

## SANTAL SIBS—THEIR TRADITIONAL HISTORY AND OBSERVED INTERMARRIAGE FREQUENCIES

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The Santals are organised on the basis of exogamous sibs. The sibs are termed *jati* which in Hindu Society denotes caste. The traditions transmitted from one generation to another and narrated at certain ceremonials, state that in the beginning a man and a woman were born from two eggs of a pair of geese. They are old man Pilchu (Pilchu Haṛam) and old woman Pilehu (Pilchu Budhi), the original ancestors of the Santals. This ancestral pair had seven sons and seven daughters. In course of time each son married one daughter and from these seven married couples originated the seven original Santal sibs—Hasdak, Murmu, Kisku, Hembrom, Marandi, Soren, and Tudu. Five more sibs were later added. These are Baske, Besra, Pauria, Core and Bedea. According to Kolean, whose account was noted by Skrefsrud and edited by Bodding (1928) the last named group had disappeared when he reported these details.

In Santal Parganas and in Bengal, the writer found similar traditions prevalent, although in some points there were important differences. The tradition in Mayurbhanj differed in certain respects. The names of ten sibs other than Pauria and Bedea are identical in the two areas. The Pauria are also known, but it was stated in Mayurbhanj that they sometimes call themselves Copiar Murmu, without having any right to the term Murmu, or simply Copiar. The twelfth name of Bedea was not given in Mayurbhanj. In one account it was stated to be Gondwar. This sib was actually found in Mayurbhanj. In another account, the name was said to be Dorka and to refer to "Birhors and others" according to the informants. The reference was evidently to Santals who had intermarried with non-Santals like Birhors. In the Santal Parganas the writer carried out careful enquiries in a number of villages, enlisting the help of Santal school teachers and also of village elders who came to various fairs. Several families of "Bedeas" Santals were eventually reported to be staying in a village off the main road in Jamtara area. These people claimed to be Santals. But the Santals of neighbouring hamlets stated that they were of mixed Santal descent. They were referred to as Bedea Santals and this was admitted by an agnatic kin of the family. The tradition noted in Mayurbhanj of intermixture for the twelfth sib fits in with what was actually found in Santal Parganas and also with the report of disappearance of this group by Kolean (since the Bedeas did not report as Bedeas).

The Santal sibs are each divided into sub-sibs termed Parist. Originally, marriage between sub-sibs inside the sib was prohibited. In recent years there has been relaxation of this rule, especially in Mayurbhanj and in some parts of Santal Parganas. Nevertheless, such instances are rare. An examination of 1568 marriages selected in the Santal areas in Bengal on random sampling technique revealed (Chattopadhyay 1947) only 28 such marriages in the sib. In the Santal Parganas there were six such marriages out of 289 studies. This is barely two per cent. It was stated in the villages of Bengal by elders that the prohibited relatives—the Ban Ganok Pera—include all sib members besides certain other relatives. Marriages in the sib but in a different sub-sib were not proper. Thus a Hat Soren should not marry any other Soren such as Man Soren. But sometimes this is

done now-a-days and tolerated or a fine is imposed. One of the rules which regulate intermarriage in different groups is that the Abge and Orak' Bonga (house deities and deities of smaller social groups) of the two families must be different. These are ancestral Bongas of the Parist and family. It was found on survey that a boy and a girl with different Abge bongas and belonging to the same Parist had married in Silda area. There had been trouble over the matter but as it was in a big village with a large literate Santal population, and in an area subject to strong modern Hindu influences, the marriage had not been dissolved. These are indications of changes that are taking place.

In Mayurbhanj, marriages in sub-sibs of the same sib are common. Out of 155 marriages studied in Muruda area as many as 15 were within the sib, in different sub-sibs. The elders said this was not held to be wrong now.

In the traditional songs sung at Jomsim *binti*, there is reference to a period when sib exogamy was not practised and marriage with near kin seems to have occurred.

It has been found from a study of Santal villages that these are founded by a group of men from a single sib and that their descendants form the nucleus of the village. Detailed studies of origin and development of villages show that the growth of villages took place mainly on a single sib basis until others were invited to settle. Among the Mundas of similar speech and culture and traditionally of same stock living in Chotanagpore, it is stated by Roy (1912) that when a village became over-populated, leading families of the same sib went out and founded a new village. In this way a number of daughter villages grew up round that original village.

