

www.hssj.artuklu.edu.tr

## Ethno-archaeological Notes on Hunter-gatherer Munda People in Tropical Rainforests of North-eastern Bangladesh

Abu Bakar Siddiq<sup>1</sup> and Ahsan Habib<sup>2</sup>

### Keywords:

1. Munda
2. Palkichara
3. Hunter gatherer
4. Prehistoric  
subsistence

### Abstract

The hunter-gatherer groups represent the oldest and perhaps most successful human adaptation on this planet. Until 12,000 years ago, before the starting of cultivation system in the Fertile Crescent, virtually all humanity lived as hunters and gatherers. Therefore, investigations on present day hunter-gatherer societies may hold the key to some of the central questions about humans' life in nature before urbanization. Moreover, they may hold information about the processes which shifted people from their natural habitat. The Munda people of Palkichara village are still observed to be unique with their ancestral way of life despite of being socio-economically controlled by the local tea estate. Hunting and gathering are the two main ways of subsistence which reflect in their every aspects of family, social and cultural practices. Therefore, being completely attached with nature and almost untouched by rest of the world, the Munda people of Palkichara village may provide some pictures of prehistoric hunter gatherer societies. This study is aimed to focus on some significant aspects of the traditional hunting-gathering methods and techniques as well as the questions on how and why the primitive way of life is still active in Munda tribal people of Palkichara village.

## INTRODUCTION

The significance of hunting and gathering has long been observed among archaeologists and anthropologists studying the role of natural resources in the subsistence of prehistoric societies. The world's hunting and gathering peoples—the Arctic Inuit, Aboriginal Australians, Kalahari, San, and similar groups—represent the oldest human adaptation. Investigations on

these types of nature based societies hold the key to the questions about social life, beliefs and rituals, diet and nutrition of prehistoric people. Moreover, they hold answers about how people lived without the state, without accumulated technology, and how they lived in nature without destroying it (Lee & Daly, 1999). Hunted and gathered floral and faunal remains identified

<sup>1</sup> Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Letters, Mardin Artuklu University, 47100, Mardin.

<sup>2</sup> Corresponding author: Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Green University of Bangladesh, 1207, Dhaka. [dipu.manush@live.com](mailto:dipu.manush@live.com)

the cultural assemblages of prehistoric sites have received much attention in archaeological literature to understand prehistoric lifestyle and prehistoric diet. It is observed that prehistoric people interacted with the natural environment by a firmly difficult life, and in this point, there is a close tied relationship between prehistoric archaeology and present day's hunter-gatherer societies. Therefore, present day's hunter-gatherer tribal groups are called as 'living fossil' by prehistoric archaeologists.

The Munda tribe in Indian subcontinent is one of the major tribes of Austroasiatic Munda-speaking people who are the descendants of a human population who migrated from Africa to India about 56,000 years ago (Agrawal et al., 2008; Pattanayak, 1998; Gadgil et al., 1998; Majumder, 2001; Riccio et al., 2011; Roychoudhury et al., 2001). Munda people are observed as proto-australoid and they speak Mundari dialect of Austroasiatic language family which is considered as the oldest language in India (Blench, 2008; Winters, 2011). There are other notable tribal groups in India and Bangladesh e.g. Santal, Juang, Kharia, Korku and Sora who also speak Mundari language (Osada, 1997). Political organization of Munda society is structured in chiefdoms, which are organized into lineages. Every lineage has own tribal chief and each lineage represent a common ancestor that bring together the different families. They usually solve all kinds of problems, within and beyond the tribal group, with their combined way of social order.

There are around 150 families in the Palkichara village of northeastern Bangladesh. 41 of them are Munda tribal families who are acting as the dominant group in the village. Like all other tribal groups, Munda people also had been migrated from eastern Indian forest when the British company established some tea state in this region. Since then, they have been living in this lush forest area with their unchanged traditional lifestyle. Munda people in Palkichara village are very far from electricity or gas supply. No electric or electronic equipments have been used by them as they are impossible to afford. There is no toilet or any structure for excrement process is seen in their settlement. They usually depend on nearest thick forest for activities like excrement process. Having their dinner, they usually go to bed soon after the dusk. They depend on Kerosene (lamp oil) or homemade oil to light the lamp in dark. They have to purchase clothes and other household metal objects from outside, which they can afford once in two or three years. However, they themselves usually make all other necessary household tools from bamboo and woods.

