



CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES

53rd Foundation Day Lecture Series

Lecture 18

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Updates on the Typology of the Munda languages:
Areal and Phylogenetic perspectives



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Gregory D. S. Anderson (PhD University of Chicago 2000), Founder and President, Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages has published numerous articles and books on endangered languages, language contact, linguistic typology and historical linguistics. His areas of specialty include the Munda, Turkic, Native Siberian, Trans-Himalayan, Ogonoid, Central Sudanic, Chadic, Salish, and Oceanic languages and the isolate language Burushaski.

In this presentation, I review some of the synchronic details of Munda languages from both an areal and a diachronic perspective. Specifically, I discuss features that appear to reflect areal contact of Munda at different historical periods, some of which are quite old, some quite recent. I also discuss features of Munda that rather reflect earlier periods in their history, specifically reflexes or retention of what could be proto-Austroasiatic features not altered by later contact events. Neither set of features are widely appreciated in discussions of either South or Southeast Asian linguistics. In South Asian studies, different periods of contact with different effects and outcomes are not typically entertained or well explored, nor is there a general appreciation of the ways that Munda languages are atypical of the South Asian area. Likewise, the possibility of retentions of old features now largely lost or submerged but found in Munda is not widely acknowledged in Southeast Asian diachronic linguistics. The data used here relate to various analytic domains from phonetics, phonology, morphology, morphosyntax and syntax and come from field notes unless otherwise cited. I suggest a more nuanced understanding of the role of contact at different periods in the history of the Munda languages and I also argue that certain old features of Austroasiatic have been maintained as well.

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