Verrier Elwin's Field Methods and Fieldwork in Inia:d An Appraisal

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I. Introduction

Verrier Elwin's concern with the history of ideas led him to Indian folklore and ethnology. From the beginning he tried to identify himself with the general welfare of the community where he settled. After he had immersed himself in the life and activities of the people, he collected their folklore and other data to achieve further understanding of them and their culture. After he had accumulated enough data, he posed a particular theoretical problem which was important to that culture. When he moved to a different geographical area, he did not use the same theory but again collected data and offered relevant theories from that data alone. The results were published in separate monographs. John Bennett's observations about "individual perspective in fieldwork" apply to Elwin's work:

> By studying a living society in its natural setting over a period of time, the ethnologist acquires a large body of data, which, when analyzed and coordinated, becomes a portrait of a complex human milieu. This rich and complex body of data must be subjected to an eclectic interpretative analysis, because sweeping, single-factor theories can not see the trees for the woods, while intensive, small-scale hypotheses see only the trees and not all of them. The small-scale hypotheses are useful for the working-up of selected portions of the data, often published as separate articles. But the final production is the general monograph, which covers as much ground as the writer is able to cover with the data and facilities available.[1]

When Elwin settled at Karanjia and established his *Gond Seva Mandal* (Society for the Service of Gonds) with Shamrao Hivale and a team of workers, he had no idea that one day he would write folkloristic and anthropological works. Instead, his purpose was to live an exemplary Christian life of Franciscan poverty. He himself states that

1. John W. Bennett, "Individual Perspective in Field-Work: An Experimental Training Course," *Human Organization Research, Field Relations and Techniques*, eds. R.N. Adams and J.J. Preiss (Illinois, 1960), p. 431.

they did not intend "to take an exclusive interest in the tribes but were concerned with everybody who was poor and exploited."[2] They planned "to build up a settlement to help the people and to base our policy and way of life on a mixture of Franciscan and Gandhian ideas."[3] But once he decided to do intensive research among the tribes where he lived, as well as those in other parts of India, he remembered the obligations of a social scientist, in spite of his individual bias. Certainly he was conscious of his role as a humanitarian worker, and his humane and humanistic approach influenced his methodology as a social scientist. But he explains that "there is nothing whatever hostile to scientific enquiry in having an intense and affectionate interest in the people one studies, in desiring their progress and welfare and in regarding them as human beings rather than as laboratory specimens."[4] He approached anthropological study with a literary bias and was proud of having a humanistic background. He declared that "the study of folktales and myths, which some people regard as unworthy of the notice of a serious scholar, brought home to one the importance of the fears and anxieties of the people and the need to ensure that we did nothing that would intensify them."[5]

In order to comprehend Elwin's conclusions about the various tribes of India and their cultures, one must understand his field methods. Many assume that field research is a "rite of passage by which an individual becomes a fully qualified member of the profession"[6] and is thus accredited to the institution of social science, for "what he does there and what he learns depends upon the community he chooses to study and upon the kinds of questions he asks."[7] However, to Elwin fieldwork was not a rite of passage, but the essence of his scientific, intellectual and, above all, spiritual mission. The goal of this mission was to comprehend the people and their culture, "who are alike in their common humanity and different in the circumstances of their realizations."[8]

Before the strategy and the techniques of Elwin's field methods are

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2. Verrier Elwin, *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin, An Autobiography* (New York, 1964), p. 105. Cited hereafter as *Autobiography*.

3. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 105.

4. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 141.

5. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 142.

6. *Anthropology of Folk Religion*, ed. Charles Leslie (New York, 1960), p. vii.

7. Leslie, p. vii.

8. Leslie, p. xviii. See also: "All my life I have been in love with something, a cause, a tribe, a person. I fall in love in turn with every tribe I study. On the whole, I find the world a very lovable place and human beings, once you get to know them, very lovable creatures." Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 323.

analyzed, it may be worthwhile to note his own statement about them. He says:

> For me anthropology did not mean 'field-work': it meant my whole life. My method was to settle down among the people, live with them, share their life as far as an outsider could and generally do several books together.... This meant that I did not depend merely on asking questions, but knowledge of the people gradually sank in until it was part of me.[9]

In general, these statements accurately describe his method. Each locale, however, brought unique experiences and problems according to the varied field situations and culture areas. He made his abode in the tribal village of Madhyapradesh almost a field station and research center, spending different time periods amongst the diverse tribes of India with their individual cultural complexities.

Elwin's study includes diverse "culture-areas,"[10] each containing a number of different ethnic and linguistic tribes, all within the geographically and politically complex country of India. A knowledge of this complexity[11] and the time period he spent in each area under differing circumstances[12] is a pre-requisite for examining his field methods. In the Indian context, the tribes he studied are not isolated groups; they have been constantly interacting with the main-stream of Indian culture and civilization from historic times. Thus, Elwin's work and study are unique when compared with the work done by anthropologists and folklorists in isolated primitive communities. A second factor that confronts the investigator is the period of time he lived among the tribes. He himself was a severe critic of researchers who spent a limited time with a tribe and yet wrote monographs about their culture. In an address to the Bihar Research Society, he remarked in unequivocal terms:

> University professors seem content to make an occasional expedition of a fortnight and use the notes they take for the rest of their lives. Students spend a few hectic months preparing a thesis for a D. Phil., and then seem to lose all interest in the subject. Administrators, who in the spacious days

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9. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 142.

10. For explication of this term see A.L. Krœber, "The Culture-area and Age-area concepts of Clark Wissler," *Methods in Social Science, a Case Book*, ed. S.A. Rice (New York, 1931), pp. 248–265.

11. For discussion of this problem see S.N. Eisenstadt, "Anthropological Studies of Complex Societies," *Current Anthropology*, II (1961), 201–222 and "Comments," *Current Anthropology*, IV (1963), 319–323.

12. Here I refer to the pre-independent and post-independent situations in India in connection with anthropological researches. Elwin describes them in detail in *Autobiography*, pp. 40–99, 140–200, 224–265.

> of Dalton and Crooke, were able to collect much valuable material, now are far too preoccupied. The trained professional anthropologist is still a rarity.[13]

The extent to which this remark illuminates his methodology will be revealed later in this chapter. In summary, although Elwin's methodology was that of a social scientist, his motivation was that of a humanitarian, to draw administrative attention to "his people" and thus achieve their betterment. He believed:

> This need not mean any lowering of the standards of research, still less a bias towards any particular theory. For it is the glory of science to direct the radiance of truth into the dark places of human life and transform them.[14]

This paper will focus on Elwin's approach of eclecticism[15] and the syndical method [16] which he advocated and established in the field of folklore scholarship in India. To facilitate study, I have divided his work into ethnographical materials and the corpus of lore he collected. I will consider the ethnographical monographs according to the contemporary political area to which they belong, and I will emphasize the contextual and human aspects of Elwin's problems in the field situation and the specific methods of investigation he used in each case. In the second category, corpus of lore, his collection methods and the problems of language and translation will be discussed in a single section irrespective of cultural areas concerned. Elwin was conscious of the fact that "texture, text and context"[17] alone can give an idea of a cultural whole and has provided cross-references for understanding the culture of a particular tribe. This dichotomy into ethnographical work and corpus of lore is made to evaluate all possible questions with which folklorists are confronted in understanding the importance of field methods in folklore scholarship, rather than the culture of the

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13. Verrier Elwin, "Our Debt to India's Tribesman," *JBRS*, XXXIII, pts. I and II (1947), 98.

14. Elwin, *Autobiography*, pp. 132–143.

15. For further elaboration of this term see Roger Abrahams, *Deep Down in the Jungle* (Hatboro, 1964), pp. 3–16.

16. "While I am responsible for the final form in which the songs are printed, the translation was the work of a 'syndicate'—a gond magician, a Pardhan dancer, the village blacksmith, ourselves, and from time to time the local cowherd or the Baiga priest co-opted as advisory members." Hivale & Elwin, *Songs of the Forest* (London, 1935), p. 9. For the importance of teamwork in the field in comtemporary scholarship see Ralph Piddington, *Introduction to Social Anthropology*, (London, 1957), II, 571–574.

17. Alan Dundes, "Texture, Text and Context," *SFQ*, XXVIII (1964), 251–265.

tribes Elwin studied. In other words, it will be a "three level analysis"[18] of his field methods. In the ethnographical materials the focus will be the context, and in the corpus of lore, the text and the texture. In reality, as Thompson observes: "Folklore and ethnology have always had so intimate and well-recognised a relationship that it is not possible to draw exact boundaries between them."[19]

In order to understand the synthesis of Elwin's impressionism and objective observation, one must first recognize the problems he faced and then analyze the "strategy" and "techniques" he adopted in the field.[20] Field methods as they are conceptualized here are concerned with the human aspect of the researcher in relation to the people with whom he works in the field, rather than with the empirical data of methodology. Since Elwin was not motivated by academic inquisitiveness but by sheer love of the people and their problems as reflected in their oral tradition, the question of "the adaptation of techniques he brought with him" is not as important as "the adaptation of himself."[21] Once his strategy is visualised, the effectiveness of his techniques can be ascertained. As Adams and Preiss state:

> The effectiveness of a technique varies partially with the originality of the investigator and his willingness to take certain operational risks. Research activities, like the behaviors they examine, become institutionalized; they become identified with certain types of loci and problems and by the same token, are 'off-limits' for other.[22]

II. Ethnographic Works

A. Madhyapradesh

Hiralal, in his presidential address to the anthropological section of the Indian Science Congress in 1922, refered to the complex problems encountered in studying the primitive tribes of central India. He emphasized the diverse theories of their origin, the process of acculturation, and, particularly, the problem of ethnographical inquiries. For example, he explained:

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18. Dundes, p. 265. Dundes advocates the "three level analysis" for defining folklore methods. I have adopted his terminology in analyzing Elwin's field methods.

