

**Language in the study of Munda agricultural rituals:
The ethnolinguistic work of Osada Toshiki**

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長田俊樹先生は過去 30 年にわたり、文法、儀礼語、オノマトペの記述を含むムンダ言語研究の多くの分野を開拓してきた。長田先生の洞察は、徹底したフィールドワーク、社会における言語の学際的分析、インドの文化史に基づいている。この論考では、長田先生が農業、社会組織、詩的言語に関する研究をどのようにまとめたかを示しながら、ムンダ言語研究に対する彼のユニークなアプローチを紹介する。その分析の視点の豊かさを際立たせるために、日本語の出版物から文章を引用する。この研究は一貫して、日本、インド、西洋と多様な知の伝統を活用してきた。私は長田先生と一緒にムンダの研究に携わる幸運に恵まれ、フィールド調査を中心にしたムンダ研究に対する先生の献身とエネルギーを称えるものである。

1 Language, agriculture, and ritual within Munda studies

Osada Toshiki is one of the world's leading authorities on Munda languages. Over the past thirty years of work, he has developed unparalleled expertise in Mundari, as well as the languages spoken in adjacent areas. Osada has published numerous and influential works on Mundari, including such foundational works as *A Reference Grammar of Mundari* (1992), "The demonstrative system of Mundari" (1991) and "Experiential Constructions in Mundari" (1999). He also contributed to important theoretical discussions, disproving the long-standing argument that Munda was devoid of word classes in "Mundari and the myth of a language without word classes" (2005) with Nick Evans. I had the good fortune of working closely with Osada and Madhu Purti on Mundari expressives. Osada has made a massive contribution to our understanding of Mundari and other Kherwarian languages, not to mention the ethnolinguistic history of Jharkhand and the social ecology of the region's people. In addition to this extraordinarily valuable empirical contribution, Osada's work is instructive because it is firmly rooted in three intellectual traditions: Japanese, Indian and Western. Moving critically between these three traditions he raises many challenges to the received knowledge that is embedded in modern academic disciplines.

The Munda languages constitute a major branch of the Austroasiatic family, whose speakers are distributed broadly across South and Southeast Asia. The Munda languages have been spoken within the South Asian linguistic area, in intimate linguistic contact with Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages. Speakers of diverse Munda languages have also been in contact with each other, negotiating influence from Hindu, Islam and Christian "civilizing" forces, as well as the shifting flows of conflict and cooperation among themselves. His work crosses into the areas of archeology and anthropology as well. In his work on Munda agricultural life particularly, he demonstrates an engaging multidisciplinary approach to the Munda position within the linguistic area. Much of this research has been presented in Japanese. Of note are two monographs published by The International Research Center for Japanese Studies 国際日本文化研究センター:

ムンダ人の耕作文化と食事文化民族言語学的考察—インド文化・耕作文化・照葉樹林文化
(1995) *Ethnolinguistic Research on Munda Farming Culture and Food Culture: Indian Culture, Farming Culture, and Evergreen Forests*

ムンダ人の農作儀礼 アジア比較稲作文化論序説—インド・東南アジア・日本
(2000) *Agricultural Rituals of the Munda People: Comparative Research on Asian Rice Cultivation-India, Southeast Asia, and Japan.*

Placing language at the center of his Munda studies, Osada draws on folklore, agronomy, botany, and anthropology, together with a keen interest in historical linguistics, poetics and linguistic performance, to provide a dynamic understanding of how the Munda people inhabit their landscapes and negotiate the complex relationships between humans and non-humans. This work also recognizes the importance of cultural contact in the multiethnic hills of Jharkhand.

2 *Encyclopedia Mundarica* and contemporary fieldwork

The position of “hunting” in the ritual texts of Munda suggests that the complex history of social, ecological and ritual interactions across the forest-field divide is still a part of Munda life. It cautions against simple generalizations that are driven by theoretical interests that develop outside of the realm of empirical data from the field. The “meaning” of hunting from an eco-cultural point of view unfolds from multiple angles when looking at areal history. For example, the Santal people initiate one of their festivals with a symbolic hunting ritual that requires the participation of a Kharia ritual performer, who is performatively shot and hung from a tree, as would be the prey of a hunting trip. This ritual is points to the social history of the region, and the manifold relationships of contestation and collaboration between people in forest spaces.