Eleven lineages exist in Palkichara Munda community. These lineages successively occupy the leadership of the village. They are under the control of a territorial chiefdom and, ultimately, under the power of the headman of tribal groups in Moulvibazar district. The domestic structure, which is formed in a small housing complex, consists of an extended family group. The oldest man, usually the grandfather, is at the top rank of a family. He is responsible for organizing and distributing household property, marriage, social representation and ancestral worship.

The surname of a Munda defines their identity and relationship to own clan. Surnames are based on natural elements, trees, animals, birds or any nature-related object which are often found in their surrounding environment (Osada, 1996). In this sense, their lifestyle is closely linked to the sacred through natural elements, icons of deities, altars and graves of ancestors. In Palkichara village, the Munda people are basically nature worshiper and most of their rituals focus on the worship of different deities of natural agents, named as *bonga*, and their ancestral spirits. Generally Munda people named their religion as 'Sarna Dhoromo' or 'Sarnaism' (Srivastava, 2007), which means 'the religion of the holy woods'. Sarnaism is also followed by some other Austroasiatic tribal groups such as the Santal, the Turia, the Khuruk, the Kharia etc. Their religion is actually very distinct from Hindu cult with the nature of deities, rituals and social attachment, although some may see similarities. Religious beliefs and practices of Munda people are described with various elements like animatisms, dream, divination, fertility cult, magic, polytheism, taboo, totemism and witchcraft (after Das, 2014). However, they generally believe in a supreme God called *Singbonga*. They believe that *Singbonga* is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. But there are other Bongas (deities) with different powers who are subordinate of *Singbonga*. They also worship the *Chalapachho Devi*, goddess of the earth, nature and the trees of the world.

Ancestral worship and ancestral shrines are usually common in Munda village. Generally the buried ancestors are memorialized as 'Guardian' spirit of the clan with a burial stone named 'Sasandiri' (Srivastava, 2007). These are placed flat on the ground. Bones of the buried body or cremated bones are placed under this burial stone with previous other ancestors' bones. Once every year, all family members are required to visit burial stones to pay their respects. There is another stone structure for ancestors' memorial called 'bhodiri' (headstones) which are placed in an erect position and without any bone or cremated ash. The hilly land of

Chotanagpur, India, which is considered as the original ground of Munda, is still dotted with clusters of these two types of ancestral shrines. But in Palkichara village massive stones are not available. Therefore, Munda people in Palkichara village use small stones, available in nearest streams, to build ancestral memorials in their settlement as well as in the shrines into the jungle.

## BACKGROUND

Palkichara is a small village under Tilokpur subdivision of Chatlapur tea estate which is located in Kulaura Upazila (subdistrict) of the Moulvibazar District in north-eastern border of Bangladesh. This part of north-eastern Bangladesh is covered with deep lush rainforests and about 39 meter (127ft) above the sea level. Prehistoric tool making sites and fossil wood raw material have been discovered from this area which suggests that earliest prehistoric people migrated in this area about 35000 to 3000 years ago (Roy and Ahsan, 2000). At present more than 25 tribal groups are living in this area. Many of them are basically depend on hunting and gathering subsistence.

The geology comprises small hillocks and most of them have course sandy soil composite. Geomorphological processes are active, erosion is constant, and the occasional large-scale morphological changes have been occurring every rainy season by very strong and sometimes sudden water flow on local landscape. This area, especially Moulvibazar valley, has a good number of haors (wetland ecosystem). The Hakaluki is the biggest of them. These Haors provide sanctuary to the millions of migratory birds, freshwater fish, aquatic

animals and plants. The Manu River is the biggest river of this area with some other notable rivers such as Bilash, Fanai, Kapua, and Juri.

The thick lush tropical rainforests are the ideal place for different animal species in this area. Among them gibbon, wild buffalo, mugger crocodile, fox, golden jackals, deer, leopard, wild fishing cats, wild boar, giant squirrels, wild chicken, peafowl, bee-eater owl, parrot and python are notable. Out of 161 teagardens in Bangladesh, 98 of those are located in Moulvibazar district (Moulvibazar, 2016). Among them there are three largest tea gardens in the world both in area and production.