19. Stith Thompson, "Advances in Folklore Studies," *Anthropology Today: International Symposium on Anthropology*, ed. A.L. Krœber (New York, 1952), p. 589.

20. Piddington, pp. 527–528.

21. R.N. Adams and J.J. Preiss, p. vii.

22. Adams and Preiss, p. 218.

> Thus the primitive people have not only accepted opprobrious names the etymology of which they did not know but have even condescended to yield to the whims of the dominant race in accepting wrong names imposed on them through the ignorance of the former.[23]

To clearly understand the tribes, their language and lore under such circumstances requires a prolonged investigation before forming theories.[24] Elwin devoted twenty-two years of his anthropological researches in Madhyapradesh to gaining full comprehension. During this period he extensively toured the area to gather materials on particular tribes distributed over a wide geographic area yet sharing common beliefs, mores and tradition.

From the beginning he was interested in the Gond tribes and their welfare. For the purpose of research he divided these tribes into three distinct classes, i.e., old Gond aristocracy, Hinduised Gonds, and those resisting alien culture but not completely out of its influences.[25]. In describing the Gond tribes, Elwin says:

> Their religion is characteristic and alive; their tribal organization is unimpaired, their artistic and choreographic traditions are unbroken; their mythology still vitalises the healthy organism of tribal life.[26]

He became so involved with this tribe that he married a Gond girl,[27]

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23. Hiralal, "The Aborigines of Central India," *Man in India*, II (1922), 17–18. For further information on the problem of studying tribes of the central provinces see S. Hislop, *Papers Relating to the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces* (Nagpur, 1966).

24. For a similar situation concerning American Indians see Franz Boas's remark: "Such a confusion of dialects and languages exists here that it is very difficult to accomplish anything in a short time. The material overwhelms me." Letter by Boas quoted in *Pioneers of American Anthropology*, ed. June Helm (Washington, 1966), p. 159.

25. Verrier Elwin, as quoted in *Social Service Quarterly*, XXVIII, no. 3 (1942), 103.

26. Social Service Quarterly, p. 103.

27. Verrier Elwin, "I Married a Gond," *Man in India*, XX, no. 4 (1940), 228–255 sheds light on his participation, not in the anthropological sense. Kenneth S. Goldstein in *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore* (Hatboro, 1964), p. 67 comments on the role of the collector's wife:

> Not only is she in an excellent position to socialize with local women and collect women's lore, but she is the entree for the male collector into the private world of women's activities and gossip as well as to children's life in the community.

In this connection it should be borne in mind here that Elwin's wife was a tribal woman and she accompanied Elwin on almost all field trips in Madhyapradesh and Orissa. As Elwin himself observes, this helped him in making initial contact and resulted in better rapport.

who assisted his researches in Madhyapradesh. His marriage made him almost a member of the community, but at the same time he remained the "invisible man,,"[28] i.e. the anthropologist| The results of his Madhyapradesh researches were twofold: the ethnographic monographs *The Baiga* (1939), *The Agaria* (1942), *Maria Murder and Suicide* (1943), and *The Muria and their Ghotul* (1947); and a general introductory book about the attitude of anthropologists toward tribal administration called *Loss of Nerve* (1944).

A brief look at Elwin's diary from 1932–1935, *Leaves From the Jungle: Life in a Gond Village*, provides essential background for analysis of the basic theoretical problem in each of the four monographs, and the analysis of the contextual and human aspects of the field situation in each case. The diary gives a clear picture of the situation in which he lived, and of the maintenance of rapport with his informants. It also gives an overall view of his life, explaining his impetus for undertaking later scientific inquiries. A review of the diary in *The New Statesman* contains the following comments which reflect Elwin's work at the time and which explicate the nature of his mission. According to the reviewer, Elwin

> ...established an ashram (headquarters) from which and of which and of his great protegés and friend she writes 'so fully', so wisely, and so wittily, that we know them more intimately and more thoroughly, as we laugh with them, and at them, than any primitive people that have been shown to us in books. Mr. Elwin's ashram with its chapel and dispensary, its school and its rest house and its leper colony, is built in the Gond manner, but with little details of sanitation, etc., that the Gonds have overlooked, and with flowers everywhere where flowers will grow. Here where all creeds are honoured and Christianity is practised rather than preached, Mr. Elwin and his Indian friends live and work.[29]

Although the review and the book do not have theoretical significance of great magnitude, they reveal the pre-field preparations of an anthropologist at work, and the hypotheses he was silently formulating. The testing of hypotheses had to come later.

The history of scientific investigations offers two approaches to knowledge of man and his works, the *rationalistic* and the *empirical* approach. The former is based on the reasoning process and the latter on the sense perceptions. Contemporary social science research accepts neither one alone, but rather a *synthesis*.[30] In the early phase of his

28. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 150.

29. *The New Statesman*, London (October 24, 1936), p. 8.

30. Harris K. Goldstein, *Research Standards and Methods for Social Workers* (New Orleans, 1963), pp. 6–7.

work, Elwin was trying to understand the situation both through rationalistic and empirical approaches. The outcome, or synthesis, is revealed in the monographs. As Harris Goldstein says:

> The scientific method is often considered self-corrective because of this relationship between theory and explanation on one hand and observations on the other, where theory and explanation are modified until they agree with the observations and observations are continued until they can be explained and predicted by theory.[31]

Leaves from the Jungle was the result of a period of preliminary observations which led later to systematic inquiries. One such observation occurs in Elwin's diary:

> December 30. In the morning we are visited by a picturesque group of wandering minstrels called Bhimas, apparently an offshoot of the Gond tribe. Some of their songs quite charming, and their dancing excellent, but they are not very well informed about the facts of life. 'Do you know anything of your past?' we ask all agog for some fresh anthropological information. 'We don't know anything about the past; what we are interested in are our stomachs. '—Have you ever heard of Mahatma Gandhi?' we asked then, applying this universal test of wider intelligence. 'We are not interested in Mahatmas: all we care for is the stomach 'they reply again, affectionately patting that organ.'[32]

A fellow anthropologist further clarified Elwin's participant observation and practice in the field situation. Visiting Elwin in 1938, the missionary-anthropologist Edwin Smith described the contextual situation and remarked about Elwin:

> Another day I wanted to go and see the Baigas in their homes and Elwin, Shamrao and I went off in the car, Shamrao driving and Elwin in the back with a little naked brown boy cuddling up to him. We went through the plain first of all; then into the forest along a road labelled 'unmotorable' —and it was! We came to the vilage—an extraordinarily interesting experience. They live in a sort of rectangular village, the houses being arranged on three or four sides of a square. We were greeted by the chief. He told us that he was100years old at least. He might very well have been.
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> Men and women danced, I won't say with equal zest of the Africans, but they did dance in a pleasureable fashion. One could sense without any difficulty that Elwin and Shamrao fitted in with these people—no standoffshness, but an atmosphere of perfect trust and friendliness between them.[33]

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31. Goldstein, p. 8.

32. Elwin, *Leaves from the Jungle: Life in a Gond Village*, 2nd Ed. (London, 1938), p. 175.

33. Edwin Smith quoted in Shamrao Hivale, *Scholar Gypsy, A Study of Verrier Elwin* (Bombay, 1946), p. 201.

In the first of his ethnographic monographs, *The Baiga*, Elwin included routine sections on all aspects of Baiga life that would be expected in any ethnographic work. As has been indicated in the introductory section, like Boas[34] he did not begin with a hypothetical problem to be solved but sought to collect data from which a hypothesis or a theory might be drawn. In *The Baiga* the focus is *Bewar*-cutting (shifting cultivation) and the traditional lore and beliefs connected with it which motivated and influenced the life of the Baiga. To complete this gigantic task he visited all the areas inhabited by these tribes, "talked freely with hundreds of Baiga in their own language, made many intimate friends, overheard a great volume of village gossip, settled a host of quarrels and disputes, and assisted at nearly all the ceremonies described in this book."[35] This monograph was the fruit of six years' probing into the particular problem in mind from 1932 to 1938. During this period he collected all data pertinent to *Bewar*-cutting, as well as other problems and aspects which set *Bewar*-cutting as the nexus in Baiga culture.

Speaking about this contextual situation and the human aspect of field methods, Elwin said: "My nearest English neighbors were a hundred miles away: I was thus compelled not only to work but to relax in tribal company."[36] As a "participant community-worker"[37] rather than just an observer, he was able to identify himself with other members of the community and thus obtain information about the feelings of the people. Such a situation gave him the opportunity to understand the people, their traditions and problems in great depth. At the same time he could formulate the theoretical problem of the Baiga culture in a meaningful way by emphasizing *Bewar*-cutting. By identifying himself with the people and their problems and at the same time observing with scientific detachment, Elwin lived up to a social scientist's standards. Benjamin Paul observes: "Participation implies emotional involvement; observation requires detachment. It

34. Gladys A. Reichard, "Franz Boas and Folklore," in *American Anthropologist,* VL, iii, pt. 2 (1943), 53–54, says about Boas: "He himself did have theories, but it is one of his most outstanding characteristics that he did not feel a compulsion to defend them *if* the materials dictated otherwise."