The *era sendera*, or ‘women’s hunt’ is one annual event that highlights the value of ritual in understanding society. I first learned about this ritual from Madhu Perti, a Munda ethnobotany specialist, singer-storyteller, master of expressive language, and long-time collaborator of Osada. As instructed by Osada, I went to Father Hoffmann’s *Encyclopedia Mundarica (EM)* – a massive source of information about Mundari language and culture –for further background information. *EM* quotes songs, stories, proverbs and daily dialog in the full Mundari forms under the lexical headwords, making it a rich source of knowledge and leads for fieldwork. Interesting detail description is contained in *EM* under the synonym term *holoe?*. While we do not have any ritual text associated with this women’s hunt ritual, the oral history around the practice points to contact with the Oraon people; Hoffmann suggests that the Munda may have borrowed the ritual from the Oraon, but in any case both the Munda and Oraon agree that the ritual commemorates the resistance of the Munda women to the Oraon when the Munda men could not go to war because they were drunk. It also signals the importance of how gender roles are defined and redefined as fluid elements in society. It is interesting to note that Hoffmann also refers to the *era sendera* in the introductory pages of his 1903 *Mundari Grammar*. In describing how the Munda had long made efforts to remain outside of the networks of trade that came up from the Indo-Aryan lowland areas, he asserts that they avoided specialized “trades” and “arts”. From there he states that probably the Munda were avid hunters.

That they [Mundas] were once keen hunters may be inferred from the obligatory yearly hunts in which every boy and grown-up man of the village must join if he wants his name to be remembered by the Singbonga (Sun-god), as well as from the *era sendera* (the women’s hunt), which is proclaimed after stated

cycles of years. In this *era sendera* the women don the men's clothes, and carrying the men's arms raid the neighboring villages. And goats, sheep, pigs or fowls they meet outside the houses on that occasion are their legitimate prey, if they succeed in cutting them down. The Mundas still prefer the forest to the cultivated country.

As Osada explores in his research, Munda livelihoods are composed of agriculture, gathering and hunting elements that are interwoven in ritual, daily work and social relations. The basic words that situate Munda livelihoods – *bir* 'forest', *goṛa* 'upland field' and *loyoṅ* 'irrigated field' – seem to delineate clear realms of livelihood activity, but can also be subsumed under the concept of *buru* 'mountain', which as we will see has eco-cosmological overlap with the notion of *boṅga* 'deity, spirit, god'. These interactions can only be understood through deep ethnographic inquiry, supported by multiple methods of interaction with people in their daily lives. In many ways, Osada's research has been conducted in conversation with Father Hoffmann. These turn of the 19th century texts provide a diachronic point of reference that allow us to gain insight on how Munda life and language has changed. Through this discussion, Osada has also been able to identify areas of Munda life that Hoffmann's position as a missionary did not allow him to comfortably examine; these gaps exist in important parts of Munda society, confirming Osada's drive to reinvestigate Mundari language and culture not only from a contemporary point of view, but from a different positionality in that society.

In the Kansai intellectual tradition, Osada privileges empirical approaches to his research, valuing thick description that is mediated by Munda conversations, discourses, songs, and jokes. When Osada (2000) engages deeply with both Japanese and Western scholarship on the theoretical underpinnings of ritual practice, but is adamant about keeping the discussion based in the local social and linguistic reality of the Munda communities in which these rituals are practiced. In particular, he approaches the differences between "ritual" (Japanese *girei* 儀禮) and "festival" (Japanese *matsuri* 祭り) from the starting point of Munda terminology and the concepts they denote. Four key terms must be explored in preparation for understanding how agricultural and other rituals can be located within Munda society:

Mundari	Gloss	Etymology	Notes
<i>buru</i>	mountain, hill	Austroasiatic	by extension, also a place or event where people assemble in masses, evoking the image of a "mountain"
<i>boṅga</i>	ritual, god, spirit, soul, sacrifice	Austroasiatic	semantically complex set of linked concepts linking humans, non-humans and sacred space
<i>neg</i>	rite, ritual activity	Indo-Aryan	
<i>porob</i>	festival	Indo-Aryan	

The terms *buru* and *boṅga* are Munda concepts, in contrast to the Indo-Aryan *neg* and *porob*. Osada points out the culturally heavy context of the Mundari terms, explaining that in compound form *buru boṅga* 'mountain spirits' refers to the totality of Munda ritual life. The word *buru* can be used to reference a specific ritual in the Munda calendar, the *mage buru*, which can be understood as the Mage Festival. The term *porob* includes four types: *baa porob* 'flower festival', *soorai porob* 'sorai festival', *mage porob* 'mage festival' and *pagu porob* 'pagu festival'. However, the smaller rituals that are performed in the agricultural cycle are classified as *boṅga*. The term *neg* refers to the day on which a ritual is performed, or the period of time in

which the related ritual activities are conducted. There are *maraj neg* ‘large rituals’ that include the festivals above, and *huṛij neg* ‘small rituals’, which encompass the individual activities conducted in an agricultural ritual. The foundation of the *boṅga* concept is “interaction between the sacred and the mundane”. With its etymological and spiritual root in the spatial framework of *buru* ‘mountain’, Osada challenges a simplistic understanding of “Munda agricultural ritual”, unpacking the interlinkages between cultivation, gathering and hunting, as well as the multilayered historical interactions between Austroasiatic and Indo-Aryan culture in the region. He does this through an ethnographic reading of Mundari ritual texts. I cannot conduct a comprehensive analysis of this valuable work here, but I introduce examples of the ritual texts and the cultural context in which he analyzes them as a snap-shot of Osada’s approach to society, nature and ritual.

3 The Flower Festival as a symbolic hunting ritual (Osada 2000)

[translation begins]

Generally speaking, the Flower Festival (*baa porob*) is the largest of the Munda festivals. What is the “flower” of the Flower Festival? The flower here refers to the *sarjom baa*, or the flower of the sal tree. Known as *sarasōju* in Japanese, the scientific name of this tree is *Shorea robusta*, Gaertn., botanically classified as Genus *Shorea*, within Family *Dipterocarpaceae*. This tree is distributed from Central India to Nepal and the Assamese Himalayan foothills. The minority groups of the Chhota Nagpura region – Santal, Oraon, Ho – celebrate the *baa porob* in conjunction with the flowering of the tree. Incidentally, the tree known as *sarasōju* in Japan is correctly the *natsutsubaki* (*Stewartia pseudocamelia*), different from the sal tree of India. As is well known, the Buddha attained enlightenment under the branches of this tree. (p106)

[text skipped]

The Flower Festival is not just a ritual conducted on that day, but covers a period that includes the reconstruction of the floor of the house and the residence of the spirits at the back of the house. The first day of the festival as conducted in Keora village is called *hai kaṛakom hulaṅ* “Day of Crab and Fish”. The household fasts on this day until the ritual activities are concluded, and then prepare a meal of dried fish. An offering is first made to the ancestors, and then the family eats the meal. In past days, they household would have participated in a group fishing trip to the river to collect crabs and small fish. Today, the group fishing ritual is no longer conducted, and the offering of fish to the ancestors is not done by all households.

The second day of the Flower Festival is the most important for Keora households. The household head fasts this day, and all members of the village work together to make *nawa jono?* ‘new brooms’. The broom is made from the branch of the *hesel* (*Anogeissus latifolia*, Wall.) and a decorative rope is made from the straw of *ruṛuṅ* (*Bauhinia vahlii*). When the brooms are finished, the remainder of the materials are taken home to be burned.