This area is not very suitable for widely cultivation process although horticulture and forest gardening is very common and this is considered as the main source of economy among local people. Pineapple, lemon and banana are prominent in cultivation. People use traditional cultivation process and local instruments made of iron, wood and bamboo as their agricultural tools. Hunting plays a major role in subsistence of many tribal groups who are closely associated to local tea estates.

Palkichara is a small village in this area which was founded by Munda, Bauri, Mandraji, Rai, Rakoti, and Koiri tribal groups. The village is under Chatlapur tea estate established by Duncan Brothers & Company under colonial ruleduring 1890s. The environment of the village includes a thick forest area with hillocks and lots of seasonal streams around it.

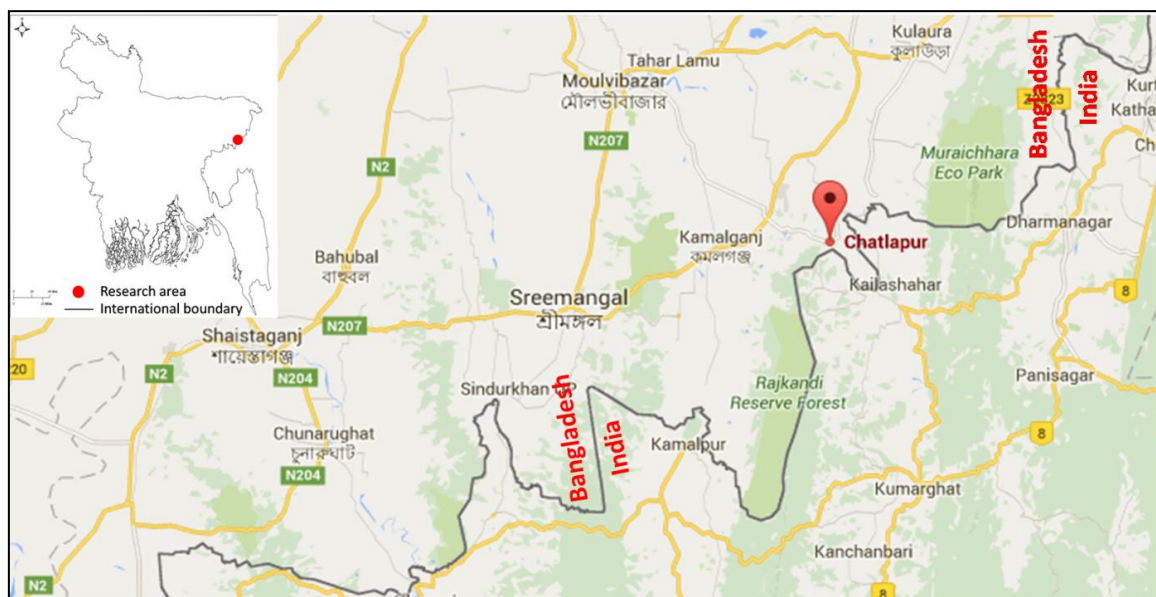


Fig 1. Map shows the location and vegetation density of the study area (Partial source: Google 2016)

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Qualitative research methodology has been performed in this study. The main objective of this research was to build up an ethnographic case study of the Munda people to find some facts about prehistoric hunter-gatherer's life before the starting of agricultural subsistence. More specifically, the study intended to analyze the existing nature of hunting gathering society as well as their techniques and methods in which they fulfill their basic needs of subsistence by maintaining a very close connection with Mother Nature. Considering this objective, Palkichara village of Kulaura sub-district in Moulvibazar district of northeastern Bangladesh was selected as the study area, where Munda people are still fully depending on tropical lush forests. First attempts were taken to meet and map all the different types of tribal people in the area. Following that, the Munda people of Palkichara was located.

26 household interviews were taken out of 41 Munda families in this village. Moreover some small scale case studies were performed to understand what Munda people usually eat, how they manage their subsistence within their surrounding forest and what are their strategies to collect and preserve food. Furthermore, interviews of individuals and sometimes, the groups in social meeting, yards and in the fields were taken in order to observe individual participation, and thinking in the society. Besides, several small hunts as well as two big hunts were observed closely during the field work.