35. Elwin, *The Baiga* (London, 1939), p. xxviii.

36. Elwin, *The Baiga*, p. xxix.

37. During this period, I prefer to call him a "participant community-worker" rather than an observer since his basic motivation in living in such a community was social service. Observations as an anthropologist were secondary to the basic ideal. Moreover, the time factor was of no concern to him. In the anthropological and folkloristic sense, it was beyond the limitations of a participant-observer.

is a strain to try to sympathize with others and at the same time strive for scientific objectivity."[38] But to Elwin, "scientific objectivity" meant not to solve a particular "small-scale hypothesis" but to understand the core-problem of a culture in order to device means of preserving the culture rather than allowing it to fall before an alien culture. Further, he had a role more unique than that of an academician, a missionary or an administrator. This in one way gave him the opportunity to understand the culture in its many-faceted expression. He himself stated:

> I had the further advantage of being neither an official who might seem too alarming nor a missionary who might seem too respectable. I was simply regarded as an amiable and eccentric person who was interested in everybody and everything, and to whom people could say anything that came into their heads. I was the Bhumia-sahib.[39]

Elwin described his relationship with the people and their observations about him thus:

> One of the greatest compliments an ethnographer could be paid was given me by a Baiga in Pandaria. We had visited his village and been received with great friendliness but none of the fuss and deference which the touring officer generally receives. One of my company was annoyed at this and said to the villagers: 'Here is a sahib; he must be someone important. Why don't you make proper arrangements for his reception?' The Baiga laughed at this. 'We know it's only *bara bhai* (the usual name for me). He is such an ordinary man (*mamuli admi*) that when we see him coming we say, oh, it's only *bara bhai*, there's no need to bother.'[40]

By not following a routine and accepted path in the collection of folklore, but by devoting himself to a cause, Elwin created his own methodology in the field. No method can be right for all situations; since methodology helps in understanding a situation, new situations demand a change in methodology. This was true in the case of Elwin. As regards the specific methodology he adapted in *The Baiga*, he collected short autobiographies of men and women "for these give a clear and immediate insight into those things which the Baiga themselves consider memorable."[41] At the same time he was in a position

38. Benjamin D. Paul, "Interview Techniques and Field Relationships," *Anthropology Today* (Chicago, 1953), p. 441.
39. Elwin, *The Baiga*, p. xxviii.
40. Elwin, *The Baiga*, pp. xxviii–xxix.
41. Elwin, *The Baiga*, p. xxviii.

to check his data with the help of these autobiographies.[42]

In addition to this particular methodology in corroborating his observations with the autobiographies, Elwin also described his unique experiences and the native people's assistance to him in cases of physical distress. He related one such situation:

> The next morning, I was standing in the forest when a large pig lumbered up to me with a leaf in its mouth which it dropped at my feet. I was rather moved by this—sort of Francis among the birds touch, I thought—and then forgot all about it. But no sooner had I returned home than I went down with a violent attack of fever. The local magicians waited on me, and soon diagnosed the cause—the witch of Bohi, annoyed at my presence in the village, had put magic into a leaf and sent it to me by her pig. They immediately took necessary measures and I recovered.[43]

This account displays Elwin's keen observation, and at the same time gives facts about that which Malinowski has called the "imponderabilia of actual life."[44]

In his second monograph, *The Agaria*, Elwin wanted to collect autobiographies of his informants, but such a methodology proved unsuccessful in a new situation, as he found: "I made many attempts to collect autobiographies as I did easily and successfully from the Baiga, but I failed to get anything worthy of a permanent record."[45] The central theme of this monograph is the "marriage of myth and craft." Again Elwin was the pioneer worker among this tribe scattered all over Madhyapradesh and some of the bordering areas of Bihar and Orissa. The literature about this tribe was not only scanty but inaccu-

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42. Collection of life histories either in biographical or autobiographical form have been an accepted methodology both in folklore and anthropology. For example, see Richard M. Dorson's life-sketches of his informants in many of his books and articles. Clyde Kluckhohn calls it "expressive interview" in *The Use of Personal Documents in History, Anthropology and Sociology* (New York, 1945), pp. 106–108.

43. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 149.

44. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (New York, 1961), p. 24; see also W.V. Grigson's statement: On two decent tours I have taken this book (*The Baiga*) with one, have shown many Baiga its illustrations, and talked to them of its contents; I can testify to its great general accuracy, and its value as a key to their confidence. Far from resenting anything written in it, they are naively proud that so full a record of their life has been made, "Review of *The Baiga*", *Man*, XLI (1941), 39.

45. Verrier Elwin, *The Agaria* (Bombay, 1942), p. xxviii.

rate." Condemning the methods of the earlier scholars in this field, Elwin said:

> It must sound, I am afraid, ungracious and ungenerous to decry the methods and results of these older and pioneer scholars, but it is necessary because there is a dangerous tendency among the younger Indian anthropologists to follow their example. There is a tendency to scamp personal investigation on the spot, to make brief visits of a fortnight or less to a district and then write about it, to conduct inquiries from the veranda of a dak bungalow.[47]

He went on to criticize such an interview conducted by another investigator in his presence and with the help of a police officer.[48] For the purpose of obtaining exploratory information on the Agaria, he made several trips to different areas to get first-hand information about the distribution of the tribe. He understood clearly that reliance on government records and officials was not helpful. Dependence on assistance from administrators in that particular period of time was unsuitable for scientific consideration, as Elwin explained:

> ... the Tahasildars of certain districts in the Province were asked to compile lists of villages in which there were Agaria smithies. This, you would say, was a simple enough business and, since government taxes the smithies, almost a speciality of Revenue officials. Yet every list was hopelessly inaccurate and useless, not only for the purpose of science but even as guide to research.[49]

Reaffirming his belief in the necessity of fieldwork in such a situation, Elwin declared:

> You can not observe mankind from the howdah of an elephant. There is no substitute for fieldwork. There is no substitute for life in the village, among the people, staying in village houses, and enduring the physical distress as well as the possible misunderstandings that may arise.[50]

He believed that "the truth is told to those who are loved," and data cannot be "bought by presents of liquor and tobacco." To be a field

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46. Kenneth S. Goldstein in *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore* (Hatbore, 1964), pp. 37–38, suggests that the collector should have an acquaintance with the literature about the people in the area before he starts his investigation. In this case Elwin happened to be the pioneer worker in a virgin field only touched by W. Reuben, the classicist French scholar, who was only interested in historical reconstruction of the Asur tribes of Chhotanagpur. He conjectured their relation to the Asurs (demons) of Indian mythology.

47. Elwin, *The Agaria*, p. xxxi.

48. Elwin, *The Agaria*, p. xxxi.

49. Elwin, *The Agaria*, p. xxix.

50. Elwin, *The Agaria*, p. xxxi.

worker among the tribes of India requires "long residence, intimate personal contact, knowledge of local idiom" and "trained Indian assistants." For this reason, as indicated earlier, he frequently criticised hastily-made generalisations. Before Elwin attempted to do his work, W. Reuben published a monograph on this tribe entitled *Eisenschmiede und Dämonen in Indien* in 1939. Speaking about this monograph, Elwin said:

> Time is of great importance. Reuben's monumental *Eisenschmiede und Dämonen in Indien* was written after a sojourn of only a month among the Asur of Chota Nagpur. No scholar, however brilliant, can expect the results of such hastily gathered inquiries to be accepted. The value of Reuben's book, however, is great. He puts the modern iron-smelter into an almost cosmic setting, and allows us to see him against the vast background of Sanskrit mythology.[51]

Elwin's comments in *The Agaria* were not based on hypothetical assumptions relating the iron smelters with the mythological Asurs but, instead, on contemporary beliefs. Describing how mythology vitalises crafts and how beliefs are ingrained in the life of the people, he quotes his own observation on one occasion:

> Special reverence is always due to fire: it must not be kindled for some days after a death; it is dangerous to swear by fire; if a man urinates on fire, his penis may become swollen and covered with sores. This happened to an Agaria boy in Bhanpur (Karanjia). He tried many remedies without effect: at last he gave food-offering to Agyasur and recovered.[52]

The Agaria is full of such personal observations which reveal his intimate relationship with the people, "the people that lived every moment of their lives for an ancient craft and by a living myth." He championed their cause based on what Elwin considered the decay of the industry, which created anxiety, fear and poverty among the people. S. C. Roy, in the foreword to the book, rightfully observes:

> ... we are filled with admiration at the clear and comprehensive, accurate and scientific and yet deeply sympathetic delineation of the life and manners and mentality of one of the poorest and lowliest but withal most interesting forest tribes of India. Indian ethnology is fortunate in securing the wholehearted (and let us hope lifelong) services of a consummate scholar and a sturdy champion of the poor and the oppressed in Mr. Verrier Elwin, whose name is now a household word among the aborigines of the central provinces.[53]

51. Elwin, *The Agaria*, p. xxxii.

52. Elwin, *The Agaria*, p. 117. Motif. C 99.1.1. Tabu: Urinating on Fire (Fire-god).

53. Elwin, *The Agaria*, p. xiii.

In summary, in *The Agaria*, Elwin depends on the collection of folktales, beliefs and myths of the people connected with the age-old craft of iron-smelting. Particularly in the section on myth, he quotes a number of his personal experiences and observations, a technique that is a rarity in anthropological or folkloristic work in India. These observations give a lucid picture of the human aspect of the field situation.