After these activities are completed, the head of the household will join the other men in the village to go gather the *sal* flowers. However, this collection of flowers takes the form of a ritual hunt, with the members calling out to each other *dola-bu sendera-te* “Now, off to the hunt!” During this time, the members shout out ritual phrases that are sexually explicit – *depeṛe-*

pe! ‘Let’s have sex!’. Festive language like this allowed only during certain festival periods, particularly the *mage porob* (which we will explore more in detail in a later publication).

The ritual hunting and gathering that comprises the Flower Festival is interesting in the symbolic links it provides between Munda society and the forest. When making the last offering of alcohol to the ancestors, the following prayer is made:

diki ta-laŋ
sirma-re siŋboŋga
toa leka-m tur-ta-n-a
dai leka-m hasur-ta-n-a
arji-a-m-ta-n-a ta-laŋ-a?
ape sida-ate ape dulu haŋam
gala haŋam samu haŋam
sanika haŋam ta-ko
ape sida cilika
sarjom baa oŋa?-re=pe
ader-ke-n-a
en-ka ge aŋ-o tisiŋ do
oŋa?-re sarjom baa=iŋ
ader-ta-n-a
ape sida cilika=pe
baa neg-re
manatiŋ-ki-ate
teŋda? ili taŋaŋ ili
om-ke-n-a-pe
ced-ke-n-a-pe
cilika leka leka panti panti
en-ka ge
om-a-pe-ta-n-a-ŋ
ced-a-pe-ta-n-a-ŋ

tisiŋ do ta-laŋ-a?
jom-ta-n nuu-ta-n-re
lai? hasu banog-o? ka
boo? hasu banog-o? ka
uri? eŋga-re
merom eŋga-re ta-laŋ-a?
buŋi caŋki bano? ka
biŋ caŋki bano? ka
kula caŋki bano? ka
maja leka ge ta-laŋ-a?
horo-ko-pe
sutu?-ko-pe ta-laŋ-a?
baba eŋga kode eŋga-re
cuŋu-ni? geger-ni?
laŋab-ni?
ape ge rogom-ko-pe
taŋkid-ko-pe
tisiŋ do ta-laŋ-a?
ape cilika sida
goe?-ja-n-a ad-ja-n-a
haŋam-ko
udub-ko-pe
u<pu>dub-ko-pe

Behold!
 Singbongga in the heavens,
 you rise like milk
 and sink like yoghurt.
 We are praying to you.
 From old times, you, Grandfather Dulu
 Grandfather Gala, Grandfather Samu,
 Grandfather Sanika and all of you.
 Long ago, you
 brought the sal flowers
 home.
 In this way, today I also
 bring the sal flowers
 home.
 Long ago, you
 at the Flower Festival
 as you conducted the ritual
 first alcohol and offered alcohol was
 given by you,
 offered by you.
 In this way,
 like this,
 I give to you,
 I offer to you.

Today, when
 we eat and drink
 let us not have stomach pain and
 let us not have head pain.
 To the mother of the cow
 to the mother of the goat
 let them not be attacked by bears,
 let them not be struck by snakes
 let them not be taken by tigers.
 As you see fit, please
 protect us, and
 lead us.
 To the mother of rice and mother of millet,
 from mice and other pests,
 from cutters,
 please protect them,
 please keep them safe.
 Today,
 you who have gone before,
 have died and disappeared,
 the ancestors,
 please teach us,
 please teach each other.

After this prayer, an offering of food is made, with another prayer.

*diki ta-laŋ
sirma-re siŋboŋga
toa leka-m tur-ta-n-a
dai leka-m hasur-ta-n-a
arji-a-m-ta-n-a ta-laŋ-a-?
ape sida-ate dulu haŋam
dulu haŋam gala haŋam
raŋa haŋam sanika haŋam
ganŋu haŋam kuŋdia haŋam oŋo? ge
ape sida cilika
haŋam-buŋria-kiŋ ge
boŋga koca-re
eskalte=kiŋ
boŋga-ke-n-a
buca caŋu-re=kiŋ
maŋŋi-ke-n-a
utu-ke-n-a
nawa caŋu nawa jula-re=kiŋ
boŋga-ke-n-a
en-ka ge aŋ-o tisij do
boŋga-ke-n-a
ape sida cilika=pe
baa neg-re
rukaŋa maŋŋi
rambaŋa utu
om-ke-n-a-pe
ced-ke-n-a-pe
cilika leka leka panti panti
en-ka ge
om-a-pe-ta-n-a-ŋ
ced-a-pe-ta-n-a-ŋ*

