

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Onge/(Ongee)

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): oon

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): The Andaman Islands lie along the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal. The Andamans are divided into Great Andaman and Little Andaman. The Onge are of Little Andaman. (1) The island is 238 square miles. Today the Onge are confined to the two main areas of Dugong Creek and South Bay. (2)

1.4 Brief history: The Onge are negrito hunter gatherers of the Andaman Islands. Little Andaman has remained the homeland of the Onge from time Immemorial. Have been in regular contact with outsiders for over a century and are considered "friendly". (1)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Raw material, such as plastic and nylon cords, have now been incorporated into Andamanese material culture: plastic containers are used for storage, nylon cords are used as string to make nets. The Indian government distributes as 'gifts' to the Onge metal pots and pans and as a consequence metal cookware has nearly replaced the traditional hand-molded clay cooking pots that were sun dried and partially fire baked. The Onge continue to make clay pots but primarily use them for ceremonial occasions. Onge grind metal scraps, found on the shore or received from the government, on stones and rocks to fashion cutting blades and arrowheads. (2)

1.6 Ecology: The tropical Andaman forest, distinctly Indo-Chinese and Malayan in character, can be broadly divided into the littoral and non-littoral types of forests. Littoral coastal forest is characterized by an extensive growth of mangroves, pandanus, nipa palm, etc. Main part of Andaman forest comprises of evergreen trees, climbers and patches of deciduous growth. Important timber trees include Padauk (*Pterocarpus dalbergioides*), White Chuglam (*Terminalia bialata*), Dhup (*Canarium euphyllum*), Chai (*Alphonsea ventricosa*). More than three-fourths of the area of the Andamans is covered with luxuriant tropical forest. (1)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: Census 1901(estimated): 672. Census 1971 (enumerated): 112. B.K. Basu (1987) (enumerated): 98. (1)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Edible roots, fruits, tubers, honey. Wild jackfruit, wild nut, Chandalu, Naragero, potatoes, and roots such as Titakoru, Tebogeta, Gine, and Tejokwage. There is a lack of diversification in economic pursuits; the concepts of property and surplus do not exist. (1)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Wild pig (*Sus andamanensis*), wild cat (*Paradoxurus*), and iguana. Fish, turtles, crocodiles, and Dugong (herbivorous sea mammals) (1)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: The Onge bow is generally made from a single piece of wood of *Mimusops littoralis* or *Pterocarpus dalbergioides*. The bow is almost straight and is about 1.5 meters long. It is thicker in the middle and gradually tapers at the two ends. While the inner surface is almost flat, it is markedly curved or convex on the outer surface. There are necks or notches at the two ends to hold the loop of the bow string, which is made by twisting a long thin strip of ficus bark. A small loop is made at one end of the string to put it around the neck of the bow. Below the necks, at both the ends, the bow is generally decorated with ficus bark fibres and strips of dendrobium orchid by winding them serially round the stave of the bow. The bow is used for hunting and fishing. The Onge use two different types of arrows for pig hunting: one with a detachable arrow-head and the other with a fixed head attached with a shaft. Both the arrows have small barbs attached to the neck of the arrow-head called *chenokwa* or *tena*. The pig hunting arrow consists of a shaft, about 80 cm in length, made from a straight and slender stem of *Tetrathera lancifolia*. The thinner end of the shaft has a notch to take the cord, while the slightly thicker end has a hollow about one centimeter, to take the arrow-head. The ends of the shaft are kept from splitting by binding them with a fine thread made from gnetum fibres. A double-strand cord, about thirty cm long, made from hibiscus fibre, is attached firmly to the foreshaft and the neck of the arrow-head in such a way that the neck of the arrow-head along with the barb can be comfortably fitted into the hole at the top of the shaft. The iron blade of the arrow is bound tightly with bark fibre to a short foreshaft. As the arrow strikes a pig, the shaft gets detached and the animal drags it along on the end of the cord until it catches in a bush and hold the pig fast. The Onge generally use the other type of arrow with the fixed arrowhead to kill the pig. The arrow with detachable head is used not only to inflict a fatal blow on the pig but also to prevent it from running away into the forest. The fishing arrow called 'korange' is simpler than the pig-hunting arrow. The shaft is a slender piece of bamboo measuring about seventy c, to a metre in length. The end of the shaft, where it takes the string of the bow, is made into a notch and bound firmly to avoid splitting. The arrow-head is made of a slender iron rod of about two to three cm in thickness. The tip of the head is pointed, while the other end is inserted at the top of the foreshaft and bound strongly with fine thread coated with wax of hibiscus. Sometimes a small barb of iron is also fitted at the end of the foreshaft. The arrow is used for piercing the fish. The Onge have learnt and adopted the method of preparing iron arrow-heads, knives, etc., by smelting the iron and then hammering it to obtain the required size and shape of the implements. They have also been provided some iron tools by the Samiti. (1)