In *Maria Murder and Suicide*, although Elwin is concerned with a problem which would be of much interest to criminologists, his method is influenced by his love for folklore and oral tradition. As Hutton observes, Elwin "goes into the various causes leading to the commission of criminal acts, treats of the behaviour of the homicide after his crime, his dreams and so forth, of the attitudes of tribal society to the criminal, and of the treatment of the aboriginal prisoner in goal."[54] Elwin began to collect data about the criminals from the judicial records. After searching these records, he undertook the strenuous task of interviewing the criminals in and outside of the jail. Then he recorded the attitudes of the tribal people and their various beliefs and customs related to crime. As Emeneau remarks, "the amount of detail provided is most praiseworthy and makes this a notable ethnological treatise."[55] Speaking about the contextual situation in which the data were collected and about the manner in which he worked, Elwin said:

> Between 1935 and 1942 I made tours in this enchanting land among these enchanting people. On the earlier tours I was accompanied by my friend Mr. Shamrao Hivale whose amazing sympathy and insight helped me to catch my first vision of Maria culture. Later I had the support of my wife, who being herself a Gond, was able to get quickly in touch with the people and immediately established a friendly atmosphere.[56]

Elwin described the persons and the context he visited:

> In Aranpur I stood beside the still warm ashes of the ritually cremated clothes of Barse Chewa who had been recently hanged in jail. At Khutepal, I watched Oyami Masa's children playing on the very floor once stained by the blood of his murdered wife; . . . In Doriras I saw the grave of the murdered Boti which had been desecrated by Shasia for the sake of the purse of money which had been buried to help the dead man on his journey to the other world. In the same village I visited the home of Kawasi Borga then

54. J.H. Hutton, Review of *Maria Murder and Suicide*, in *Man*, LXIV (July-Aug., 1945), 89–90.

55. M.B. Emeneau, Review of *Maria Murder and Suicide, American Anthropologist*, XVILL (1945), 163–164.

56. Verrier Elwin, *Maria Murder and Suicide*, 2nd ed. (Bombay, 1950), p. xxiv.

serving a life sentence, and talked to his fine sons and his sad pathetic wife.[57]

In field work, one of the most intricate and difficult situations confronting the worker is the reaction of the people who are interviewed. Tribal life is so belief and myth oriented that any calamity, disaster or irregularity in the area usually creates misapprehension amongst the tribe toward the ethnographer. In such a situation the ethnographer has to be both tactful and sympathetic to win over the informants and thus collect his information. Elwin's research was complicated not only because he was concerned with a past criminal act, but also because he aroused suspicion about the purpose of his investigation. The people, he noted, were "naturally inclined to be secretive and prefer to claim ignorance rather than expose themselves to possible later difficulties by confiding in the investigator."[58] However, other ethnographers met similar difficulties:

> But inquiries among the Maria are never easy. The people say that, as a result of Mr. Grigson's investigation when he was writing his book on the tribe, their villages have suffered an invasion of man-eating tigers. In one village where I myself took photographs it was declared afterwards that I had made all the women barren.[59]

In *Maria Murder and Suicide* Elwin was chiefly concerned with subjective material, i.e., sentiments of the people interviewed. But his task was not only to gather sentiments, but to correlate them with the act of criminal activity in general. In other words, after faithfully recording his observations, he tried to deduce the interpersonal relations out of which the sentiments arose. So his field methods in this particular work were structured in non-directive and highly situational terms. The investigation necessitated his roles as a benefactor and a sympathiser in order for him to understand the opinions of the people and make a cognitive formulation of ideas on the subject.

As the problem varies, so do the methods. Elwin's classic ethnographic work, *Muria and their Ghotul*, depended not on participation but on interviewing people and discussing with them the subject of sex. In this culture area Elwin's problem was to study the social institution of *ghotul*. To understand this institution in its many-faceted expressions, one has to comprehend the social fabric woven around it. Elwin confronted a simple and homogeneous culture with firmly established values, as he noted: "Here everything was arranged to prevent long-drawn intense attachments, to eliminate jealousy and possessive-

57. Elwin, *Maria Murder*, p. xxiv
58. Elwin, *Maria Murder*, p. xxv.
59. Elwin, *Maria Murder*, p. xxv.

ness, to deepen the sense of communal property and action."[60] Elwin was handicapped in observing this close community since tradition never allows an outsider to remain inside the *ghotul*. Elwin stated:

> Every night, when everything had warmed up, there came a moment when I had to leave the ghotul. I would have given almost anything to have stayed on, to have traced (having watched the process of tumescence) the story to its end, even if only as an observer. But the rules were very definite and I knew that if I broke them even once my chances of obtaining information might be lost. So I always went away to my cold and comfortless camp, nostalgic for the happy, exciting world I left behind.[61]

To the Murias, sexual cohabitation was not immoral. It was to be "performed by the right people (such as a *chelik* and *motiari* who were not taboo to one another), at the right time (outside the menstrual period and avoiding forbidden days), and in the right place (within the *ghotul* walls where no 'sin' could be committed)."[62] But for the field worker to obtain information about "the right place" was a formidable task. Even Elwin's Gond wife could not help.

> To get information from the motiari's point of view was almost impossible for a party of men; Kosi filled the gap and obtained some unique experiences from her friends in the ghotul—into which, however, to her great annoyance she was not allowed, as a married woman to enter.[63]

As "Maria sahib" Elwin created such an atmosphere of friendliness that it was possible for him to get information, though it took him a long time because:

> The ghotul does not yield up its secrets readily. It is easy enough to obtain a superficial knowledge of its organization, but the Muria have no conscience at all about misleading the inquirer, and it is almost routine for them to give incorrect information at first.[64]

Elwin became both a "detective and a magistrate" to obtain his data, but he proceeded with affection:

> They are the most friendly people in the world—once you have learnt how to set about them. They immediately respond to respect. For years they have been scolded, peered at, ridiculed by every visitor to their villages; their first reaction to a newcomer is naturally to throw up a barrier of re-

60. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 164.
61. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 164.
62. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 166.
63. Verrier Elwin, *The Muria and their Ghotul* (Bombay, 1947), p. xiv.
64. Elwin, *The Muria*, p. xi.

ticence and falsehood.[65]

Elwin succeeded because of his genuine intimacy with and concern for the people He was conscious that in ethnographic literature a village dormitory as a place of research is not adequate and moreover the methods applied were not holistic.[66] In order to comprehend the nexus of this problem, he not only gathered information through questionnaires but requested other investigators to conduct independent research on different aspects of the problem. Kaufmann studied the music, Mitchell the language, Guha the anthropometry, and a huge team of workers, drawn from the administration and outside of it, assisted. Before Elwin published his conclusions, he presented the manuscript before a private seminar at the house of Woods in Bombay. The points raised there were subsequently investigated in the field.

During the first stage of his investigation, Elwin sought problems and concepts that could provide a premise for understanding the institution he was studying. He looked for information beyond the questionnaire which could serve as an indicator of "the right place," which was hard to observe. So information gathered through questionnaires, his wife's assistance, and the team's work enabled him to relate the phenomena inside the *ghotul* with the culture and make an authentic, comprehensive assessment of the cultural complexity.

In conclusion, Elwin's field methods in Madhyapradesh were diverse because of the highly complex situations and problems. It is evident that Elwin was not hasty in forming generalizations and believed that understanding of the Indian situation resulted from long study, a sympathetic attitude, and, above all, a devotion to a cause. Theoretical concepts were important, but not until adequate data had been collected. He believed in obtaining minutest details through observation and collection of folklore before arriving at a theoretical premise. And his studies were translated into practical terms, instead of dealing in abstractions.

B. Orissa

The research in Orissa posed unusual problems and brought Elwin new experiences. Though he had advocated collecting exhaustive data on cultures as entities and accumulating it over a long period of time,

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65. Elwin, *The Muria*, p. xi.

66. Here Elwin mentions the work of E.W. Smith and A.M. Dale, *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* (London, 1920); B. Malinowski, *The Sexual Life of Savages* (London, 1932); Hutton Webster, *Primitive Secret Societies* (New York, 1908); and other works in continental literature, reference to which was supplied to him by C. von Fürer-Haimendorf.

he did not do this in Orissa. He moved into the area briefly on different assignments whenever he was requested to by the colonial administration and the post-independent native administration. Moreover, researches in Orissa were conducted at different times: some during the period of World War II, some during the period when colonial rulers were about to leave, and the last phase when he was honorary ethnographer of Orissa and subsequently anthropologist to the government of India.

Out of his Orissa researches came the ethnographic monographs "Notes on the Juang" (1948), published in *Man in India* as a special volume, "Economics of the Kuttia Konds" (unpublished), *Bondo Highlanders* (1950) and *The Religion of an Indian Tribe* (1955). For the purpose of our inquiry, when we analyze each of these ethnographic monographs, we can note the diversity of the field situations and his methods in handling them. In particular, his Orissa researches convinced Elwin that a theoretical problem is a prerequisite for any kind of folkloristic or anthropological inquiry.[67] Perhaps this change in his attitude was due to his earlier experiences in Madhyapradesh. He was concerned in Orissa with what data to gather and bow to gather them. For this he depended on the same team of workers whom he had trained in ethnographic inquiry.

In Orissa, as in Madhyapradesh, Elwin had problems in regard to the political situation. The areas in which Elwin worked were under the administrative control of colonial rulers as well as feudal lords; until 1936 Orissa was not a separate province.[68] So obtaining literature on the ethnography of the tribes of Orissa was a difficult task for Elwin. Moreover, no systematic studies of the tribes of Orissa had ever been made. Most of the work done by missionaries and colonial administrators was not only inadequate[69] but grossly inaccurate. Some areas were not even touched. Elwin was aware of the poverty of anthropological and folkloristic data. He also realized the tremendous sociocultural changes occurring during the period due to World War II, the transfer of power from the colonial rulers to the democratic

67. "I myself, however, have preferred to plan my series of Orissa monographs somewhat differently. This book on the Bondos will lay its emphasis on character and personality, for in this tribe it is the individual who stands out sharply and his human problems which are of special interest." Verrier Elwin, *Bondo Highlanders* (Bombay, 1950), p. vi.

68. For details about the political history of Orissa see H.K. Mahatab, *History of Orissa*, 2 vols. (Cuttack, 1963); Ramsay Cobden, *Feudatory States of Orissa* (Calcutta, 1910).