### *Hunter-gatherer lifestyle of Munda people before European colonization*

Technologies such as iron-smelting, basket-making etc. are brought by the outsiders to the Munda society (Osada, 1996). The artisans in the Munda society in different part of India and Bangladesh, e. g. the Asur, an iron-smelter, the Turi, a basket-maker, and the Birhor, a rope-maker are most common nowadays. However, all Mundas were the same – hunter-gatherers before European colonization in India. Since time immemorial, Munda people along with other tribes were living in and totally depending on forest. They were the owners of the forests. They used the forests for hunting animals, gathering tubers, fruits, flowers and herbs. They cut wood and plant to build their homes, used forest for their daily needs. If they had to sell some forest produce, it was only to buy other things they needed, such as salt and iron tools. They did not sell the wood and other things from the forest to earn a profit.

Historical records show that the people living in forests used to give valuable gifts of ivory, animal skins and honey to the kings and emperors. As long as the forest

dwellers did not threaten the security of the kingdoms, the kings and emperors left them alone and did not make laws or rules to control how they used the forests. As a result, for many centuries forest was Munda as well as other tribal groups' undisturbed home before European colonization.

### *Munda people after European colonization*

The situation changed rapidly during British rule. By 1910, more than 50,000 kilometres of railway lines had been laid. Each year almost 10 million wooden sleepers were needed to lay these new railway lines. Wood was also cut and sold in huge quantities for buildings, mines and ships. In 1864 British government set up a Forest Department to protect the forests from the people living in or near them. Consequently, in 1878, the government enacted a new forest law to stop people from using forests freely (Gupta, 2009). Under this law, forests were divided into two categories: a) Reserved forests - in which no one could enter; b) Protected forests - from which people could take head-loads of wood and small forest produce. However no one could cut trees, collect honey or fruits, burn grass or graze their animals. This process worsened the hunting and gathering forest life of Munda tribe as well as made them labourers for the Forest Department and contractors as well as bonded farm labourers for outsider farmers. Basically, this crucial step constrained Munda people to give up their previous lifestyle and made them agricultural and tea estate's bonded labour as they have been found in different part of India, Nepal and Bangladesh nowadays.

### *Hunter-gatherer lifestyle of Munda tribe in Palkichara village*

Munda people in Palkichara village were brought in this area between 1880 and 1890 as tea estates' bonded labourers. Since then they have been living in this village generation after generation. There are several reasons for that they are still remained as hunter gatherer. They neither have any land right for cultivation nor even to build a house. They have to take permission from tea estate for all kind of uses of land. However, this process is not obligatory to hunt in the forests. Therefore, hunting has been more popular than even household farming. On the other hand, a mature labour can earn 69 BDT (0.75 USD) maximum a day. As a result they have to depend on forests more than their labour investment in tea estate. A small town Shamshernagar, is about 8 km away of this village and yet one or two elder Munda once or twice in their life time have been there.

Hunting is a very effective way of fulfilling the basic subsistence levels in Pulkichara's Munda people, though

their food is not that much diverse. Normally they eat rice, roots and vegetables, meat, and local fresh water fish. Their hunting area comprises a large area around their settlement. Munda people in Palkichara go for hunting up to 15 kilometres far from their settlement. Hunting is always considered as the men's labour. No woman in this settlement has been observed in hunting practice.

*Beliefs in hunting:* Munda people believe that forest has right to consume preyed food. If it does not happened, nature will be unhappy to them and they will be fallen into evil forces. They need to offer some portion of their hunted food in the forest for their forest god. This sacred food is called 'voog'. They believe 'voog' will open new opportunity for next hunts and it will keep them safe and well. As 58 years old Ramlal said 'in the forest, our god is exists who gives us food and shelter from evil forces. We always offer him *voog* whenever we hunt and it is our rituals. No one shows apathy among us for offering the *voog*'.