2.4 Food storage: The procurement of food is done for immediate consumption. (1)

2.5 Sexual division of production: There is a clear division of labour on the basis of sex, with activities like hunting, fishing, construction of huts, collection of honey, preparation of dug-out canoes, implements, etc., which require courage, skill and strength, entrusted to the men; and the women, on the other hand, collecting edible roots, tubers, fruits and firewood from the forest. They also catch the smaller fish with nets, in creeks and coral reefs during low tide. For fishing as well as for collecting the forest produce, the women always go in groups. (1)

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics: Presently, the art of pottery is not practiced by the Onge. The existence of pottery among the Onge in the recent past is proved by the find of potsherds in the kitchen-midden deposits. Found where communal huts were located. The pots used to be made by coiling long and thin clay rolls and shaping them with the controlled pressure of thumb and first finger. The pots were first dried in the sun and then baked. The indigenous earthen cooking pot is known as 'tobuchue'. The only original cooking pot ever collected of the Onge is a clay-made cup-shaped pot having a maximum diameter of 17.5 cm and the surface wall gradually tapering and ending in

a more or less rounded base, having the maximum thickness of 2 cm, a height of 10.5 cm, with a 0.9 cm thick wall near the upper edge. (1)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: A hunter is relieved of his responsibilities once he brings the kill to the settlement. Immediately, two or three men volunteer to take charge of the game, quickly cut it into pieces and put them in boiling water, kept ready by some other men. Unlike many tribal communities, there is no particular system for the distribution of the meat, or of anything for that matter, among the Onge. Everybody is free to help himself according to his choice. No misunderstanding arises over nor is any stigma attached to sharing the meat. The edible roots and tubers, honey and fish, which are procured individually, may be taken to be personal, but there is no restriction if anybody wants a share out of it. (1)

Residents of Obonaley have access to food from everybody's family kitchen. Therefore, whatever is hunted by them is all given away within various families. Within each camp-site, food, hunting weapons, and foraging implements are shared. Each evening when the men return with what they have gathered, all the food is placed in the middle of the camp at the communal cooking place. All Ongees are expected to just pick up whatever food there is irrespective of who brought it and who is or is not related to the person who either hunted or gathered it. (2)

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?: The single-outrigger canoe called the 'dange' is the only means of navigation used by the Onge. It is a simple dug-out canoe fitted with a float at one side. The canoe is quite comfortable and safe for sailing, especially in the sea. The process of making a canoe starts with the selection and felling of a suitable tree, usually of the *stericula* species. The bark is carefully stripped off without chipping the wood just underneath. The surface selected for the keel of the canoe is kept on the ground while the other surface is chipped flat with the indigenous hatchet or adze. Thus starts the long process of chipping and carving leaving about one to two feet of flat space on the surface for the platform at each side. The light and soft float is made of either *Hibiscus tiliacus* or *Streculia cilliosa*. The float is almost of the same length as that of the dug-out tree trunk, and is made slightly pointed towards the ends. At least two sets of three pegs each (slender hard branches of trees made pointed at one end) are driven into the float to form triangles at its two opposite ends. Two outrigger booms of hard wood are fitted parallel to one another in the holes made on each side of the canoe near the platforms. The free ends of the two sets of pegs on the float are firmly tied to the free ends of the booms, holding the float fast to them. After the tree trunk has been carved in the forest, it is carried, with the help of a few friends and relatives, to the sea water. The float is adjusted and the booms fixed after the vessel is set afloat in the water near the shore. (1)