69. Verrier Elwin, *The Religion of an Indian Tribe* (Bombay, 1955), pp. 1–33 (cited hereafter as *Indian Tribe*); *Bondo*, pp. 1–7; "Notes on the Juang," *Man in India*, XXVIII (1948), 7–15 (cited hereafter as *Juang*).

government, and the first phase of nationalistic aspirations of a free society. With this emergence, a new view of history was gradually gaining importance. The concept of greatness of an individual lord by historical inheritance was losing ground, and the tribes were being considered part of a great society in the making. So a concern with human behavior in its continuity from historical times and the change that was going to be achieved and realised both made an impact on Elwin's work. Through his mystical absorption with the tribes, Elwin was looking for the true nature of things on the plane of the normal life of the people. His personal love and faith as a basis for the study of the tribes had changed into the professional faith of an anthropologist. As regards methodology, this faith had already germinated with his researches on Muria dormitories.

No culture is a closed system. The differing human behavior of diverse groups can only be understood within a larger system. Elwin realized that tribal communities are only a part of India's cultural and social history. In addition, he was enculturated in the technique of handling and overcoming the stupendous obstructions from the tribes in the field situation and of understanding the complexity of the situation on the intellectual plane.

From the beginning of research in Orissa among the Juang, he identified and formulated a problem. As Goldstein observes:

> The identification and formulation of the problem includes decisions whether it is an empirical or theoretical problem, the identification and description of the principal concepts in the problem, and the relation between them.[70]

Among the Juang Elwin found "no two Juang will agree on the number of clans or the nature of gods; every myth and legend varies a little."[71] And on the practical side, the Juangs refused to talk to any visitor and they said, "We've never had a visitor here before and we don't want one now." Describing his field situation, Elwin said:

> At one point, when I was being carried with high fever through the jungle at night, my Juang bearers dumped me down and disappeared, leaving me alone without a light and unable to walk. Another time they declared, "whether you live or die, what is that to us?" and refused to help even a sick man.[72]

While he was treated thus in Keenjhar, in Pal Lahara he was called

70. Harris K. Goldstein, *Social Workers*, p. 18.
71. Elwin, *Juang*, p. 3.
72. Elwin, *Juang*, p. 3.

"Rusi Sahib." He described another situation:

> In Bonai a belief that we were exporting girls "for the war" meant that I hardly ever saw a woman who was not over military age. In the wilder Juang hills of Keenjhar, though some of the people remembered the former Administrator Macmillan (a popular, and then almost legendary, figure who married a Bhuiya girl), many had never seen a white face before and, believing me to be an evil spirit, fled into the jungle with shrill cries of horror and amazement.[73]

Elwin spent only a few months in 1942 in these areas and depended on inquiries made by his assistants, a practice he himself had decried in the past. In spite of this, his notes on the Juangs consisted of first-hand information and observations documented in the classical ethnographic manner. His work was more scientific than the previous studies done by travellers and administrators which were not only inaccurate but confusing and overly-imaginative.[74] Elwin's problem was the study of acculturation due to a rapid change through the influence of urbanisation. The empirical referents through the repertoire of myths and legends provided materials to investigate this concept.

Unfortunately his projected "Economics of the Kuttia Konds"[75] has not yet been published. Thus it is difficult to know about his experience among these people who are known throughout British India for their love of human sacrifice." Elwin described the field situation in only a few pages in his autobiography. He told how the people assisted him in protecting the party moving through dangerous tracts from man-eating tigers and wild elephants.[77]

Elwin's incentive for research among the Bondos came from two articles published by Fürer-Haimendorf. Referring to the situation, Fürer-Haimendorf wrote in 1943:

> Seclusion in highlands even to-day accessible only by foot paths, and an innate conservatism seem to be responsible for the persistence of a culture representing no doubt one of the last remnants of the Austro-Asiatic civiliza-

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73. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 171.

74. Vivian Meik, *The People of the Leaves* (London, 1931); L.S.S. O'Malley, *Modern India and the West* (London, 1941).

75. Elwin refers to this projected work in *Bando*, p. vi.

76. S.C. Macpherson, *Report upon the Khonds of the Districts of Ganjam and Cuttack* (Madras, 1942); Home Department, Govt. of India, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Operations for the Suppression of Human Sacrifice and Female Infanticide in the Hill Tracts of Orissa* (Calcutta, 1854); John Campbell, *A Personal Narrative of Thirteen Years Service Amongst the Wild Tribes of Khondistan for the Suppression of Human Sacrifice* (London, 1864).

77. Elwin, *Autobiography*, pp. 177–179.

> tion which in neolithic times, extended from Further India deep into the Indian Peninsula.[78]

The Bondos belong to Austro-Asiatic civilization, but were characterized by Elwin as "excessive." When Elwin made his first visit to this inaccessible country, he was utterly disappointed. Because of World War II, it was a bad time for ethnographic work. There was suspicion all around. Preparations for the fieldwork were much hampered due to the military administration. Elwin said:

> All maps were, very properly, controlled by the military authorities, and so I had very little idea of where anything was. Food, with equal propriety was strictly rationed, and for a traveller to obtain the necessary permits involved endless waiting about in dreary offices. Rations were issued by the week, but I needed supplies for several months.[79]

During this period in India, unless the researcher was a part of the administration, he had the disadvantage of being interrogated.[80] Though Elwin was experienced in countering any kind of obstacle, he could not possibly counteract the apprehension of the people among whom he had to work. As he explained:

> Later I heard that it was supposed that I had come to take recruits for the war, that I was going to send all the children to America to be baptized, and—most curious of all—that I was an excise officer who had come to introduce prohibition.[81]

But after a while he established enough rapport to start his inquiry. The theoretical problem in which he was interested was the character and personality of the Bondo people. To succeed, particularly among this hostile people, was an enormous task. He had to pay several visits to the area. By the time of his second visit he had the official status of honorary ethnographer to the government of Orissa, which helped him to get assistance from the government. But this official status did not impress the people. Several times his wife and assistants were threatened with death.[82] Since Elwin sought to understand the personality of the Bondos, the method upon which he depended in this inquiry was to collect genealogies and check and countercheck these against the data collected through participant observation. Like most

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78. C. Von Fürer-Haimendorf, "Avenues to Marriage Among the Bondos of Orissa," *Man in India*, XXIII (1943), 168.
79. Verrier Elwin, "My Worst Journey" *GM*, XXVII (1954), p. 307.
80. Elwin, pp. 308–309.
81. Elwin, "My Worst Journey," p. 309.
82. Elwin, *Bondos*, p. viii; *Autobiography*, pp. 180–187.

of his ethnographic works, *Bondo Highlander* contains different genres of folklore in the contextual setting. Collecting, classifying and preserving vast amounts of folkloristic data was always one of Elwin's methods; these data were then analyzed to study the theoretical problem. In an estimation of Boas, Gladys Reichard observed: "The strongest rocks in Boas' self-built monument are his texts, his belief that what people record of themselves in their own words will in the last analysis reveal their motivations and ideas most accurately."[83] Elwin had the same belief when he pioneered work among the tribes which he studied. In a review of *Bondo Highlander,* Emeneau rightly remarked:

> As usual, we are presented with much assiduously collected, well organized, and keenly interpreted data. The tribe has peculiar features of much interest in the overall picture of central India, and we must express our gratitude to Elwin and his team of workers for their efforts in gaining access to a most inaccessible community and in establishing *rapport* with people who are obviously most turbulent and difficult.[84]

For Elwin the theoretical problem was a corollary to the field situation. He was primarily interested in genuinely appreciating, carefully observing, and understanding the points of view of the tribes and the relationship of the data to the life of the people. In other words, he tried to visualize the tribal vision of life.

When Elwin moved to the study of the religion of the Saora tribe, particularly the Saoras of the Ganjam and Koraput districts, he again had an unusual situation. Among the Bondos he was working within the context of an almost isolated, rigid, exogamous village community in which membership could only be acquired by birth or marriage. But the Saoras have a long historical tradition, evidence of which may be found in the *Ramayana.* Though linguistic research had already been conducted on this tribe, no systematic work had been attempted on their religion, which according to Elwin is the nexus of Saoran culture. Elwin's researches started in 1944 and extended over a period of seven years. During this period the longest time he was in the field was from December of 1946 to February of 1947. He had the official status of Deputy Director, The Anthropological Survey of India, Government of of India. While he investigated the religion, the members of his party studied Saoran economics and physical characteristics.[85] While his

83. Gladys Reichard, "Franz Boas and Folklore," *American Anthropologist,* XVL (1943), 55.

84. M.B. Emeneau, "Review of *Bondo Highlander,*" *Journal of American Oriental Society,* LXXII (1956), 201.

85. Verrier Elwin, "The Anthropological Survey of India: Part I, History and Recent Development," *Man,* XLVIII (1948), 69.

ethnographic work *The Muria and their Ghotul* is one of the most detailed works on sexual mores and the youth dormitory system ever done, his *The Religion of an Indian Tribe* is the most detailed analysis of an Indian tribe ever completed.

Describing the first reaction of the Saora tribe to any visitor, Elwin said that "after any outsider had been to the village they made special sacrifices to purify the place from any possible magical defilement. In one area I found a regular tariff: for a Forest officer they sacrificed a goat, for a Sub-Inspector of Police a fowl, and for an anthropologist a large black pig."[86] To win over these people, Elwin gave away gifts of country cigars and tea, not as remuneration for the informants, but to create a feeling of oneness with the community. As he described: "I often had half a dozen people around my bed soon after dawn anxious to share my morning tea."[87] This explains not only the reciprocal situation he created in the field, but also his identification with the people he was studying. As Rosalie Wax points out:

> The difference between the great professional and non-professional ethnologists and the ethnological ignoramuses is chiefly of interest, understanding and insight. While it can not be denied that time and rapport contribute to the development of these valuable qualities, they do not inevitably create them.[88]

Because of his interest, understanding and insight, Elwin could easily establish rapport with everyone in the community; he went into their houses, sat with the officiating priest and observed all details about their religious ceremonies, beliefs and faith. When he was ill, the priests and priestesses attempted to cure him with their traditional techniques.[89]

The study of religion by folklorists and anthropologists has always tended to be approached from an agnostic point of view. The aims and concepts of theology have hardly been tested in concrete field situations.[90] Elwin, because of his training in theology, ably overcame this lacuna. In classifying various aspects of religious behaviour, the Saora pantheon, rites of fertility and death, he synthesized the theological and anthropological approaches. Because of his liberal attitude, he considered the religious system of the Saoras on an equal basis with other advanced religions.