*tisij do ta-laŋ-a-?
jom-ta-n nuu-ta-n-re
lai? hasu banog-o? ka
boo? hasu banog-o? ka
uri? enŋa-re
merom enŋa-re ta-laŋ-a?
giŋri-hiŋri banog-o? ka
enda?-giŋri? banog-o? ka
bir-re akar-re
biŋ caŋgi bano? ka
kula caŋgi bano? ka
maja leka ge ta-laŋ-a?
baba enŋa kode enŋa-re
cuŋu-ni? geger-ni?
laŋtab-ni?
ape ge rogom-ko-pe
takid-ko-pe
tisij do ta-laŋ-a?
ape cilika sida
goe?-ja-n-a ad-ja-n-a*

Behold!
Singbongga in the heavens,
you rise like milk
and sink like yoghurt.
We are praying to you.
From old times, you, Grandfather Dulu
Grandfather Dulu, Grandfather Haram
Grandfather Rana, Grandfather Sanika
Grandfather Ganggu, Grandfather Gudia and all!
As before,
the two of you, Grandfather and Grandmother,
at the side of the ritual grounds,
the two of you
made the sacrifices.
In the new earthen pot
you cooked rice
and you cooked curry.
In the new earthen pot,
you made the sacrifices.
Like this today, I also
make the sacrifices.
Just as in the old days,
at the Flower Festival,
warm rice and
black gram curry,
were given by you,
were offered by you.
We too,
like this,
give to you,
offer to you.

Today, when
we eat and drink, let us
not have stomach pain and
not have head pain.
To the mother of the cow and
to the mother of the goat,
let them not disappear and
let them not die.
In the woods, in the forest
let the snakes not strike and
let the tigers not attack.
As you see fit,
to the mother of rice and mother of millet,
from the mice and pests,
from the cutters,
please protect us.
Please keep us safe.
Today we,
you who have gone before,
you who have died and disappeared,

(p108-11)

[translation ends]

These rituals demonstrate the on-going negotiation between the people and their ancestors, as well as their struggle for coexistence in the forest with others. We encounter the wild and the domestic – both animals and plants – as well as the basics of subsistence, rice for daily this-world sustenance, as well as the ritual sustenance of alcohol offerings. Osada offers a fascinating ethnographic account of the ritual as practiced in Keora village, but here I highlight how Osada demonstrates the importance of fieldwork that is grounded in the performativity of daily and ritual life.

4 The Pagu Festival between forest and field

While the Flower Festival can be seen as a domesticated hunting and gathering ritual, the Pagu Festival shows how the development of agriculture infringed upon the Munda logic of the forest. I offer a translation of the section on the *pagu* ritualized hunting festival (p116-122).

[translation begins]

Ritualized hunting - the Pagu festival

The Pagu (Mundari: *pagu*) festival is held on the full moon that falls between February and March. According to the Hindu calendar, this is the *phālgun* full moon. On that day, the well-known Hindu spring festival of Holi is held, and revelers throw colored water at each other. The Munda word *pagu* is derived from this Indo-Aryan word. In Hindi *phāgu* means ‘powder used in colored water during Holi’, and by extension this has come to refer to the Holi festival itself, or ‘the celebration of Holi’. Taking the word as a criteria, it seems that the *pagu* festival is a borrowing. The fact that the ritual tree cutting of the first half of *pagu* is also found in the Hindu ritual is also noteworthy. In fact, EM states that the Munda festivals *pagu* and *soorai* are both borrowed. However, there is no throwing of colored water in *pagu*. Moreover, one important element of the Munda festival is the ritualized hunting, which is not a part of the Hindu festival. For sure, the Munda festival has a certain Hindu flavor to it, but the lack of this ritualized group hunting (*pagu sendera*) that is held in the second half of the festival I treat this as its own festival. Thus, treating *pagu* as a Munda institution, I also consider the *soorai* festival to be a borrowing from the Hindu tradition because the rituals is conducted in Hindi, not Mundari. The language of *pagu* is Mundari, which I believe is another important criterion for determining it to be a Munda tradition.