The Munda political structure centered thus round the sib and sib settlement. The main office bearers came from the founder's family and sib in each village and the head of the group of villages was furnished by the original founder's family in the central mother village.

It has been found that among the Santals also, the head man of a village comes from the founder's family and sib. Santal villages are not however single sib villages now. But there are clear traditions of single sib villages and domains at least in Chae Champa country (Hazaribagh plateau) and probably dating to an earlier period. Subsequently the Santals seemed to have migrated too frequently, and in territory where there were overlords, for the sib to have any political and territorial basis having the character of a State. The following extract from Risley (1892) is noted with regard to their traditions in Chae Champa :

"In order that members of the various septs may recognize each other when they meet, each sept (= sib. KPC), except Pauria, Chore and Bedea, has certain pass-words peculiar to itself, which are supposed to be the names of the original homes of the septs in Champa or in one of the earlier settlements of the tribe. The passwords are as follows :

(1) Hasdak—Tatijhari, Gangijauni, Kara Guja, Sohodoro; (2) Murmu—Champagarh, Bagsumbha, Naran Manjhi; (3) Kisku—Kundagarh; (4) Hembrom—Kunda, Khairigarh, Jalaghatia; (5) Marandi—Badoligarh, Jelen Sinjo, Dhano Manjhi; (6) Saren—Andali, Barha, Pero Pargana; (7) Tudu—Simgarh, Sukrikutup, Baru Manjhi; (8) Baske—Ranga. Chunukjhandu; (9) Besra—Dhokra-palania, Gulu, Phagu Manjhi."

The place names are easily identified in the Chae Champa area in Hazaribagh. There is an ancient tale in this connection told at Jomsim *binti* when other ancient traditional tales are recited. It speaks of a quarrel between the ancestors of Kiskus and Marandis. The story and songs connected with it clearly indicate separate territory of each of these sibs. Also each sib had its own headquarters. It was Koendagar for the Kiskus and Badoligarh. (gar = fort) for the Marandis. The story and songs are not noted here for lack of space. It is clear from these tales and songs that there was a dispute about the limits of territory of the Kiskus

of Koendagar and Marandis of Badoligarh. The identification phrases noted by Risley mention these two forts for these two sibs, and also other areas for seven other sibs. It is therefore permissible to conclude that in the Chae Champa area, the Santals lived in territories demarcated for each sib, where villages were also single sib domains, as found much later by Roy among Mundas in their intact villages.<sup>1</sup>

There is another story of a minor disagreement, between Tudu and Besra, which did not affect the sib as a whole, nor did it lead to war. It was a quarrel over a Tudu boy coming to dance with Besra girls. The point of interest in the story is that according to it, the Tudu territory and Besra territory were separated by a river showing that there was demarcation. The quarrel did not lead to avoidance of the two sibs in marriage. There is a tradition that at first Besra girls were not married by other Santals. But a Tudu boy who danced with Besra girls, married one of them. Others followed suit. It was also stated that the Besra and Tudu originated the custom of giving three pieces of cloth at marriage, besides money. In the descriptive terms for sibs the Tudu are referred to as Mandariya i.e. drum players (at dance) and the Besra as Nacaniya i.e. girls who dance.

It is clear that the Tudu and Besra are linked together in tradition as (a) drummers and dancers, (b) as having originated, jointly, a marriage custom, and (c) as being the two sibs which intermarried first leading to admission of Besras into Santal society by marriage. It has been considered necessary to add these details to make it clear that the quarrel of Tudu and Besra did not lead to avoidance in marriage but ended in promotion of their union. On the other hand, the war between Kisku and Marandi had far-reaching consequences and the breach between them persisted. If marriage occurs between these two sibs, they are said to be unhappy. In connection with two cases of dissolution of Marandi-Kisku unions by divorce a generation earlier, in two genealogies collected by the writer, the relatives who were Kisku, at once made this comment. When other cases of divorce where husband and wife belong to other sibs came up for record, no such comment was made. The sample studied of Kisku-Marandi marriages and other marriages was not large enough for the comparison of relative frequency of divorces. But the data on marriages between different sibs furnish evidence of the dislike of unions between Kisku and Marandi sibs. For Tudu and Besra the frequency of marriages does not support any mutual avoidance of these two sibs in marriage. This is in agreement with the traditions noted.

The frequency calculations are made only for marriages in the Bengal Santal areas. The Santal villages in Bengal as noted earlier were selected on a random sampling technique, in consultation with the Indian Statistical Institute. In Santal Parganas, the areas were (a) a sub-division subject to Bengalee influence, and (b) a small area in the Santal reservation. The villages were widely scattered and hence the study gives a fair picture of the areas. Nevertheless, in the absence of complete randomised samples, numerical figures cannot be used by themselves as indicators of existing rules, except in a broad general way. The size of the sample for Santal Parganas is fair, the total being 294 marriages. But the expected frequency of marriages of even the most numerous sib is less than 10. Sampling errors even when properly randomised are likely to give wide divergences in all cases where the expected frequency is less than 25. In Santal Parganas, the sample was not randomised on a scientific basis. This is true also for Mayurbhanj. Here there was another

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<sup>1</sup> The conditions under which such conclusions may be drawn are discussed in the writer's paper (Chattopadhyay, 1942).

defect in noting the data. As the genealogies were recorded while observing rites and ceremonies and for enquiries connected with them, the sib of members of the genealogy noted in any instance was ascertained at first for the persons affected. In general, enquiries of sibs of marriage relations and deceased members have to be made in the family circle and the full information becomes available after enquiry from several individuals. In Mayurbhanj this subsequent enquiry was made only in a limited area. A fair proportion of genealogies collected while studying material culture and ceremonies in widely separated areas was left out of the later enquiries to ascertain sibs of all persons in the genealogy. The marriage pattern is also somewhat different. Hence, as the total number of marriages was less than 200, the detailed analysis of frequencies of sib relations has not been carried out in this case as well. Such analysis is not statistically justified. A brief indication of the lines of testing is given below.

Let  $N$  be the total number of marriages between different sibs excluding marriages in the sib. Let  $P, Q \dots$  etc be the total number of marriages of the sibs  $P, Q \dots$  etc, considering men only of such sibs who are marrying in other sibs. Let  $p, q \dots$  etc be the total number of similar marriages of sibs  $P, Q \dots$  etc considering women only of such sibs. The total of marriages of men will be the same for women, for all sibs. Then, if the frequency of intermarriage of sibs  $P$  and  $Q$  is independent of any bias towards or away from such marriage, the chances of such unions will be given by a simple formula which is the product of the ratio of the numbers of marriage partners in each sib to the total. For men of sib  $P$  and women of sib  $Q$ , the likelihood is

$\frac{P}{N} \times \frac{q}{N} = \frac{Pq}{N \times N}$  and the expected frequency is this fraction of the total number

$N$ , that is  $\frac{Pq}{N}$ . Similarly for women of  $P$  and men of  $Q$ , the number will be

$\frac{pQ}{N}$ . The expected frequencies of marriage between different sibs may be calculated in this way. Separate calculations for men and women are necessary,

as the number of marriages is not the same for union between any two sibs although the total for all sibs together is the same for men and women. Apart from any bias in marriage, there will be some difference between the two sets of values, due to sampling fluctuations.

Two points have to be remembered in this connection. If the expected frequency is low, say less than 10, then a difference of one or two marriages will cause a big divergence in percentage. Actually, if the expected frequency is low, and the population (here, the total of marriages of sib, separately for each sex) is below say 50, two small sibs may be combined in one unit, to bring the total in each case within the limits required. This is a recognised statistical device. As the total population of Besra men and of Besra women, as defined above, is in each case barely 30 and the expected frequencies are 5.5 and 4 only, the figures for Baske and Besra have been combined under "other sibs". There are no Pauria or Core cases in the Bengali list. In the Table for Marandi marriages below, the difference between expected frequency and actual frequency is shown to the nearest integer.

The value noted in the last row in symbols used by Yule is of  $(\tilde{m}_r - m_r)^2 / \tilde{m}_r$ , where  $\tilde{m}_r$  denotes the expected frequency and  $m_r$  the observed frequency in the  $r$ th cell. As there are in this Table seven sib groups in which the Marandi married (counting "other sibs" as one), and the total is given, one degree of freedom is subjected to constraint. There are thus six degrees of freedom. The value of 41.44 for chi squared, as the sum is called, gives a probability value for six

TABLE I  
*Marrindi marriages with other sibs*

Sib	Murmu	Kisku	Hasdak	Hembrom	Soren	Tudu	Other Sibs	Total	Per cent of total difference
Frequency expected for Men	61.4	13.9	37.2	29.7	47.8	25.4	14	229.4	
Actual for Men	74	1	48	32	72	34	13	274	
Difference in integers	13	-13	11	2	24	9	-1	+45	19.6%
Expected for Women	41.2	10.8	28.2	29.6	29.4	26	10.6	175.8	
Actual for Women	53	8	25	45	33	38	12	214	
Difference in integers	12	-3	-3	15	4	12	1	+38	21.6%
Total of men plus total of women expected	102.6	24.7	65.4	59.3	77.2	51.4	24.6	405.2	
Actual of men plus actual of women	127	9	73	77	105	72	25	488	
Difference in integers	24	-16	8	18	28	21	0	83	
Difference per cent of expected	23.3	-64	12.3	30.5	36.4	41.2	0	—	20%
(Actual Difference): Expected Frequency	5.59	10.24	0.98	5.49	10.19	8.95	0	41.44	

degrees of freedom, which is in this case infinitesimal. Hence the likelihood of the differences being due to sampling fluctuations is negligible.

The difference between expected and actual frequency is positive for all sibs except one serious (Kisku) and two minor exceptions and indicates a bias towards marriage in such sibs. For the "other sibs" there is no such bias. For the Kisku, there is clear antipathy to marriage with Marandi. The difference for men and women taken together is—64 per cent which is far beyond the limit of sampling fluctuation. If we exclude the Kisku marriages, the total comes to 479 for all marriages, against an expected value of 380 only. The difference is 99 which is 26 per cent of the expected value. This indicates a bias towards marriage in such sibs.

A more detailed analysis of the marriage frequencies is needed for ascertaining the likely factor causing this excess. It has been stated by some investigators among Santals, that the mother's sib is avoided by the Santal in marriage. When the present writer made this enquiry in the abstract, putting the question in a language other than Santali as well as in Santali, he was told that such marriages did not occur. When however he put the question in a concrete form by referring to the genealogies of the persons questioned and of other persons belonging to their mother's sib but not nearly related to them, the reply was that such marriages were in order. As the discrepancy was curious, and suggested some submerged belief against some kind of marriage with the mother's sib members, all the marriages studied, where the mother's sib is known and recorded were specially tabulated. The tabulation was to indicate the number of marriages of each sib with other sibs, separately for marriages in the mother's sib as well as marriages out of the mother's sib. The total of marriages of both types was 912 out of the 1540 marriages so far studied. Normally, in a simple family we can expect, of all the marriages tabulated about half to two thirds of cases where the information about the mother's sib will be available. For, in the top generation, beyond which the information has not been collected, this bit of data will always be absent. The proportion obtained with full data is, therefore, fair. The details are noted in Table II below.

TABLE II

*Marriages in and out of mother's sib*

Category	Number	Per cent of Total
In Mother's sib	217	23.8
Out of Mother's sib	695	76.2
Total in all sibs	912	100

It is not possible to determine the exact likelihood of marriage in the mother's sib without complex calculations and additional data. But on an average, without any bias we might expect about one seventh at most of marriages in the mother's sibs. The actual figures as noted in Table II indicate the existence of a very large bias in favour of marriage in the mother's sib. The reasons for such a bias, in the opinion of the writer, appears to be due to the former existence of a marriage custom which has now disappeared. One of the likely types of marriage which would, after its disappearance, leave behind a bias in favour of marriage in the mother's sib, is marriage with own mother's brother's daughter.

Since this form of marriage was once prevalent in North India, both in the time of the Mahabharata and in the lifetime of Buddha, and since it survives to the present day in Penninsular India, as well as on the border area of Eastern India, some support is given to such a hypothesis. The occurrence of this form of marriage among tribal folk to the west and south of Chotanagpore seems to strengthen such a view. There are however other alternatives and the question requires discussion in a separate paper. From the point of view of the women it may be said that women given in marriage to a family tend to be, in succeeding generations, of the same sib. The close connection of a man in rituals with his father's sister's husband, his own sister's husband and with the daughter's husband, as also the sexual joking relationship found between a woman and her father's sister's husband fit in with this marriage trend, of which the significance has been revealed by statistical analysis.

#### ABSTRACT

In this paper the writer notes a brief account of the traditional origin of Santal sibs and of the tradition of separate demarcated states of each sib. A statistical analysis is then carried out of 1540 Santal marriages to find out bias towards or away from marriage between different sibs. The tradition of Marandi-Kisku avoidance in marriage is tested and found to be correct. On the other hand, contrary to reports by some earlier observers, a definite bias in favour of marriage in the mother's sib by a man is proved by the figures of such marriages. A likely explanation is suggested.

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