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: The bond of mutual love and care between husband and wife is sincerely maintained through life. Divorce is practically unknown among the Onge. (1)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Monogamy is the only form of marriage among the Onge. They never marry again during the lifetime of the partner. Marriage within close relatives and within the same band is strictly avoided, by cross-cousin marriage is in vogue. Remarriage of widows and widowers is a common feature among the Onge. The prevalence of the system of remarriage creates a problem of great concern for unmarried boys and girls. The limited strength of the population, the restrictions on marrying within the prohibited degrees of relatives, and band exogamy, all put together have further aggravated the problem. All these have led to an acute scarcity of suitable mates for marriageable boys and girls. The fact of the great discrepancy in the ages of spouses these days is an inevitable consequence of the existing problem. Incompatible pairing leads to unproductive marriages and inhibits growth of the population. (1)

Monogamy is a strict rule. An older man or woman who has lost a spouse receives priority for marriage. Marriage is a highly valued status. (2)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Marriage is arranged by the elders within the prescribed group, that is, between turtle hunters and pig hunters. A man's patrilineal relatives take gifts and demand a daughter from a man's matrilineal group. (2)

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Among the Onge, a newly married couple stays with the wife's matrilineal relatives at least until a child is born. After a child is born the couple may move to live with the husband's siblings and their families. Men and women inherit rights and obligations primarily from their matrilineal lineage. Tools and canoes may be inherited from the father's side. Divorce is rare and is considered immoral after the birth of a child. Customarily children are given in adoption. The responsibility of early socialization of the child rests with the child's matrilineal relatives. After a girl's first menstruation she is even more closely aligned with her matrilineal relatives. Children of both sexes are taught about the forest as they accompany their elders on different hunting and gathering activities. Through play and the making of toy canoes, bows and arrows, shelters, and small nets, children are introduced to the basic requisite skills. (2)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Children among the Onge are the objects of sincere love and affection irrespective of their familial affiliation... But once they grow beyond about eight years, the relationship with their parents gradually gets diluted. The grown-up children of the Onge do not generally remain subject to the authority and control of their parents. As they grow, the behaviour and activities of the Onge children are more and more guided by individual motives rather than by the considerations that

affect the members of a family. The family comes to provide only common residence and meals for the children and parents who may sometimes appear to behave indifferently towards one another. (1)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): The system of recruitment of women as members of a band only as descendants of the males indicated band-exogamy, which is the only attributive function of the present-day Onge bands. A study of all the 24 married couples of Dugong Creek and 8 of South Bay shows that in each case husband and wife belong to two different bands. Even in the case of remarriage, which can be performed by an Onge only after death of the previous spouse, the exogamous character of the band is maintained. Though the Onge now live in the rehabilitated settlements, they still affiliate themselves with specific bands which continue to survive. Exchange of women through marriage between different bands is an effective means of communication among the bands, that has helped the survival of the band organization among the Onge. (1)

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows"): The Onge believe that none of their women can conceive without the grace of Onkobowkwe, a spirit whose abode is in the sky over Little Andaman. The souls of babies sent by Onkobowkwe enter some food items such as honey, roots and tubers. This causes pregnancy when the woman takes in the food. In spite of their knowledge of conception through sexual intercourse they believe that a woman cannot conceive unless Onkobowkwe desires it. Barren women are believed to be victims of the displeasure of Onkobowkwe. The most popular practice among the Onge is for the issueless couple to go to the forest for a few days, where they would construct their own temporary hut and stay away from their settlement, though under normal conditions a couple would not go to the forest to live alone. Even for spacing of childbirths, a couple would simply stop going to the forest to live there alone. Considering their dwindling population, the Onge welcome childbirth with great happiness. (1)

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): Among the Ongees, population decline often makes it impossible for a young man to marry his classificatory cross-cousin and, consequently, he sometimes must marry a much older woman who is his mother's classificatory cross-cousin. (2)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: Descent among the Andamanese is bilateral. The kinship system is cognatic and terminology, on the whole, specifies classificatory relations. Prefixed or affixed the classificatory terms of reference which also emphasize senior and junior age differences. (2)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? See 4.30