The first half of the *pagu* is called *pagu ma?*. In this stage of the festival, villagers set fire to and cut trees along a forest road. In Mundari *ma?* means ‘to cut down a tree’. The important trees felled in this ritual are *risajara daru* (*Ricinus communis*, Japanese hima or tōgoma) and the *edel daru* (*Bombax malabaricum*, Japanese kiwata or indo kiwata). The second half consists of the *pagu sendera*, or ritualized group hunting. In Jojoba? village, the *pagu ma?* tree felling is conducted twice on the day before the full moon and the full moon day. In Keora village, the ritual is conducted only on the full moon day. [fieldwork details omitted from translation]

Now I will move to a concrete description of the festival, starting with Keora village. On the day of the full moon, villagers go to the forest to cut *risajara daru* and *edel daru*. The trip to the forest is undertaken in the evening, and only young men participate. After the tree felling, the group returns to the village singing and dancing to the *japi*. After nightfall, the trees are stood up along the road that runs west to east through the village. The trees near the house of the *pahan* [Mundari ‘ritual leader’] are arranged in a standing pyramid, and a straw is placed over the top to make a temporary shelter. Then the *pahan* sacrifices a red chicken. The prayer offered at this time is below, transcribed from the recordings I made at that time.

<i>ne, tisiŋ do</i>	Now, today
<i>bir-te=ŋ senoʔ-ta-n-a</i>	I am going to the forest!
<i>sanga goʔa</i>	Sweet potato fields!
<i>hasear goʔa-re=le</i>	Taro fields!
<i>ter-goeʔ-ko-ka</i>	Let us kill them with throws,
<i>hulaʔ-goeʔ-ko-ka</i>	let us kill them with broken bones.
<i>rooʔo sakam</i>	Let the dry leaves
<i>kulae-oʔ-ka</i>	become rabbits.
<i>guruʔu diri ge</i>	Let the spice grinding rock
<i>sail-oʔ-ka</i>	become a deer.
<i>sendera bir</i>	In the forest of the hunt,
<i>nitiŋ bir-re</i>	in the deep forest,
<i>huanʔ-re</i>	at the cliff face,
<i>coga-re</i>	at the deepest roots,
<i>alo-ka=le ter-uyug-oʔ-ka</i>	let us not trip and fall.
<i>kula caŋki banoʔ-ka</i>	Let the tigers not attack,
<i>biŋ caŋki banoʔ-ka</i>	let the snakes not strike.
<i>maja leka ge</i>	With success
<i>goʔ-au-ko-ka-le</i>	let us bring them [prey] back,
<i>kuʔuŋ-au-ko-ka-le</i>	let us carry them back.

A similar text was recorded in the EM. I reproduce that here for reference.

<i>ne, tisiŋ do</i>	Now, today
<i>om-a-m-ta-n-a-ŋ</i>	I give to you,
<i>ced-a-m-ta-n-a-ŋ</i>	I offer to you.
<i>jom-e-me nuu-i-me</i>	Please eat, please drink.
<i>hisi aʔal duŋusi aʔal-ate</i>	More than 20 rows, more than 40 rows
<i>sutu-au goŋgor-au-ko-me</i>	lead [the prey] to us, bring to us!
<i>sanga gaʔa</i>	Sweet potato holes dug,
<i>hasear gaʔa-re=le</i>	mountain yam holes dug,
<i>dal-goeʔ ruu-goeʔ-ko-ka</i>	let us beat them to death.
<i>rooʔo sakam citiri</i>	Birds the color of dry leaves,
<i>qelka buʔu kulae</i>	Rabbit the color of field ditches.

