consulting the Santal objects and information in reading the Norwegian texts will always be remembered, without which the bulk of Santal material would have been misunderstood. For certain photographs and information the author wishes to thank the secretariat of the Santal Mission of Northern Churches, Oslo, and the Librarian of the University of Oslo library. Finally all other colleagues in the museum will always be remembered for the unforgettable help which they extended from time to time.
2. As to Bodding's arrival in India, the Oslo museum publication *Studies* No. V, 1957 gives a different year, 1889 (pp. 104), which seems to be incorrect compared to the year 1890 mentioned in the reports of the Indian Mission to the Santals.
3. The term *Bonga* is used to designate the Santal's supernatural and impersonal power, existing as a quality or attribute of objects. This power can be animate or inanimate, with or without form. The Santal considers this quality as the cause of all unforeseen energy emerging in all forms and phases of productivity. The Bongas are spirits pervading everywhere. In order to avert their anger and danger they are offered sacrifices at all ceremonies.
4. In 1969 and 1970 I had an opportunity to meet Revd. J. Gausdal, successor to Revd. P. O. Bodding, at his home in Oslo. In our conversation on Bodding he told me that Bodding was always anxious to know more about the Santal community. He had created his own system to handle this problem by employing Santal informants who not only collected the required objects but also noted down the related information. When all was ready Bodding used to check up his material by asking questions of Santal leaders in the form of interviews. His attempts to keep a Santal field museum in Dumka was not understood by his mission colleagues. After his departure to Norway the objects were used to entertain the visitors and were given as presents to them.
5. *Kukli punthi*—a Santali religious book, was published in the Mission press at Bengaria. In 1879 Dr. Graham of the Scottish Mission presented a printing press to Skrefsrud for mission publications.

6. Kolean was a Santali *guru* (teacher) of Revd. Skrefsrud, whose accounts of the Santal traditions and Institutions were recorded by Skrefsrud on 15th February 1871, Bengaria (Bodding, 1942: 1).
7. After the death of Varier Elwin (1902–1964) his tribal collection was presented to the National Museum, New Delhi. Some of the Santal objects, such as the marriage litter (*rahi*) and fiddles (*banam*) are displayed in the tribal section of the museum.
8. Contrary to 'Sanskritization' the 'Santalization' is a process where the cultural phenomenon works as a mechanism for self-restraint. The process enhances revivalism on the basis of local ethnic traditions and ideals of the community by promoting group solidarity and conforming to the Santal standard of behaviour. It further attacks the hierarchy of the caste ideology and eliminates the diacritical differences in the internal structure between the clans and the ethnic groups (Gautam, 1973 A: 4).

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