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## Critical analysis of Marriage issue among munda tribes in Jharkhand state

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### Abstract

This research paper is kinship system in Munda and he people of Singhbhum District in the state of Jharkhand, India. Although it did not aim at answering to the 'Munda question', it highlighted some features, which appear not to belong to neither of the two large groups into which terminologies of the Indian sub-continent are conventionally divided, the Dravidian and the Indo-Aryan. As these features are shared with some other 'tribal' groups of Northern and Central India, the chapter identifies a possible avenue for future research.

**Keywords:** Kinship, tribal, living attributes, civilisation

### Introduction

The present paper research deals with the Munda and He people of Singhbhum District in the state of Jharkhand, India. The state was carved out of Bihar on November 2000 and is Located in the Chota Nagpur plateau of central India. The plateau is an ill-defined tract that means different things to different people geographically, it constitutes the north-eastern extension of the central plateau of India, an area of upland that touches the five neighbouring states of Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Bihar. Having the richest deposit of mineral wealth of the whole India sub-continent, the area is covered by an increasing number of open mines and industries and is known as 'the Ruhr' of India. Finally, the plateau is populated by a large number of tribal inhabitants and is therefore also defined as 'the Indian tribal belt'.

The Indian constitution perpetuates the British categorisation of social groups. In particular, it defines criteria for the identification of so-called scheduled Tribes (ST). In Jharkhand, Scheduled Tribes are largely concentrated in the districts of Ranchi, Santhal Parganas, and Singhbhum, Mundari-speaking tribes, which include Mundas and Hos-together with Santhals, Kharias, Birhors, and others- constitute the prevalent 'tribal groups of the area.

Alternating with open valley, and the steep forest-clad mountains.

The Porahat area is located in the north-western part of the district. It connects West Singhbhum with the Khunti subdivision of Ranchi district with its Kompat Munda population. The Porahat area is hilly, forested, and quite disconnected from the rest of the District. Porahat has a heterogeneous population of Hindu castes and 'tribal' communities like the Hos, Mundas, Salthals, and Birhors. Migratory movement of the Porahat population can be reconstructed thanks to oral histories and some historical evidence. Both are contested. It seems however legitimate to affirm that some Hos migrated to Porahat from the deeply forested southern part, called kolhan; some Hos and Mundas came from the north-eastern plains of the ex-princely states of Kharsawan and Seraikela, and that another group of Mundas migrated into the area directly from Ranchi district through the deep forests of the north.

A working hypothesis is that the Mundas who migrated from the north area the so-called kompat Mundas; that the Hos from the south were 'originally' their offshoots; and that the Hos/Mundas who came from the north-western plains are one branch of the Mahali Mundas.

### Marriage Patterns

The Munda kinship system is a strong alliance system. Marriage is conceptualised as a transaction between corporate groups.

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Affinal relation between clans are meant to be pervasive, stable, and enduring through time and the fear of being rejected by one's own affines is indeed tremendous.

The Munda kinship system can be defined as an 'elementary' system: it not only specifies whom one cannot marry, but also whom one can and indeed should marry. One has to marry into an affinal clan, while marriage between members of agnate clans as well as intra-clan marriages are equated and both heavily punished. Marriage between affinal clans follow regular patterns. Ethnographic evidence suggests bilateral cross-cousin exchanges as the preferential marriage patterns with no apparent preference for patrilineal or matrilineal side."

Most clans living in Dirih and Bhanjara have been intermarrying for a long time. The data show, for male ego, a strong preference for one's mother's clan or father's mother's clan, however, the data also show a decrease in the number of marriage with father's sister's clan through time. As the following chapters will show, a section of the Mundas living in Dirih-Bhanjara has been undergoing a process of Sanskritisation and change in their marital practices. Their ascendants is always socially avoided (Trautmann 1981:25) Indeed, the Brahmanical ideology discountenanced cross-cousin marriage and their two main effects, i.e., the perpetuation of affinity between two group and sisters-exchanges. Though evidence of such customs has been widely reported among north Indian castes, these customs are indeed 'strongly disapproved of by the more orthodox.'

### Siblings exchanges

Munda kinship terminology repeatedly suggests sibling-exchanges. For instance, ego's father's elder brothers are equated to ego's mother's elder sisters, and the equation implies marriage relations. Moreover, from the point of view of male ego, his/her father's elder brothers are equated to his/her father's younger brother's wives' eldest sisters. This identifies marriageable categories (FeB with MeZ; FeB with FyBWeZ) which again remind of siblings-exchange. Their marital potentiality was confirmed to me when I was told that marriage with yBWeZ is indeed quite common. Finally, spouses' sibling's spouses are classified as parallel kin (as ego's own siblings). This again would suggest siblings' exchanges, although it has been shown that marital rules should not be inferred by kinship terminology, 67 the latter is however relevant when it confirms a practice supported by ethnographic evidence.

Ethnographic evidence for sibling exchange abounds. The Bandra Clan provides one instance. Originally from the southern part of the district, its members were invited to settle in Dirih-Bhanjara to act as specialists of the sacred. As they did not belong locally, they were not part of already-existing affinal networks they had therefore to start new alliances. These took the shape of sibling-exchanges between.

### Conclusion

The chapter provided an overview of the Munda kinship system. Although it did not aim at answering to the 'Munda question', it highlighted some features, which appear not to belong to neither of the two large groups into which terminologies of the Indian sub-continent are conventionally divided, the Dravidian and the Indo-Aryan. As these features are shared with some other 'tribal' groups of

Northern and Central India, the chapter identifies a possible avenue for future research.

In addition, the chapter also identifies equality as characterising both the Munda Kinship system and their preferential marital practices. However, the following chapters will show how those Mundas who converted to a Hindu reformist movement relinquished marriage with father's sister's clans, The skewing of symmetrical marriage rules in the direction of unilaterality is generally interpreted as leading to asymmetrical exchange and the development of wife-giving and wife-taking clans, There appears to be a causal relation between the new drift towards asymmetrical exchanges and the conversion process. Chapter Seven and Eight will indeed show how conversion led to caste discrimination among agnates hence to an emphasis on hierarchical relations between and within clans. The 'new' drift towards asymmetrical exchanges thus appears to be a reflection such emphasis on hierarchical relations, as chapter Eight will explore in more detail.

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