According to the footnotes to the EM text, the hunt is possible because the prey falls into the holes dug in the harvesting of sweet potatoes and mountain yams. If we read more deeply here, it is possible to link the *pagu* with the cultivation of tubers and grains. The dried leaves (*rooʔo sakam*) indicate organic fertilizer, in particular fertilizer (*sara*) for the finger millet (*qai*) seedbeds. The dry field ditch (*qelka buʔu*) refers to the method of planting sweet potato and mountain yams. These both provide links from hunting to tuber and grain cultivation. This “dangerous holes” interpretation has already been suggested by Itabashi (1989:5-6). If we

develop an argument based on the a priori assumptions of irrigated and upland rice cultivation, this would appear to be a new interpretation.

However, if we compare to other texts that I have collected, it becomes clear that this interpretation is not convincing. According to these other texts, the reference is not to ‘holes made by digging sweet potatoes’ (*sanga gaṛa*), but rather ‘sweet potato fields’ (*sanga goṛa*). There is easy explanation for this. The reason that the Mundari text mentions sweet potatoes is that the wild boars that are hunted like to eat them. It seems that the EM text *gaṛa* ‘river’ (and as semantic expansion from there, ‘ditch that resembles a river’) is either a mistake in hearing or transcription. The ‘bird of the color of dry leaves’ (*roṛo sakam citri*) is also problematic. According to my text, the sense is ‘if only the dry leaves would transform into a rabbit’ (*roṛo sakam kulae-oḷ-ka*), so perhaps the original EM text is *roṛo sakam citri-oḷ-ka*, ‘if only the dry leaves would transform into a bird’. Munda people often utter desires for different reality – such as ‘if only this rock were...’ using this grammatical construction, so it is unlikely that this is just childish speech. The EM description and explanation do not make sense here. This has been something of a detour, but I offer this example here in support of my assertions in the first chapter regarding fact and interpretation.

Returning to the ritual, this red chicken is not killed by having its head chopped off as it usually is in the Munda rite. It is killed in the performative “hunt”. The red bird is tossed into the pyramid shelter, and the straw is set on fire. The chicken is burnt to death there, or if it escapes, it is stoned until its death. When the straw is lit, the *pahan* pulls out a hunting ax and cuts down the burning shelter. He then recovers the burnt chicken from the ashes, and it is divided among the participants and eaten. Following this shared meal, the men of the village set the other trees on fire and cut them down. In the past, this was done naked. In fact, someone actually told me to strip naked and chop, but I was never sure if this was a joke or a serious order.

In Jojoba? village, the ritual is conducted in almost the same way, with the exception that it is the children on the first day, and adults on the second. Although it is divided into two days, the content of the ritual is no different from Keora.

Thus ends the first day of the *pagu*. The hunt is held on the second day. According to EM, in the Nagpuri dialect area, people from several villages come together for a large communal hunt. In Keora it is only people from the area of that village that participate in the hunt. Before the hunt, rituals are conducted in the household of each participating person. However, this ritual is not conducted inside the house, but rather inside a simple shelter that is constructed for this purpose using wood from the sal tree [*Shorea robusta*]. The shelter is built facing east, and the ritual is conducted with flowers – *madukam* (*Bassia latifolia*, Japanese mahua), *buruju* (*Bauhinia variegata*, Japanese fuisoshinka) and *huṭar baa* (*Indigofera arborea*). These all flower at the time of the *pagu*, but they cannot be picked for the duration of the festival. The flowers are placed at the festival grounds once they are constructed. A red chicken or a red goat is sacrificed. The text of that ritual follows.

diki bagwan siṅbonga
toa leka=m tur-ja-n-a
dai leka=m hasur-ja-n-a
tuṛi maa sutam-te
bor haṛagu
bor rakab-ja-n-a tisiṅ do
purab kona-re-m-a
pacim kona-re-m-a
utar kona-re-m-a

Behold! Lord Singbongga!
 You rise like milk, and
 sink like yoghurt.
 With a blue rope,
 you are pulled and sink of your own, and
 you rise of your own.
 You are in the East,
 you are in the West,
 you are in the North,

dakin kona-re-m-a
soromakash cairo kona caurasi
darti mata piriti=m bai-la
da? enğa=m bai-la
senğel enğa=m bai-la
jiu-jantu=m bai-li-?
manoa hon manoa gaņa bai-li-?

you are in the South.
You are present in all four corners, and
you have created Mother Earth and the soil.
You have created Mother Rain,
you have created Mother Fire.
You have created Living Beings,
you have created the children of Man and the
grandchildren of Man.

tisiņ do
ipil-gopil-ko=m bai-la
siņgi caņđu? bai-la
ter bagwan nımtan do
kaji-a-m-ta-n-a
ne disum tala te ta-laņ
sarte ge nımtan doņo?
ne disum ma?-nam
disum tala cimtuņ
samae-re
ma?-nam-le-m-a-ko
puu-nam-le-m-a-ko
a?kuņi boņga
sendera bir boņga

Today,
you have made the Stars,
you have made the Sun and the Moon.
Oh, Lord, now
we say to you.
In this World,
truly now,
you have opened up this World.
In the World
in all Times
open it up for us.
Clear it for us.
Akuti Spirit,
Hunting Spirit!

tising do ta-laņ
enka ge om-a-m-ta-n-a-ņ
ced-a-m-ta-n-a-ņ
sida cilika=ko om-a-m-ke-n-a
enka tisiņ do
ara? merom daņe
katu om-a-m-ta-n-a-ņ
ced-a-m-ta-n-a-ņ

Today
we give this to you,
we offer this to you.
Just as those before us offered this to you,
today, like this
the red goat sacrifice,
we give to you,
we offer up to you.

The *a?kuņi boņga* and *sendera boņga* of this text do not appear in any other agricultural rituals. The word *a?kuņi* is a compound of *ļa* ‘bow’ and *kuņi* ‘hunched back’, where the final glottal stop of the second element is lost. EM explains that *a?kuņi* is a spirit whose back became hunched from tetanus, and comments that “This rite is observed by very few Mundas” (p.87). It is pointed out in EM that the origins of this ritual are Hindu (p.89-90), and there is a question of why this is connected to the Keora *pagu* festival. EM does not offer any insight on this, but Keora villagers explain that the village protection spirits cannot watch over them when they go hunting, so they must pray to the forest spirit of hunting *a?kuņi*.

When this ritual is over, the hunters depart as a group. In recent years, there has been much felling of trees and the number of animals has decreased to the point that hunters often return from the hunt empty handed. Details concerning the rules and practices of the hunt are described in EM, but because hunting has declined the rituals concerning division of meat among the community members are not practiced anymore. In these times, men returning from the group hunt are welcomed back at the village by the women, who wash the hunters’ feet upon arrival.

This was a brief overview of the *pagu*, and since there are significant portions that seem to be borrowed from Hinduism, it should have perhaps been included in Section 3.3 [which discussed Hindu influence on Mundari rituals]. However, since *pagu* has been integrated into agricultural ritual, I opted to treat it separately from the *soorai* festival. I consider *pagu* as an

element of Munda agricultural ritual for several reasons. First, *pagu* leads us to Munda shifting cultivation. Until the *pagu* is completed, Munda villagers cannot begin their shifting cultivation. It also signals the beginning of mahua flower collection. Additionally, unless the *a?ku?i bongga* is propitiated in the *pagu* festival, it is believed that cattle and goats may suddenly die and the rice and finger millet crops may fail. People believe that the more successful the hunt, the more abundant the harvests will be. Although the hopes for such advance blessings are getting increasingly thin, Munda people continue to believe in the connections between agricultural harvests and the *pagu* festival.

[translation ends]

5 Rituals, text and fieldwork

Working with ritual texts as they are performed in the daily life of the Munda, Osada has brought out language-based challenges to theory-driven anthropological generalizations. This requires not only a deep linguistic reading of the texts, but also first-hand observation and participation, as well as knowledge of local social history, botany and livelihood practices. In celebration of Osada-sensei's seventieth birthday, I am honored to offer a small glimpse of some of this fascinating work to an English-reading audience. *Johar*.