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86. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 189.

87. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 189.

88. Rosalie Hankey Wax, "Reciprocity in Fieldwork," *Human Organization Research*, ed. Adams and Preiss, p. 91.

89. For greater detail of his observations about the human aspect of the field situation see: Elwin, *Autobiography*, pp. 189–196.

90. John Middleton, ed., *Gods and Rituals* (New York, 1967), pp. ix-x.

The religious personnel in the Saora community were numerous, but the Shamans were the most important figures. In order to understand the Shamans and their ecstatic experiences, Elwin gained their confidence by recording their experiences and documenting these in the book. As regards specific methodology, he set down the life histories of Shamans and their ecstatic dialogues. As he said:

> I took down the incantations, prayers and trance-dialogues directly, usually squatting on the floor as near as possible to the officiating Shaman, who invariably ignored my presence.... Many of these are keen theologians and like nothing better than to describe their experiences and discuss the points of doctrine that arise from them.[91]

After collecting both the expressed and the implicit facts, he easily established the social and the cosmological relationships and theorised about the mystical powers of certain human beings and their role in this socio-cultural context.

In conclusion, Elwin, because of his highly personal involvement in differing field situations, his active participation, his sympathetic attitude, and his dependence on data understood the importance of human problems and constructed his own methodology to cope with his theoretical problem. The novel feature of his ethnographic work is the use of short dialogues collected from the field situation with which he identified himself without losing scientific insight. Finally, his method can be characterised as eclectic, and he successfully achieved his goal with all the emphasis at his command.

C. North East Frontier Agency

In earlier discussions it has been observed that Elwin's ethnographic research in Madhyapradesh was of the nature of social work research. He was concerned with finding the relationship between the observed facts and similar universal problems. "To make the tribal people known" and "rouse them to a sense of their rights" through encouragement and a "simple everyday act of kindness"[92] were his goals. Thus his field methods consisted primarily of a somewhat repetitive cycle of observations and explanations[93] in order to grasp the totality of the situation. This phase of his fieldwork may be termed as "knowledge seeking" in a mystical sense; he was conscious of the propositions which he wished to support with folkloristic data. In contrast, the Orissa research was in a real sense scientific inquiry which followed from a

91. Elwin, *Indian Tribe*, p. xvii.
92. Elwin, *Autobiography*, pp. 288–289.
93. Harris Goldstein, *Research Standards*, pp. 3–5.

pre-planned definitive problem. Elwin was cognizant of the organization of the project, the methods of collecting data, and the explication of the empirical data in relationship to the theoretical concept. As has been shown, this started with his research on the Muria *ghotul* in Madhya Pradesh.

When Elwin moved to N.E.F.A., he was less interested in scientific inquiry. He wanted to philosophize about the tribal problems on the basis of his wide research and depth of knowledge about the tribes.[94] This phase of his research may be described as a quest to emphasize the social role of the folklorist and anthropologist.[95] In his special position as adviser for tribal affairs in NEFA during the post-independence period, he wanted to make an exploratory survey of all the tribes belonging to this area. Until independence this area was completely isolated. Thorough scientific inquiry or study among these tribes was not done, with the exception of work on the Nagas.[96] Elwin approached the people with his usual method of empathy, and he utilized the assistance of his life-long team of workers. For the most part, his researches in this area were surveys. In his autobiography he described in a sketchy way his travel experiences in this area.[97] These descriptions lack the elaborative details on the human aspect of the field situation which he copiously reported in most of his works. In one instance he said:

> All my life I have had the misfortune to incur the displeasure of the clergy.... Here the suspicion and fear of us was not political but theological. On entering every village I was greeted with rows of sharp bamboo stakes and gates adorned with a number of symbols—sometimes it was the head of a dead dog—designed to frighten away the evil spirits whom we were certainly bringing with us.[98]

Unfortunately most of his ethnographic notes on this area have not yet been published. The monographs and books which have appeared so far are either collections of the writings of earlier writers or Elwin's comments on the achievement of the political aspirations of the people with whom he was concerned.[99] In the mimeographed work

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94. Verrier Elwin, *A Philosophy for NEFA*, (Shillong, 1959).

95. This will be discussed in detail in a separate paper.

96. For details about the research on the Nagas see Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland* (Shillong, 1961). For the purpose of this study I have included Nagaland in NEFA, which has now achieved a separate status on the Indian political map.

97. Elwin, *Autobiography*, pp. 254–286.

98. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 270.

99. Elwin, *Ten Years of Progress in N.E.F.A.* (Shillong, 1957); Elwin, *Democracy in N.E.F.A.* (Shillong, 1965).

Studies in N.E.F.A. Folklore[100] we get only descriptive notes on various tribes and their cultural complexities. So it is impossible at present to assess Elwin's field methods in N.E.F.A. But from the nature of his job in N.E.F.A. and from the various publications so far available, it can be inferred that in his usual way he was exploring the theoretical problems that could be studied in this area. Before he could succeed, he died. But he explicitly admitted that:

> The character of my research work changed, as it was bound to do. Formerly I had a great deal of time, freedom from pre-occupations and I was able to settle down for long periods among the people. In NEFA I had to survey a vast tract of mountainous territory, some thirty-three thousand square miles in extent, and help to look after thirty or forty tribal groups. . . . I have continued my interest in folklore and art but my main concern has been in what is called applied anthropology.[101]

So it can be concluded that although Elwin's motivation for fieldwork came from social work, as time passed his knowledge and perceptual abilities grew as a result of physical exposure to the field situation. Based on the intuitive and the empirical approaches, his work made a synthesis which is unique in social science research in India.

D. A Critique of Elwin's Methods in Ethnography

Herskovits in "The Ethnographer's Laboratory"[102] discusses the useful rules that may be applied in fieldwork: "*See as much as you can, participate whenever you are permitted to do so, and compound your experiences by discussing them formally and informally with natives as widely as you are able.*"[103] In view of this statement, Elwin's field technique was both adequate and effective in obtaining insight into the problems and the cultures he studied. But in most cases, in the *sorting out process* used on the abundant data he collected, he rambled to a great extent in his early works having no definitive theoretical framework.[104] This was due partly to lack of training, since he was a self-trained scholar, and partly to the formative stages of the social science discipline in India. Also, his interest in the beginning was absorptive rather than studious. But, subsequently, out of the rambling and trial

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100. Verrier Elwin, *Studies in N.E.F.A. Folklore*, 2 vols. (Shillong, 1955); a mimeographed work in the Folklore Institute Library, Indiana University.

101. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 240.

102. Melwille J. Herskovits, *Man and his Works* (New York, 1964), pp. 79–93.

103. Herskovits, *Man*, p. 84.

104. For further discussion on "Relevance of Information and the Problem of Rambling" see Piddington, p. 542.

and error, he envisaged the theoretical problems and handled them in his unique way. Elwin came to realize that the methodological devices for use in the field must vary according to the situation. A researcher encounters a number of problems, particularly among the primitives. Alexander Goldenweiser remarks: "People in general, and primitives in particular, do not think or analyze their culture—they live it. It never occurs to them to synthesize what they live or reduce it to a common denominator, as it were."[105] So studying primitive tribes and "a wholly untouched tribe does not present the most favourable situation for study."[106] Unfortunately, Elwin had to study mostly untouched tribes and thus adopt his own methodology as a self-trained folklorist and ethnographer. But he was aware of anthropological and folkloristic devices as a result of his reading and contact with scholars all over the world.

In a general survey of different approaches, Herskovits suggests *notes-and-querries, genealogical method, village mapping, biographies and autobiographies* and the *use of the native language*[107] as some of the methods which are important in ethnographic inquiry. In the preceding discussions based on a study of Elwin's monographs, it was ascertained that Elwin followed these methods in whatever way the field situation demanded. Besides the main approaches suggested by Herskovits, a study of material culture as an index of the culture was one of the basic premises stressed by Elwin. In this approach he gave details of the tools, instruments, building of houses and other structures, and data which were interrelated with the culture he studied. He was also conscious of the importance of photography and documentary film. He recorded the reaction of the natives toward this in various field situations.[108] But to him the most effective way of working with and studying the tribes was to develop an empathetic approach through detailed observations. His insistence on observing minute details has been reported by Bhattacharya thus:

> We were camping at Badpara, a village on the hills inhabited by Bondo Highlanders, for nearly a week. Dr. Elwin informed me that he would not move from the village unless he can assist in a Bondo child's funeral. I was alarmed at his queer idea. Who knows when a death of a child would occur in the village and thus we should get opportunity of assisting in a funeral? Dr. Elwin told me that it was a remarkable custom and we all must observe it even at the cost of some trouble. He was adamant, but no child looked

105. Alexander Goldenweiser, *Anthropology* (New York, 1942), p. 47.
106. Goldenweiser, p. 47.
107. Herskovits, *Man*, pp. 89–92.
108. Elwin, *Autobiography*, pp. 194–196.