*The rules and ways of hunting:* Hunting is actually their natural instinct what they have inherited from their ancestors. Oral history and different stories in Palkichara Munda families also show their close relationship with hunting practices and the hunter-forager life of their ancestors across the hilly rainforests. However, hunting is not found necessarily an everyday activity in Palkichara village. Most of adults Munda in Palkichara have to work as tea labour from morning to mid-day (8:00 to 14:00 for men and 8:00 to 16:00 for women). After working hard until afternoon, they usually have little time to hunt before the dark. Besides, hunting for a short time and in closer forests is not so advantageous because of the scarcity of prey animals. They generally need a full day to hunt sufficient. Therefore, they usually go hunting once or twice a week for a good amount of meet source for their community.

The chief of the tribe leads the hunting activities. Before going hunting, most of the adult men in the settlement gather in the yard of chief's house. Then they go to forest together with all the preparation and plan. They usually perform a small ritual to the forest god before their every hunt. They usually take four to five hours for a small and over a day for a big group hunt. Deep forest is ideal for hunting but it is not easy without risk. They usually do not hunt again in the same forest for a long time. It is a common strategy to target prey animals easily.

*Hunted animals:* Climate change, expansion of human settlement as well as different other changes in natural environment of forests are resulting for wildlife decrease in Palkichara area. On the other hand, it is observed that hunting practice of Munda people in Palkichara area

effects very little on wildlife in this area. This is because they do not hunt frequently as well as they are well aware about the animal population in the forest. Therefore, it is prohibited to kill pregnant animals, mother or baby animals in their hunt. Wild boars, spotted deer, mouse deer, rabbits, foxes, forest fowls, peafowl, swan and different type of large birds are very frequent in this area. In previous time, they used to hunt more animals and consume much meet than the present days. Sometimes, could even hunt wild buffalos. A lot of deer antlers are still available in many houses of this village. At present, different types of birds, swan, wild fowls, foxes, rabbits and wild boar are found more in their prey animals.

*Hunting tools and techniques:* They normally use bow and arrow, knife, bolas, cutlass, sword, various sizes of spear, slingshot, lance, rod, stick, buckler, armour, chain and tether for hunting activities. They usually buy their metal tools from nearer markets. Different types of tools are used for different types of hunt. Bow and arrow, knife, spear, bolas are used especially for a big hunt when they are trying to kill animals like wild boar, deer and fox. Slingshot is mostly uses tool among Munda. Those are mostly used for hunting birds and mouse type animals. They were also seen trapping wild animals widely.

Munda people in Palkichara follow some strategies to hunt their target. First they find the prey animals by divided them into small groups. After one group find and fix a suitable target, they send signal to others to come and surround the targeted prey. Then they hit or shoot the target from different sides all together and with a lusty noise to frighten the pray. Sometimes they use sword to kill the injured animal fast. Sometimes they spear and chain the animal to grab it. After the hunt, they go closer to wounded animals, ensure no risk and collect the preyed animals. Finally they bring all preyed animals together in their settlement and distribute them among all families including those who even could not join the hunt. Headman of Munda tribe leads the whole activities.

#### *Gathering strategies in Palkichara Munda people*

Wide range of gathering was observed in this community. They were seen to be depended more on gathering than the hunting. Needless to say that gathering is mostly performed by women and girls. They usually buy oil, salt and rice from local market which they afford from their labour in the tea garden. Sometimes, they collect lady nut (*Entada phaseoloides*), one kind of wild been to extract oil. They do not cultivate rice or any other crop though small scale house

cultivation for some local vegetables was seen in their community. This is mainly maintained by women in the village as the support in shortage. However, they cannot rely on domestic vegetables since they do not have land ownership or space in the court yard.

They usually collect edible fruits, leaves, roots and plants from lands as well as water bodies. Sometimes they were seen to collect vegetables from tea garden, nearest swamps, road side and even valleys of the hillock area. The study suggests that their dependency on the gathering subsistence is increasing gradually in last 40 years, which is parallel to their reduction in hunting. No common rule or routine in gathering was found. However, group and seasonal gathering for over a week was reported. Sometimes, men and women join in groups and go fishing as well as collect aquatic roots,

crabs, snails, freshwater oysters etc. They were never seen to buy fish or meat.

They were found heavily depended on wide range of medicinal plant species for medical and luxury practices. Besides the medicinal and herbal plants, different wild plants are common in their daily meal. Girls and women were seen to collect roots, twigs, wild potatoes, vegetables etc. every day at least for 2 hours before they start to cook the midday meal. Over 80 plant species have been found to be related with food habit of Munda people in Palkichara. They either eat them or collect roots, fruits, seeds, bark and leaves as storage food. The following table shows a short list of most common wild plants related to their daily food habit and gathering practice:

Table 1. *Most Common Wild Plants Species Consumed By Munda People in Palkichara*

Common Name	Plant family	Scientific name	Bangla name
Air potato	Dioscoreaceae	Dioscorea bulbifera	Cham alu, Pagla alu
Blue water-lily	Nymphaeaceae	Nymphaea stellata	Chhoto Shaluk, Nil Padma
Centella or Gotu kola	Apiaceae	Centella asiatica	Thankuni
Chinese-cucumber	Cucurbitaceae	Momordica cochinchinensis	Buno kakrol
Common Purslane	Portulacaceae	Portulaca oleracea	Bara Loniya
Fiveleaf yam	Dioscoreaceae	Dioscorea pentaphylla	Jhum alu
Indian timber bamboo	Poaceae	Bambusa tulda	Jowa bans, Tallabans
Indian Senega	Caryophyllaceae	Polycarpon prostratum	Ghima shak
Indian yam	Dioscoreaceae	Dioscorea glabra	Shora alu
Ivy gourd	Cucurbitaceae	Coccinia grandis	Telakucha, Makal
Lady Nut, Mackay Bean	Mimosaceae	Entada phaseoloides	Gilla
Lasia	Araceae	Lasia spinosa	Kanta kachu
Mountain yam	Dioscoreaceae	Dioscorea hamiltonii	Bon alu
Orange berry	Rutaceae	Glycosmis pentaphylla	Ashshaora, Ban Jamir
Rosary Basil	Lamiaceae	Ocimum americanum	Ban tulsii
Roscoe	Zingiberaceae	Alpinia allughas	Jangli ada
Seeded Banana	Musaceae	Musa paradisiaca	Aittakola, Bichikola
Spiny pigweed	Amaranthaceae	Amaranthus spinosus	Kata notey, Kata denga
Swamp Cabbage	Convolvulaceae	Ipomoea reptans	Kalmi Shak
Sword bean	Fabaceae	Canavalia gladiata	Makhna shim
Taro	Araceae	Colocasia esculenta	Mukhi kachu, Bahumukhi
Turkey berry	Solanaceae	Solanum torvum	Tit Begun
Vegetable fern	Dryopteridaceae	Diplazium esculentum	Dheki shak
Voodoo Lily / Snake Plant	Araceae	Amorphophallus bulbifer	Ol, Olkachu
Water Cress	Asteraceae	Enydra fluctuans	Helench, Hincha shak
Water Lily	Nymphaeaceae	Nymphaea nouchali	Sada Sapla
White turmeric	Zingiberaceae	Curcuma zedoaria	Sothi
Wild Asiatic banana	Musaceae	Musa acuminata	Kola

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Munda were originally the inhabitants of north-western India and they migrated to Chottanagpur followed by Azamgarh after the Aryan invasion (Das &

Singh, 2014). In Bangladesh, they are mainly distributed over the Rajshahi, Naogaon, Jaipurhat, Dinajpur and Bogra district of Barind area. Most of them had been brought by the landowners from the adjoining district of Dinajpur to clear and reclaim jungle land

(Sharmeen, 2013). At present majority of the Munda people in India depend on agriculture, livestock and wage labour while majority of Munda people in Bangladesh depend totally on agriculture or wage labour in agricultural fields. However, Munda people in Palkichara village, contrasting to most of Munda population, are still dependent on forests as their main source of subsistence. They are still capable of practicing their ancestral way of life. Being controlled by tea estate and isolation from state agents are two main reasons to support their natural life. Moreover, availability of the natural resources can also be a crucial factor there.

A large number of prehistoric artifacts were discovered from the Chaklapunji tea garden, a tropical rainforest area in Chunuraghat sub-district of Habiganj district. This prehistoric settlement is about 50km far from Palkichara village. However, the ecology, landscape, and the natural environment of this prehistoric settlement are similar to Palkichara area. Besides, few small size stone artefacts also have been observed in Palkichara area during the fieldwork. Based on comparative study, it is described that prehistoric people had occupied this land some 25000 to 3000 years ago (Roy & Ahsan, 2000). Although great number of artefacts suggests a heavy occupational sign, the subsistence pattern of prehistoric people yet to be understood because of the absence of any excavated or stratigraphical site. Therefore, the subsistence pattern of Munda people of Palkichara settlement may give some hints about the life of prehistoric people since they are very closely dependent on nature and are maintaining their subsistence with a very limited technology as like the prehistoric people.

Munda people in Palkichara village perform rites and rituals in different seasons of the year. These include the worship of village deities, forest deities as well as ancestral spirits. In many areas Munda people are found to cremate their dead (Das, 2014). However, Munda people in Palkichara bury the dead as like the traditional custom of their ancestral homeland. They smear mustard oil and turmeric paste on the dead body. Afterwards, they cover the dead body with a new white cloth and usually put some daily household goods in the grave. There is no ancestral memorial structure is seen in Palkichara village whereas Munda people in their ancestral land (Jharkhand, India) still perform ancestral worship with sacred burial stones 'Sasandiri' (Srivastava, 2007). Lack of availability of massive stone slabs is the reason for it. However, Munda people in Palkichara village perform ancestral worship by erecting

a long stone close to their households or on the altar of temple as the symbol of ancestral shrine.

Gathering is seen more important and necessary comparing to hunting in Palkichara. Their average meat consumption is found once a week. This information suggests them to be more dependent on vegetables than the meat. Women were seen play very active role for daily subsistence. Men were seen to be engaged with harder work like building and repairing the house, hunting and fishing, wood cutting etc. Women were seen in more light but laborious work like gathering and preparing the meal, cleaning and maintaining households, child caring etc.

Fascinations for changing their livelihood into a technologically advanced and comfortable modern life have observed in many researches throughout the Indian subcontinent. Especially in north-western Bangladesh, where their population is the highest in number, the Munda people are seen to be very interested in local politics and state agencies for gaining different state based facilities (Sharmeen, 2013). However, traditional socio-cultural practices are still unchanged there. In Palkichara Munda community, this trend is not so strong. Although they are gradually being used by neighbouring state politicians, they are still observed to have imaginary idea about state facilities and technologically advanced life. Munda people in Palkichara are observed to be happy and relaxed with their natural and simply lived life. Yet, their fascination for a technologically advanced lifestyle is seen to be unavoidable.

## CONCLUSION

It is thoroughly seen that Munda people have changed their way of hunting gathering life into a sedentary agricultural life throughout most of their distribution area. However, smaller Munda communities, resembling in Palkichara village, are still surviving on their ancestral hunting-gathering and sometimes semi-forager way of life in isolated ecological niches. The survival techniques and strategies of these isolated and unique groups can duplicate pictures about human-environment interactions in prehistoric time. Deep attachment with natural world is present in rituals, beliefs, philosophy, social structures and even family practices of Palkichara's Munda people. Hunter gatherer life of this people testifies that prehistoric human species were very able to survive in this natural environment without the help of advanced technology. Nonetheless, life of Mundas in Palkichara show another fact that hunter gatherer subsistence pattern, which was practiced

by prehistoric people, is not so sought-after to human species in contrast to technologically advanced life.

## REFERENCES

- Agrawal, S., Srivastava, S. K., Borkar, M., & Chaudhuri, T. K. (2008). Genetic affinities of north and northeastern populations of India: Inference from HLA-based study", *Tissue Antigens*, 72, 120 – 130.
- Blench, R. (2008). Re-evaluating the linguistic prehistory of South Asia. In Osada, T. & Uesugi, A. (Eds.) *Occasional Paper 3: Linguistics, Archaeology and the human past* (p. 159-178). Kyoto: Indus Project, Research Institute for Humanity and Nature.
- Das, S. (2014). Changing cultural profile of a tea garden community: A case study of Mundas in Tripura. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Studies*, 3, 338-346.
- Das, P., & Singh, P. K. (2014). The Munda and their Lac culture: A case study of Gulllu area of Murhu block of Khunti district, *Asian Mirror- International Journal of Research*, 1, 1-22.
- Gadgil, M., Joshi, N., Manoharan, S., Patil, S., & Prasad, U. V. S. (1998). Peopling of India. In D. Balasubramanian & N. Rao (Eds.). *The Indian human heritage* (p. 100-129). Hyderabad, India: Universities Press.
- Gupta, S. D. (2009). Accessing nature: Agrarian change, forest laws and their impact on an adivasi economy in colonial India. *Conservation and Society*, 7, 227-238.
- Lee, R. B., & Daly, R. (1999). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of hunters and gatherers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Majumder, P. P. (2001). Ethnic populations of India as seen from an evolutionary perspective. *Journal of Bioscience*, 26, 533–545.
- Osada, T. (1997). An introduction to comparative Munda linguistics. *Nihon Kenkyū*, 16, 259-288.
- Osada, T. (1996). Ethnographical notes on Munda (2): Cultivator, Hunter, Artisan. *Nihon Kenkyū*, 14, 282-256.
- Pattanayak, D. P. (1998). The language heritage of India. In D. Balasubramanian & N. Rao (Eds.) *The Indian human heritage* (p. 95-99). Hyderabad, India: Universities Press.
- Prakritik Shampad (in Bangla) (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.moulvibazar.gov.bd/node/436698>
- Riccio, M. E., Nunes, J. M., Rahal, M., Kervaire, B., Tiercy, J., & Mazas, A. S. (2011). The Austroasiatic Munda population from India and its enigmatic origin: A HLA diversity study. *Human Biology*, 83, 405–435.
- Roy, J. S., & Ahsan, S. M. K. (2000). A study of prehistoric tools on fossil wood from Chaklapunji, Habiganj. *Pratnatattva*, 6, 21-32.
- Roychoudhury, S., Roy, S., Basu, A., Banerjee, R., Vishwanathan, H., Rani, M. V. U., Sil, S. K., Mitra, M., & Majumder, P. P. (2001). Genomic structures and population histories of linguistically distinct tribal groups of India. *Human Genetics*, 109, 339 – 350.
- Sharmeen, S. (2013). Politics of development and articulation of indigenous identity: the formation of Munda identity in Barind, Bangladesh. *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, 9, 141-160.
- Srivastava, M. (2007). The sacred complex of Munda tribe. *Anthropologist*, 9, 327-330.
- Winters, C. (2011). Munda speakers are the oldest population in India. *The Internet Journal of Biological Anthropology*, 4. Retrieved from <http://ispub.com/IJBA/4/2/5591>



## Kuzeydoğu Bangladeş'in Tropikal Yağmur Ormanlarında Yaşayan Avcı-Toplayıcı Munda Topluluğu Üzerine Etno-Arkeolojik Notlar

Abu Bakar Siddiq ve Ahsan Habib

### Anahtar Kelimeler:

1. Munda
2. Palkičara
3. Avcı-toplayıcı
4. Tarih öncesi yaşam

### Özet

Avcı-toplayıcı gruplar bu evrendeki en eski ve muhtemelen en başarılı insan uyumunu örneklendirmektedir. 12.000 yıl öncesine kadar, toprak ekim sistemine geçilinceye kadar, tüm insanlık avcı-toplayıcı olarak yaşamıştır. Dolayısıyla günümüz avcı-toplayıcı toplumları üzerine yapılan araştırmalar insan yaşamının şehirleşmeden önceki hayatına dair temel sorulara ışık tutabilir. Dahası, insanları doğal yaşam alanlarından çeviren süreçler hakkında da bilgi içerebilir. Palkichara köyündeki Munda topluluğu, sosyo-ekonomik olarak kontrol edilen yerel çay üretimine rağmen atalarının takip ettiği yaşam tarzı açısından benzersiz olarak görülmektedir. Avcılık ve toplayıcılık, aile, toplum ve kültürel hayatlarına yansımaları olan iki temel yaşam kaynağıdır. Dolayısıyla, doğayla tam bir ilişki içinde ve dünyanın kalan kısmıyla bağı zayıf olan Palkichara köyündeki Munda topluluğu tarih öncesi avcı-toplayıcı topluluklar hakkında bazı görüntüler sunabilir. Bu çalışma, Palkichara köyündeki Munda kabilesi insanların ilkel yaşamı neden ve nasıl devam ettirdiği gibi soruları ve geleneksel avcı-toplayıcı yöntem ve tekniklerin çeşitli boyutlarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.