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Marriage may be settled either by the man himself or by his parents through negotiation with the parents of the girl, but always with the consent of the girl. At present, because of the dearth of marriageable partners, the Onge may not always necessarily follow the traditional process of marriage settlement. However, the consent of the woman, who may be an unmarried girl or a widow, is still given preference over other considerations. The simple nuptial ceremony generally takes place in the communal hut at night, on the date fixed for it, but may also take place in the korale of the bride; this is especially the case for an Onge female of the South Bay settlement. The bride and the bridegroom sit on two different beds, allotted to them for the ceremony, in the communal hut. Most of the relatives of both the partners assemble on the occasion. Then the ritual of the bridegroom bringing the bride, by holding the wrist of her left hand, to his own bed, is followed by consummation on the same night in the same bed, maybe in the presence of others. From then onwards, the partners generally do not remain separated from each other. On the following morning, the couple goes round the settlement to meet the relatives, where they exchange mutual greetings through embracing one another. The same afternoon, the bride meticulously embellished the face and body of her husband with designs in white clay. She also gets herself painted by some female relative. The newly married man wears a neck band made of woven red bark fibre and strips of the yellow skin of the dendrobium orchid, and the wife puts on an ornamental girdle or apparel of bark strips round her waist. The relatives may also get themselves painted on the occasion, to take part in a group dance along with the couple in the evening. This marks the completion of the marriage rituals. (1)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: The Onge remain in perfect peace and order. Neither the adults nor the children were ever found fighting, quarrelling or even exchanging hot words with one another. This does not mean, however, that conflict is completely unknown to them. If and when there is a dispute or conflict within a family or band, the concerned individuals are kept apart

until the feelings of anger subside. They do not express anger or dissatisfaction through any other outward gestures except staying apart. (1)

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: Altogether twenty-four different bands have been identified among the 98 surviving Onge. (1)

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): The south-western monsoons create a rainy season which lasts approximately nine to ten months each year; annual precipitation is 2,750 to 4,550 mm. The only dry season on the islands begins in February and ends in March. Except when the weather is dry over an extended period of time, the forest bed is damp and exudes a smell of decaying vegetation. Hunting and gathering, predicated on a seasonal translocatory pattern, characterizes Andamanese culture. (2)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): The concept of authority of seniors and the subordination of juniors is unknown to the Onge. It is very amusing for them to think that a man can give orders to others. There is no reason to assume that the Onge families are thoroughly disorganized. The subordination of juniors is more a matter of obedience and respect for the seniors than a principle of authority or order. Lack of concepts of authority and subordination may be the reason why leadership did not develop among the Onge. No real chief or leader seems to have ever existed among the Onge. This holds true even today. (1)

5.4 Post marital residence: Bands are patrilineal, i.e. the members are descended through the male line only, resulting in a group of agnates. Patrilineality or the agnatic position of a person seems to be the recognized criterion of recruitment into the Onge bands. On the basis of the actually described genealogical ties existing among the surviving members of a band, indicating a common ancestor only a few generations back, the bands have been identified as lineages, not clans. Since the bands are patrilineal and correspond to lineages, it can be safely deduced that the existing bands of the Onge are patrilineages. (1)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Among the Andamanese certain territories were identified as belonging to a specific band. In the Northern and the Middle Andamans it was frequently necessary to pass through another's territory. The trespassers were obliged to behave as guests in another's territory and, in return, the owners of a given territory were obliged to behave as cordial hosts. Thus a feeling of mutual interdependence and a value for hunting and gathering in each other's part of the island created a process of productions and consumption which was to be shared. Among the Onges of the Little Andamans, where no other tribal group resides, the island is divided into four major parts and identified with two pairs of mythical birds each of which is associated with land or water. The four divisions of land represent the four Ongee clans. Each sections of the island is further subdivided into sections of land associated with a lineage. These divisions, known as megeyabarrota, are identified with a person's matrilineage and, depending on whether the territory is in the forest or on the coast, with either the turtle hunters (eahambelakwe), or the pig hunters (eahansakwe). Ongee prefer to hunt and gather in their own megeyabarrota but there are no restrictions against hunting in someone else's. If one does hunt in another's megeyabarrota, he is obliged to offer and share first with the owners any resource taken. A person's identity with a megeyabarrota plays a crucial role in Onge rituals and ceremonies, e.g. consummation of a marriage must occur in the wife's megeyabarrota, a dead person's bones must be kept in the berale (circular hut) of a descendent's megeyabarrota.(2)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: The indigenous communal hut of the Onge was once an important integral part of their life and culture, serving as a common residence for the members of a band, mainly during the heavy monsoon months, and as the venue of all the important events and rituals associated with the life cycle. The hut appears like a huge umbrella or a bee-hive, its framework made of wooden poles and cane. A number of cane rings, varying in diameter, are tied firmly to a number of upright poles planted on the ground, corresponding with that of the rings, and arch is formed with its minimum height at the two ends and the maximum in the middle. The gaps between the cane rings of the rood are filled by tying slender wooden logs in series. Long canes run transversely from one end of the rood to the opposite end, touching the cane rings, and the points of intersection are firmly tied with bark strips. At this stage the skeletal structure of the frame takes the shape of a bee-hive or open umbrella without the cloth on it. Now the roof is covered with a mat, made by weaving the leaved of palms after they have been split into two halves through the midribs. The split halves of the palm leaves are woven serially in a manner to enable the whole mat to be tolled up whenever needed. A number of such mats are spread over the skeletal frame and the ribs, and tied to the cane rings to make the roof waterproof. Inside the communal hut are a number of beds arranged radially along the periphery, starting from the left side of the entrance. A number of skulls of pigs and turtles, jaws of the dugong and human mandibles, along with cane baskets and wooden buckets, may be found hanging from the poles and roof of the communal hut. The Onge also use a typical indigenous korale (temporary hut). There are two front poles for the back, about forty centimeters each. All four poles are firmly planted in the ground at a distance of almost two meters from each other, forming a square. Two parallel poles. About 2.25 meters each, are tied with the pair of front poles and back poles, a few centimeters below the top of the poles. A roof of palm leaves, slightly bigger than the slanted frame of the roof, is spread over and tied to the frame with bark strips. A number of slender wooden sticks are placed casually below the roof in the gap between the two parallel poles of the rood to complete the structure. A raised sleeping platform is constructed below the roof, just like in the communal hut. (1)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Unmarried and separated men all have one sleeping platform and sleep together under one shelter. They work together and help others in various situations like cutting logs for canoes, and locating and clearing up camp-sites. The men living together under a shared roof are regarded as residents of obonaley. Obonaley also forms the shelter where all men congregate, especially on full moon nights. It is obonaley where all the boys collect and are instructed in various forms of activities like making canoes, bows, and arrows. Obonaley is the only residential shelter in the camp-site which has a fire but never is food cooked under its shelter or by its residents. (2)

- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Sleep in the communal hut. The beds of the communal hut, as that of the temporary hut or korale, are simple raised platforms made by binding split canes in a row. The cane platforms, varying in size from 3'5" x 1'5" to 5' x 2'8" are placed inside the frame made of wooden logs, raised to a height of about two feet from the ground by four wooden legs. The Onge use them as beds, placing their heads, while sleeping, towards the center of the hut. (1)
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: See 5.3/5.4
- 5.12 Trade: Traditionally, trade within a group was conducted between the bands identified as pig hunters (forest dwellers) and turtle hunters (coastal dwellers). The pig hunters band traded clay paint, clay for making pots, honey, wood for bows and arrows, trunks of small trees for canoes, and betel-nuts in exchange for metal gathered from the shore, shells for ornaments, ropes and strings made from plant fibres and nylon, and edible lime gathered by the turtle hunters. The bands would take turns serving as host for these organized events of exchange. Historically the Andamanese gathered honey, shells, and ambergris to trade with outsiders in return for clothes, metal implements, or even cosmetics. Under the colonial administration trade with outsiders was the point of entry for opium and liquor into the northern Andamanese community. (2)
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? See 5.3

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): The Onge have a few rites and rituals associated with birth, adolescence, marriage, and death. Unlike many other communities, the rituals of the Onge do not involve any religious worship, propitiation or sacrifice. In fact, they do not have an organized religion as such, but rather some beliefs, and fears emanating from them. The transition from adolescence to adulthood in the life of the Onge is marked by certain rituals as part of the ceremony called the 'tanagiru'. The rituals that are performed to initiate an Onge boy or girl into adulthood have their own significance in Onge society. An Onge boy, who occasionally goes along with some hunting party, suddenly comes to know that his tanagiru ceremony will be performed on a particular day. He remains preoccupied with the thought of how efficiently he can prove his prowess as an Onge hunter to earn his entry into the world of adults and acquire the status of a good hunter. A girl, on the other hand, attains the most important phase of her life through the performance of the rituals of puberty, through which she attains the status of an adult and subsequently a prospective Onge wife and mother. Though it was reported that the tanagiru ceremony is performed for three days only (Roy and Ganguli, 1961:3), there is, in fact, no authentic report about the number of days over which the ceremony is performed. Tanagiru happens to be the most elaborate ceremony of the Onge, signifying the power of endurance of the Onge. Certain rites and rituals are observed by the Onge to mark the first menstrual discharge of a girl. In the rite of puberty called 'Tangleangabe', the girl remains confined to her bed in one of the korale. The rituals continue through the days of her menstruation. At the first sign of the menses, the girl puts some 'Batage' leaves, soft and soothing, under her tassel and on the bed as well. As a part of the ritual, she abstains from eating any meat but can take fish, crab, honey, roots and tubers, during the period, when the face of the girl is always kept daubed with white clay paste. She has to keep her hands and palms always on her abdomen, even when she lies down on her bed. At the end of the menstrual period the girl is led to the sea for a bath by a few women. The girl is then adorned by the female relatives with the indigenous ceremonial dress consisting of a headband, chest band, a bead necklace, a waistband or girdle etc. The headband, chest band and waistband are all made by interweaving white and yellow strips of palm leaves together. A fresh tassel or nakuinyage is worn by the girl after taking a bath in the sea water. She is offered some food by the female relatives, after they have dressed her in the ceremonial dress at the seashore. Her face, head and body are then painted with ochre by a female relative. After that she can take any food she likes. In fact, the Onge prefer to offer the meat and clotted blood of female pigs to the girl, from the belief that she would thus regain quickly the blood and strength which she has lost through her menstrual discharge. (1)

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: After death the dead body is buried under the bed of the deceased person, often in a temporary hut. On hearing the news of death all the relatives assemble at the korale and weep for hours. It is the duty of the married gallankare or gutarandi, male or female, of the deceased to perform the rituals connected with the disposal of the dead body. In case such a person is absent, the rituals may be performed by the deceased's younger sister's husband. After removing the bed, the person digs a grave measuring about three feet in length, breadth and depth. The corpse is then bent in such a way that the knees touch the chest, and the palms are made to cover the eyes. The elbows rest against the ribs of the corpse. The corpse is then tied, in that posture, with 'kuebo' (a species of hibiscus) bark. The corpse is laid on its back in the grave, with the head facing the sea. 'Tommeroe' leaves (Licuala palm) are spread all over the body before covering it with earth. The period of mourning continues for at least four to five months, or till such time when they are sure that the flesh has completely decayed and the bones will not smell. Once again, all the relatives, along with the person who performed the death ritual, assemble at the spot. The same person, who performed the burial ritual, exhumes the lower jaw of the deceased person from the grave and decorates the mandible with red ochre and threads made of bark fibre. A bark fibre string is tied on both sides of the mandible to wear it around the neck. All the relatives wear it for some time and by turn, in memory of the deceased person. The mandible is again reburied in the same grave by the same person after about two to three days. All the relatives of the deceased abstain from using the red ochre till all the rituals are over. After the completion of the ritual, all the relatives of the deceased invariably paint themselves with red ochre. All the married women dance in the middle of the

communal hut at night, while their husbands sit on the beds watching the dance. After a while, the women come to their respective husbands and weep while embracing them. This is repeated till they are tired and retire to their beds for rest. When the wives stop dancing, the husbands get up to repeat the same performance. The completion of this ceremonial dance marks the end of mourning. The Onge believe that since the dead bodies of their relatives are buried in the korale, the spirit of the deceased will always remain with them to protect, help and guide them, especially while hunting. (1)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: Men and women adorn themselves with paint. Traditionally, painting is exclusively the job of the women. Either red ochre or white clay is used, commonly called 'alame' by the Onge. For the red ochre, a paste is prepared by mixing it with either pig fat or turtle fat. Oily paste gives a shiny effect when painted on the dark background of the body and face. Red ochre is reported to be in use for painting only on sad occasions like deaths. Painting with white clay or ochre, is indicative of rejoicing, love, festivity, and successful hunting expeditions. The white clay is mixed with water before use. An Onge woman, immediately after her marriage, is often expected to paint her husband's body and face with white clay. It is believed that the more a wife loves her husband the more care she takes during painting. On occasion of marriage or a successful hunt, the persons concerned often embellish their bodies with paint. It has been observed that whenever they eat pork or turtle's meat they invariably rub their palms and mouth with white clay paste to remove the sticky fat. White clay is also believed to have medicinal qualities, providing relief against bodyaches, headaches, or any pain for that matter. It is also supposed to have a property that repels mosquitoes and insects. (1)

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Traditionally the women have used the indigenous 'nakuinyage', a tassel made of tender palm leaves to cover their genitals. This is the only traditional dress for women. Women now wear saris, petticoats, lungis, blouses and brassieres, and are beginning to feel indecent in only tassels, though they never part with them. After contact with other cultures, they adopted the habit of wearing clothes. Onge girls begin wearing the tassel at around the age of about 5 years. Boys go without clothes up to the age of six or seven years, when they begin wearing loin cloths, which are commonly used by most of men and grown-up boys. Nowadays, Onge boys and men wear colorful vests, shirts, trousers, etc. The necklace of dentalium or tusk shell is an important traditional ornament of the Onge women. Nowadays, they rarely use the necklace, which has been almost wholly replaced by colorful plastic bead necklaces. (1)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: The garment known as the 'keye', is used by both men and women on ceremonial occasions. A few strips of cane are interwoven serially by placing one strip of the cane above the other, with the yellow skin of the stem of dendrobium orchids and with vegetable fibre, to form a belt. The cane strips and vegetable fibres are smeared with red ochre to give a colourful effect to the belt. Several bunches of bark fibre, about thirty cm long, are tied all along the length of a belt, so that when the dress is worn the threads remain suspended from the belt. (1)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: See 7.5

7.8 Missionary effect: The Onge often fall victim to the craze for modern luxury items which they pick up from outsiders. (1)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: On ceremonial occasions, both men and women wear round their waist the traditional apparel (keye) made of strips of cane, bark and colored bark fibre. The headband (ataki) is a strip of bark worn round the head by both men and women on ceremonial occasions. During the adulthood ceremony, both boys and girls wear bark strips interwoven with the bright yellow sheath of the dendrobium plant in a criss-cross fashion on the chest and the back, and necklaces and garlands of beads round the neck, arm and wrist. The Onge have now come to wear wrist watches, shoes and sunglasses. (1)

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: One of the problems while studying kinship among the Onge was to make them understand or indicate the relatives about whom information was sought. Kinship terms for the primary relative of both the consanguineal and affinal categories were collected first, and then the terms for other relatives were collected with reference to their kinship relations with the primary relatives. 'Umari' and 'kairi' are terms used for father and mother respectively and are not normally used for any other relative. It signifies the kind of importance attached to their status as different from that of the relatives in other categories. 'Kolodi' and 'kakodi' are terms generally used to refer to the father's elder brother and his wife respectively, at times 'umari' and 'alalebi-kairi' are the other terms used to refer to the father's elder brother and his wife respectively. This signifies a tendency to equate the status of father and mother with that of father's elder brother and his wife respectively. This does not apply to other collaterals of father's and mother's generation. Denotative terms are used for the stepfather (ecaikwe), stepmother (etukete), husband (agichebe), wife (angechibe), father-in-law (obeletene), mother-in-law (uteesy), elder brother's wife (agegi), husband's elder brother (ayentegi), and husband's younger brother (ayentenegi). There is not separate term of address for brother and sister. A single term is used to refer to younger brother as well as sister, 'eiketa', and a separate term to refer to elder brother and sister, 'atilanka'. The sibling terms are not equated with any other kinship term. 'Mayere' or 'mairi' is the term generally used to refer to one's own children, irrespective of sex or age. 'Dabaigi' and 'debaigi' are also used for one's own son and daughter respectively. 'Aye' refers to step-children. See source for much more extensive information. (1)

8.2 Sororate, levirate: Levirate marriage is acceptable (2)

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

A peculiar custom of marriage, reported to have existed among the Onge, requires an Onge boy to marry ceremonially a person, either male or female, before the actual marriage and performance of the tanagiru ceremony. For this purpose a married man or a young girl is selected by the parents of the boy. On the evening fixed for the purpose, relatives of both the parties assemble in a communal hut where torches of resin are kept burning. Both the partners sit on their respective beds. As directed by an elderly man, the boy gets up and holds the hands of his partner, brings the partner to his bed, and makes him or her sit on his lap. The boy and his partner solemnly embrace each other, before going back to their respective beds after a while to sleep separately. On the following morning, the boy leads his partner to the relatives of both of them. The partner sits on the lap of each relative and embraces them. The same ritual is also followed by the boy. This is reported to be a purely ceremonial marriage, in which sex is not involved. However, there has been no information on its significance. (1)

Numbered references

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