> to have any sign of early death. We continued to stay at the village with the greatest physical discomfort. At the end of a fortnight a child actually died much to our relief. I along with Dr. Elwin visited the cremation ground in the dead of night and observed the funeral rites at that place. It was remarkable indeed in view of the fact that a full adult-cremation was given to the ten-day old boy.[109]

For empirical study Elwin depended on folklore data in great detail to arrive at a theoretical premise instead of a speculative theory. Often his studies were criticized for "ethno-centrism" in the analysis. Such a charge is not completely true, as Bhattacharya observes: "To some extent it is true. But for this reason also he could enter deep into the life of the people and thus know of them most intimately which could not be understood by the outsider easily."[110] The essence of his mission may be termed as "love for the people" wherever he went and whatever he studied with insistence on "cultural relativism."[111] That is the key to understanding his field methods. As one of his co-workers stated: "Verrier then has not 'gone native,' but he has certainly 'gone Indian.' He belongs to us."[112] Finally, it can be said that to understand and analyze the field methods of Elwin, one needs to inquire into his personality in great detail through the study of his correspondence with scholars around the world, which has not yet been published.

III. Corpus of Lore

A. Standards and Methods of Collection

Before thematic evaluation of the work of any social scientist can proceed, one has to look into the data and discover the bases for the methods used in obtaining the data. Personal observations of the contextual situation are important, as are the standards and methods in collecting folklore materials. Hymes, in his discussion of linguistic anthropology, suggests that "an adequate ethnographic description is truly a theoretical task."[113] In accomplishing this task the value of lore and the method of obtaining it cannot be overlooked. The problems which the folklorist or ethnographer faces are: what to collect, how to collect, and when to collect. Terms of reference to the text and the context must be included. The contextual situations in which Elwin

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109. Communicated to me by Professor Asutosh Bhattacharya.
110. Ibid.
111. Herskovits, *Man*, pp. 61–78.
112. Hivale, *Scholar Gypsy*, p. 221.
113. Dell Hymes, "Notes Toward a History of Linguistic Anthropology," *Anthropological Linguistics*, V (1963), 91.

worked and his stimulating experiences in the human aspects of the field situations have already been presented. Although previous discussion focused on his intimate bonds with the tribal life of India, the methods he adopted in collecting the lore need equal emphasis.

Goldstein, in a discussion of collecting methods, suggests that the "vacuum cleaner" approach in collecting folklore materials is preferable for a number of reasons.[114] Elwin adopted this approach since he was concerned with the relationship between the materials and the tribal life he was studying. In addition to the ethnographic works, he documented the lore in separate volumes covering the geographical areas he studied. Like Malinowski he was aware of the importance of these materials "as documents of native mentality."[115] Moreover, these expressive materials were also essential to him not as a facet of the culture but as the most valuable means for understanding the culture.[116] His descriptive observations in ethnography in their coverage and subjectivity relied heavily on these suitably annotated texts published in separate volumes. In this process he was interested both in preserving texts as important historical and literary documents and in obtaining insight into cultural complexities. Richard Dorson, in a discussion of the standards for collecting American folktales, considers three alternatives for an ideal folktale collector, "Money, Art, Truth," and suggests that one "Keep Truth as the primary goal."[117] To Elwin, truth was always of primary importance in his own ideals and ideology because of his theological education and rigorous training under Gandhi to experiment with truth in practical life.[118] Dorson further states:

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114. Kenneth S. Goldstein, *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore* (Hatboro, 1964), pp. 133–138.

115. "A collection of ethnographic statements, characteristic narratives, typical utterances, items of folklore and magical formula has to be given as a *corpus inscriptionum*, as document of native mentality." Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (New York, 1961), p. 24.

116. "My purpose was never primarily to collect folk-tales or songs. This was incidental to my main task of ethnographic enquiry, though I have always considered that the light thrown on anthropological problems by both stories and poetry is of the greatest importance." Elwin, *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* (Bombay, 1944), p. xxiii; cited hereafter as *Mahakoshal*.

117. Richard M. Dorson, "Standards for Collecting and Publishing American Folktales," in "The Folktale: A Symposium," *JAF*, LXX (1957), 53–57.

118. Gandhi all through his life experimented with truth in practical terms and insisted that the inmates of his ashram and his followers adhere to it despite all difficulties. Elwin came to the field of tribal study being trained under Gandhi. For further reference to this aspect of Gandhi's life see Mohandas K. Gandhi, *My Experiments with Truth* (Washington, 1960). Elwin stated, 'From my Oxford days I had been attached to the idea of Aletheia, the ultimate truth or reality,

> Our ideal table-collection contains a number of elements. All of them—edited texts, sketches of informants and settings, analyses and hypotheses, notes and indexes should be combined with imagination and understanding according to the special needs of each individual project.[119]

Examining any of Elwin's tale or song collections, one easily finds that they meet the standards envisaged by Dorson. Unlike many of the Indian Folktale collectors, Elwin strove to present his collections as authentic documents of tribal life. In a review of the *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal,* Norman Brown explains:

> . . . Mr. Elwin, himself a man of literary skill, feels the literary content of his stories throughout, though he scrupulously refrains from any doctoring or "improving" or even from excluding stories that have little, if any, artistic quality. With high appreciation of the value these stories have to the people among whom they circulate, and of the worth of these "primitive" people and their culture, he offers them as ethnological material. They are given in direct and most commendable—and for Indian folk-tales unusually—unbowdlerized form.[120]

Elwin's methods of collecting various genres of folklore varied according to the situation and the problem of language in the areas concerned. In his Madhyapradesh research the problem was not so difficult because the Madhyapradesh tribesmen were part of his life. He stayed among them, became one of them, and through his love and affection for the people won them over. So, in methods of collection Elwin did not have to depend on special informants. All members of the community were his informants, and they "opened their hearts."[121] The relationship of collector-clientele was absent. He did not set out to find singers or tale-tellers; they were all around him. Elwin collected everything, with the help of his team, while around the firesides in the little villages, on his tours through the hill areas of Madhyapradesh. In addition to texts, he included vivid descriptions of the social function of the tale-

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as it appears in the Johannine writings. Gandhi emphasized this idea for me in his teaching on truth as God. Among the tribes too I wanted the truth as a philanthropologist. The truth about the tribes makes its contribution to our knowledge of mankind, and it is only as the truth about them is known that they will be properly regarded and rightly treated." *Autobiography*, p. 332.

119. Dorson, "Standards for Collecting and Publishing American Folktales, p. 57.

120. W. Norman Brown, "Review of *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal,*" *JAmOS*, LXVI (1946), 186. For defects in the Indian folktales published by his predecessors see Elwin, *Mahakoshal*, pp. xiii-xviii.

121. From Comments of Professor Walter Kaufmann.

telling situation.[122] In one such description he said:

> We will give two more examples of the tales told by the fireside in these little villages among the Satpura Hills. They were given us by Hothu the Baiga in a remote village of Bilâspur. It was a strange and absorbing sight to watch in the firelight the wild handsome faces of the Baigas as they listened to Hothu, himself a tall, striking-looking man, naked save for a scanty loin-cloth, his long hair tied in a knot hanging on one side of his head, in his ears large rings of white and blue beads. Certainly he had the gift of speech. He told his stories with slow expressive gestures, long pauses, a touch of poetry in his repetitions, and an inimitable trick of crumpling up his forehead at the funny bits. His first story was in form exactly parallel to the Saila songs, a theme progressing gradually through various grades of innocence to a highly vulgar termination.[123]

But in his collections from Orissa and NEFA, the methodology changed slightly. Here he depended on his trained assistants to collect lore, and he was more concerned with the contents rather than with the linguistic aspects. In these areas the problem he encountered was the fantastic variety of languages and dialects forcing him to depend on interpreters. As Bhattacharya suggests, it was one of the drawbacks of his collections.[124] But for a pioneer worker interested in the meaning and contents of lore, linguistic considerations were not of paramount importance in understanding the people. Although language is a historical product and the medium of expression for oral or written literature, it is not in a deeper sense a reflection of culture. In the words of Sapir:

> Nor can I believe that culture and language are in any true sense casually related. Culture may be defined as *what* a society does and thinks. Language is a particular *how* of thought. It is difficult to see what particular causal relations may be expected to subsist between a selected inventory of experience (culture, a significant selection made by society) and the particular manner in which the society expresses all experience. The drift of culture, another way of saying history, is a complete series of changes in society's selected inventory—additions, losses, changes of emphasis and relation. The drift of language is not properly concerned with changes of content at all, merely concerned with changes of content at all, merely with changes in formal expression.[125]

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122. For the importance of the study of this problem see Linda Dégh, "Some Questions of the Social Function of Story-telling," *Acta Ethnographica,* VI, (1945), 91–147.

123. Hivale and Elwin, *Songs of the Forest,* p. 28.

124. As Communicated to me by Professor Asutosh Bhattacharya.

125. Edward Sapir, ***Language*** (New York, 1949), p. 218.

This does not mean that Elwin neglected linguistic considerations. But he understood that these were beyond the limitations of his team and left this work to linguists. It is evident that his primary concern was not form but content and the exploration of vanishing social heritages as expressed in oral literature. In his analyses of the genres of a particular area, he undertook a multifaceted approach.

B. The Problems of Language and Translation

Research in India in either the humanities or the social sciences requires a basic knowledge of the Great Tradition in the complex civilization of India. The study of the Sanskrit language is a prerequisite for understanding the interaction between the "Great Tradition" and the "Little Tradition."[126] To increase his knowledge about the East in preparation for a comparative study of religious issues, Elwin took language training in Sanskrit and Marathi during his early association with *Christa Seva Sangh* in Poona. As Elwin put it:

> I was fortunate in having a wonderful old Brahmin, H.V. Harshe, who was the embodiment of the best kind of traditional Hinduism. He spent most of my language-lessons discussing Hindu mysticism and philosophy with the result that after six months I knew the Marathi or Sanskrit words for most of the higher spiritual states, Yogic postures and exercises but I was quite incapable of ordering lunch at a railway station.[127]

Besides his workable knowledge of Sanskrit, he acquired a commendable facility with Hindi when he moved from theological work to social work. During his long residence in Madhyapradesh, he learned Gondi.[128] He was not interested in the linguistic analysis of the texts he collected or in the study of language as an aspect of culture.[129] But he had some knowledge of general linguistics, which is evident from his use of the various terms and concepts in almost all of his ethnographic works as well as in the collections and the glossaries provided in each of his works.

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126. See Robert Redfield, *The Little Community/Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago, 1965), pp. 40–59.
ture (Chicago, 1965), pp. 40–59. Also Elwin's statement: "My studies of Hinduism in Poona were also of great benefit. The majority of the tribal people outside Assam have been profoundly influenced by that great religion and it is not possible to understand them without knowing what it is about." *Autobiography*, p. 141.

127. Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 41.

128. Appendix III, A, p. 2.

129. Piddington, p. 564; Herskovits, *Man*, p. 454.

Although Elwin realized the importance of knowing the languages of the people he wanted to study, in all areas it was not a practical possibility for him to master the language. Even though knowledge of the native language is a valuable tool for any kind of fieldwork,[130] communication can be achieved in other ways. Piddington suggests four ways of establishing communication in the field situation: 1. through interpreters, 2. through some *lingua franca*, 3. by obtaining information from those who speak the language of the informant, and 4. by learning the language.[131] In the Madhyapradesh researches, Elwin did not have any difficulty in establishing communication since he knew the Gond language and his wife was a Gond. But in the Orissa and NEFA researches, he depended langely on interpreters. In the case of the Orissa researches, he also communicated through Hindi (the *lingua franca* of India) and through bilinguals and multiple interpreters.[132]

In ethnographic works, importance has always been laid on mastering the language of the people to be studied. But for all practical purposes it has been found that mastering a language has been a formidable task for ethnographers. Discussing this problem of linguistic adaptability, Mead thinks that learning the language should be considered as a tool, and competency in the spoken language is not an absolute necessity. This she calls "virtuosity."[133] An analysis of Elwin's work reveals that he had the requisite "virtuosity" in working among the various tribes.

Translation as well as language poses a problem in ethnographic and folkloristic work. Without adequate knowledge of the native language, there remains a chance of misrepresenting the culture of the people. In the present discussion we are not concerned with translation as a theoretical problem[134] but as a reality in the field situation. In most cases Elwin translated materials on the spot with the help of the interpreters and using a typewriter in the field.[135] Then these translations were checked and rechecked with the help of the syndicate[136] before the final publication. Although he was primarily concerned with the content and

130. Piddington, p. 564.

131. Piddington, p. 566.

132. As communicated to me by Professor Bhattacharya.

133. Margaret Mead, "Native Languages as Field-work Tools," *AA*, XIL, (1939), 189–206.

134. Elwin discusses this problem in the introduction to most of his collections. For example, see *Autobiography*, pp. 144–146; Elwin, "Epilogue," *Man in India*, XXIII (1943), 81–89.

135. For an analogous example see Melville J. and Francis S. Herskovits, *Dahomean Narrative* (Evanston, 1958), pp. 6–8; on the use of a typewriter in the field see Piddington, p. 567.

136. See footnote 16.

meaning of the lore, he was sensitive to the intensity of the words and images.[137] Elwin collected folklore as incidental to ethnographic inquiry,[138] and in the collected volumes he emphasized the appreciation of folklore as literature. Leach, in his address to the American Folklore Society, stresses "the interdependence of appreciation and scholarship"[139] collecting and analyzing folklore materials. An item of folklore material has been interpreted by Elwin both as sociological material and as a genuine piece of literature. In other words, he tried to synthesize appreciation and scholarship as suggested by Leach. As Elwin said: "Every story has been tested against the background of the ethnographic monographs and there is nothing inconsistent between this book and those."[140]

Elwin's translations took place at two levels. In reporting about the people and their tradition, he used the ethnographic method of translation. As Casagrande puts it:

> The attitudes and values, the experience and tradition of a people, inevitably become involved in the freight of meaning carried by a language. In effect, one does not translate LANGUAGES, one translates CULTURES. Ethnography may, in fact, be thought of as a form of translation. That it is possible to translate one language into another at all attests to the universalities of culture, to common vicissitudes of human life, and to the like capabilities of men throughout the earth. . . ."[141]

In translating folktales, Elwin used the aesthetic-poetic method.[142] "My custom," said Elwin, "was to translate the stories on the spot, as they were narrated or interpreted to me. I have translated them literally, as if I was translating poetry: that is to say, I have inserted no new symbol or image, and I have tried to avoid words which, though neutral in themselves, carry association alien to the tribal consciousness."[143]

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137. "I tried to represent the meaning as literally as possible, within the limits of the demands of poetry, and was scrupulous in introducing no new image." *Autobiography*, p. 145.

138. See footnote 16.

139. MacEdward Leach, "What Shall We Do with 'Little Matty Groves' ", *JAF*. LXXVI (1963), 194–199.

140. Elwin, *Mahakoshal*, p. xix.

141. Joseph B. Casagrande, "The Ends of Translation," *International Journal American Linguistics*, XX (1954), 338.

142. Casagrande, pp. 335–340. Here he discusses four types of translations: a. pragmatic, b. æsthetic-pœtic, c. linguistic, and d. ethnographic. In æsthetic-poetic translation the emphasis is laid on the expressive factor of the materials translated.

143. Elwin, *Tribal Myths of Orissa* (Bombay, 1954), p. x; cited hereafter as *Orissa*.

He followed this method in all of his translations.[144] For models he chose the translations by Bompas[145] and Mills[146] because they were "clear, straightforward, readable, without the introduction of a single jarring note."[147] He follows them to avoid producing collections "which have been regarded in India as a suitable pastime for the clergy and for English ladies."[148]

In translating the songs Elwin depended upon the models of Waley[149] and Archer.[150] Archer, commenting on Elwin's translations, suggests, "Blake turned the element of English folksongs into great poetry which was individual and communal. These Gond poems are elements for us in the same way."[151] Archer compares Elwin's work with "Malinowski's main contention, for only an intimate knowledge of a language in terms of its actual living use can give translations their vital veracity."[152] Archer continues:

> *Folksongs of the Maikal Hills* and *Folksongs of Chhatisgarh* are primarily collections of poems but they are also commentaries on a whole way of tribal life. *The Baiga*, an ethnographic monograph, contains some of Elwin's finest translations and was in fact the first book on an aboriginal tribe to use songs everywhere as "documents." Indeed in all his work it is difficult to say where ethnography ends and poetry begins; for the poetry is ethnography and the ethnography is poetry.[153]

To what extent folklorists and anthropologists can follow a definite standard envisaged by Malinowski is still polemical.[154] But Elwin de-

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144. Elwin, *Myths of the North-East Frontier of India*, (Shillong, 1958), p. x.

145. C.H. Bompas, *Folklore of the Santal Paraganas*, (London, 1909).

146. J.P. Mills, "Folk Stories in Lhota Naga," *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XXII (1926), 239–318.

147. Elwin, *Mahakoshal*, p. xviii.

148. Elwin, *Mahakoshal*, p. xv.

149. Arthur Waley, *One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (London, 1928); Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 145.

150. W.G. Archer, *The Blue Grove* (London, 1940). Elwin reviewed this book in *Man*, (1941), 40–41.

151. W.G. Archer, "Comment," in Elwin, *Folksongs of Chhatisgarh* (Bombay, 1946), p. xxi.

152. Archer, p. xxv.

153. Archer, p. xxv.

154. Malinowski's techniques of translation include four phases: a. word by word or interlinear, b. "free", c. collation of the interlinear and free, and d. contextual specification of meaning. See Raymond Firth, "Ethnographic analysis and language with reference to Malinowski's views" in *Man and Culture: an evaluation of the work of Bronislaw Malinowski* (London, 1957), pp. 107-108.

finitely laid the foundation in India in discussing the problem of translation, which was completely neglected by his predecessors. Reviewing his translations, Spencer rightly says:

> Due to the impossibility of producing a completely literal translation and at the same time an intelligible English version the authors have not attempted to retain the form of the songs; their aim has been to avoid departure from the original meaning and to introduce no extraneous images. Notes on the patterns of the principal varieties of songs and comments on stylistic features such as onomatopœia, the use of internal rhyme, echo-words, and alliteration indicate the difficulties involved in translation and give an idea of the original form.[155]

Elwin's bias was preeminently literary. But he tried to shed light on the real significance of folklore both as literature and as a key to the social life of the tribes which produced it. For translation he depended on interpreters and his own knowledge of native language. Then he checked his materials with people who were experts on languages, symbols and cultural meaning before he published them. The corpus of lore collected, translated, analysed and published by him reflects both poetic imagination and ethnographic insight. "The translation is an act of scholarship of a certain time, place, and person, variable in quality and character, as is all scholarship,"[156] and in the case of Elwin, he visualized the problem and handled it with unique brilliance.

In conclusion it may be observed that whether confronting problem-seeking in ethnography or methodology of collection and translation, Elwin did not have a single theoretical bias. He was liberal, open-minded and interested in searching for truth. He synthesized both humanistic and social science approaches in drawing his conclusions about the tribal life of India. This synthesis was based on experiences gained in the field and ideas received through his study of similar problems on a global scale.

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155. Dorothy M. Spencer, "Review of *Folk-songs of Maikal Hills*," *AA*, XVILL (1946), 642.

156. Dell Hymes, "Some North Pacific Poems: a problem in anthropological philology," *AA*, LXVII (1965), 335.

Dear Drieder: