

The Making of an Encyclopedic Dictionary: How P.O. Bodding¹ Re-enchanted Santal Words

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Abstract

The Santals are fond of their language and love to play with words. The richness of language makes up in a way for the poverty of history in granting a real culture to the Santals. Bodding comments on how translating from a largely unwritten language made him aware of the originality of Santali. He remarks that Santali, as an agglutinative language, was rich in concrete terms but poor in abstract expressions. Bodding, as a missionary, sometimes found it difficult to convey a Christian content in his translation of the Bible, and he was acutely aware of the cultural embeddedness of language.

I take some of the entries from Bodding's Santal dictionary to show how this extraordinary dictionary is truly encyclopedic. Based on the first collects of words and definitions made by the Santal collaborators of the missionaries, the definitions of the words given by Bodding show how he was both an ethnologist and a linguist. I take as examples some fundamental paradigms of Santal experience to show how words convey both the beauty and the hardship of their daily life. For Santal speakers words are not just words, they are the 'salt of life', a dimension that Bodding explored by giving us not only the definitions of the words but their contexts - which contribute to their enchantment.

Introduction

The Scandinavian missionaries pursued their own utopia, inventing Santalistan, a Santal territory centered on the Mission headquarters in Dumka, where heathens surrounded the Christianised Nankar district. It was a time when the rule of the Sahib prevailed, though the memory of the 1855 rebellion was still vivid. It was also a time when the Santals, though they were innocent and unable to understand the laws of the market², had interiorized the value of writing, as we know from various documents from the archives. To put it briefly, during the rebellion, the Santals had realized their inability to write and had to ask Hindu sympathizers to do it on their behalf (Guha 1983). Their fascination for writing is clear in a text, *Hul reak' katha*, where Sido and Kanhu, the leaders of the Santal rebellion, realized 'that they did not know how to read and write'. (Andersen, Carrin and Soren 2011: 172-89). Then they had to start the *Hul* – the rebellion - and had no time for learning. But Sido and Kanhu had understood that learning implies receiving knowledge from somebody else. It creates a relation, and

¹ See Appendix for a Biographical Note.

² See Banerjee (2000).

certainly the Santal were ready to learn and to use knowledge to avoid being exploited in the markets or in the colonial courts.

The linguistic work of the missionaries

The missionaries needed to master Santal language in order to translate the Scriptures and like other missionaries in the region, they perfectly realized how difficult it would be. Other missionaries such as the Baptist, J. Philips³, had already published a grammar of Santhali language in 1852 and a catechism in 1857. In 1868, E.L. Puxley from the Church Missionary Society published a vocabulary of Santali language where he discarded the Bengali script to write Santali words. When Skrefsrud published his grammar in 1873 it was a step forward in comparison with earlier work, and meanwhile he had started to collect words with a view to publish a Santal dictionary. To collect words, Skrefsrud taught Santal collaborators how to write Santali, using a phonetic transcription. The Roman script had already been standardized with the inclusion of diacritical marks, but Skrefsrud developed the transcription considerably. Morgenstierne⁴ has pointed out that Skrefsrud was one of the first to use a laryngoscope in the field in order to classify the different sounds and he showed me these sound archives in his office in the 1970s.

The national identity that the missionaries sought to identify when they thought of the Santals as a nation, was above all, a matter of language. For the missionaries, who were not ready to locate Santal identity in the historicity of the Santal rebellion⁵, language could make up for the poverty of history in granting a real culture to the Santal in the missionary mind (Carrin and Tambs-Lyche 2008: 312). The missionaries wanted to store tribal knowledge by transforming heathen beliefs and ritual into a folklore of the past that children might learn at school, thus desacralizing the *bongas*, the Santal deities, so the Santal would gradually cease to worship them and embrace Christianity.

From the very first, as noted, Skrefsrud had started to collect Santali words with a view to publish a dictionary. In 1869, he reported that he had collected ten to twelve thousand words. In the following years he constantly wrote, in his correspondence, of his work with the dictionary. Over the years, he sometimes held out the prospect that the dictionary would soon be ready for the press, but he was never able to finish it. In fact, after his return to India in 1883 from a visit to Scandinavia, he only occasionally found time for the dictionary. Hodne (1966: 22) reports, further, that Skrefsrud could not make his mind about the nature and the structure of his dictionary. In 1884, he wrote to A. Graham that he has not yet decided whether he should give quotations taken from life in lieu of the citations from classical authors, as used in other dictionaries, for every shade of meaning, or if he should simply put down the meaning and nothing else. Skrefsrud evidently decided for the first method and devised an encyclopedic dictionary which would store not only words but indigenous knowledge.

³ Philips had started by using the Roman script but he later adopted the Bengali script under the pressure of his publishers.

⁴ PHONOGRAPHIC Reporter by Isaac Pitman. London. 1870.

⁵ Bodding however took interest to Santal history when the missionaries wanted to create a Santal colony in lower Assam in 1880. Later on, in 1917, Bodding asked a Santal chief Chotrae Desmanjhi to dictate his own account of the travel from Santal Parganas to Assam to another Santal called Raya. The first part of the narrative describes the conditions of the Santals just before and after the rebellion while the second deals with the establishment of the Santal Colony (Murmur 1964).

In 1903, he decided to leave the work to P.O. Bodding who had arrived in the Santal Parganas in 1890. Bodding's studies in theology included the classical languages and he had developed an interest for languages as well as for botany (Hodne 2006: 15-24). Skrefsrud asked Bodding to take on the project, handed all his material over to him and gave him a free hand to use it, as he might find necessary. Bodding, in his preface to his dictionary, characterizes Skrefsrud's dictionary as a vocabulary. It contained a little more than thirteen thousand words and became the basis for Bodding's five-volume Santali dictionary published thirty years later.

The making of a dictionary

Bodding's Santali dictionary is an outstanding piece of work which is equally valuable for the linguist and for the anthropologist. For the Santal reader, the dictionary is a symbol of identity since it encapsulates Santal life in all its aspects giving vast information about clans, sub-clans, chiefs and other village dignitaries, and other aspects of Santal culture. This is important nowadays, when young Santals living in Kolkata or Rourkela are unable to speak Santali fluently and sometimes feel they have forgotten their culture, since they have been pressured to learn English to accede to career jobs (Carrin 2017).

For the Santal reader the dictionary offers a linguistic and literary tool and it has proved central for the recognition of Santali as one of the important minority languages of India in 2002. Furthermore, when Ram Dayal Munda founded the department of Mundari languages in Ranchi in the late 1960s, the teaching of Santali was possible at once since tools like grammars and dictionaries already existed. Certainly, the dictionary has stimulated the creativity of Santal authors and the emergence of Santal intellectuals who feel it important to keep in touch with the subtleties of their language (Carrin 2013). Even for illiterate Santals, the dictionary 'as an object of knowledge' is impressive, and I remember how Santals who could not read roman script urged me to explain to them some of its definitions. More importantly, the dictionary stands in Santal imaginary as a companion and as the witness of a culture which is still around, though many deplore the loss and the memocide produced by the colonization of the mind.

This does not allude only to the missionaries who wanted to convert the Santal people but also to the emergence of a Santal middle class whose members sometimes emulate the Hindu middle class. In a society like India where plurilinguism prevails, language changes over time and certainly, modern Santals do not speak like Bodding's collaborators did. There are differences between regions, but also between generations.

But a work like the Santal Dictionary stands as a testimony of how Bodding lived among the Santals during many years, and how he strove to understand the richness and complexity of their language and social organization. For the anthropologist coming from abroad, the Santal dictionary represents a wonderful introduction to the people and their language, and the apprenticeship never ceases since one always learns anew by consulting such an encyclopedic dictionary. When I started doing fieldwork among the Santals in the early seventies in Odisha, I had copied many of the dictionary's definitions on small file cards. Since I was staying in a school building, I started questioning children about words and definitions. They used to tell me: *didi*, we shall show you the words! Later on, in 1972, I came to Oslo since I had found a footnote in Gausdal's book indicating the existence of the Santal archives. I met Gausdal and Hodne as well as Prof. Morgenstierne, Knut Christiansen, and Per Kvaerne, who introduced me to the Archives in the Oslo University Library. Finding the three thousand pages written by the Santal

collaborators was a shock for me, since I had not realized that the Santal had left what I would call a literary heritage. I microfilmed the collection and returned to India, where I started working on Santal texts with different assistants, some of whom also knew Hindi, a language with which I was familiar. In 1980 I was invited to the University of Chicago on a Fulbright grant, and I had the chance to work with Norman Zide, a specialist in Mundari languages, so as to deepen my knowledge of Santali. I have just written a book on Santal Ritual Discourse where I describe how the Santal in Odisha reacted when I read to them some of the texts written by their ancestors, and how we often consulted the dictionary together. To return to the Dictionary, Bodding paid much attention to Santal institutions, he did not neglect any field of knowledge, and he offers us a compendium of Santal knowledge, customs and usages

The Santal collaborators

Before trying to understand what Bodding's idea of a dictionary was, I shall introduce the Santal collaborators who taught Santali to Skrefsrud and his successor, since their role has been central in collecting the Santali words and definitions. Bodding explained the role of these collaborators - he called them 'living lexica' - who were 'not easy to consult and were not ordered alphabetically or systematically'. And, Bodding added (1915), 'to get the right people for such work is extremely difficult'. He praised the living lexica for being concrete: 'They may say, for example, that such and such is, when one does this or that...one does get the concrete usage and gets a chance to understand by oneself' (1915: 18-19).

Among his Santali teachers, Bodding cites Biram, who had lived in Benagaria during the rebellion and later became Skrefsrud's teacher. Biram was finally baptized in 1874. Later he wrote his autobiography, which was printed in Dahkwala. When he died in 1897, Skrefsrud wrote in Biram's obituary that he had been 'the soul of everything they have written in Santali these last 21 years' (Carrin and Tambs-Lyche 2008: 325).

Phagu was the first of Bodding's teachers at Mohulpari. He was a guru and had a 'bottomless treasure of knowledge about Santal traditions and other matters'. From him, Skrefsrud got the old songs included in Mare Hapram ko, and Bodding learnt much about Santal customs from him. But he died from cholera a year later (Bodding 1915:20).

Then came Mongol, an old man from a family of lepers at Mohulpahari. Mongol, says Bodding 'was completely unlearned', but his knowledge of Santali was 'in some ways even richer than I was to find with anyone else'. Mongol was not his only illiterate assistant since Bodding wanted to have one around to test his translations, to make sure that the common man would understand.

And then came Sagram Murmu from Godda, who had been to school with the CMS. Bodding acknowledged Sagram Murmu's knowledge of oral literature, and he wrote that he had a great ability to write his own language fluently. Sagram Murmu not only wrote everything he knew but also took down many tales told by other storytellers. Bodding admitted (1915: 23) that he had a splendid collection of folktales written in a superb language which had 'not been tainted by passing through a European brain'. This remarks show that Bodding was eager to collect Santal stories as 'authentic pieces' of creation, though he often criticized Murmu for expressing his opinion on the texts he wrote. Bodding was not ready to accept Sagram Murmu as a Santal author and in a footnote to his book 'Santal Folk-Tales' he was laconic about Murmu's contribution: 'all tales are as told by Sagram Murmu of Mohulpahari when no other name is given'.

Certainly, Bodding reproached Sagram Murmu for adding a ‘tail’ to his stories and for his tendency to moralize (Andersen 2013; Carrin 2015).

Bodding also got the help of Sido Desmanjhi, who had taken part in the rebellion when he was young. Sido was later converted to Christianity, and wrote his autobiography, where he presents his view of life in the Assam colony, around 1907. It was published in 1917.

Bodding’s idea of a dictionary

Bodding often deplored that Santal words were not fit for abstraction, and he considered that this made it very difficult to translate some parts of the Bible. Santal words and expressions convey all the nuances of Santal life in the contexts which we may define as ‘Santal sociability’ or Santal culture. But these notions, which embrace feelings towards kin or friends, and which do not exclude strong emotions, do not necessarily fit the Christian ethos. When Bodding comments Santal words like Thakur Jiu, ‘supreme God, prophet’, he has a tendency to give a monotheistic content to the term, as did Skrefsrud who used the term Thakur for ‘God’. I shall leave the question of translating the Scriptures and concentrate on Bodding’s work on the Santali language.

Bodding’s intuition of semantic fields

Bodding had the intuition to realise, as we would now say, that semantic fields are constantly overflowing into each other. We may define a field of religion, but the semantic elements of that field soon spill over into the field of ethnic identity, then to that of politics, or to selfhood, and so on.

In the last volume of his dictionary, Bodding published a list of what he called the ‘connecting words’. This list gives us the main entries of the dictionary arranged semantically but while some entries like agriculture, hunting or relatives indicate a rich ethnographic content, others like ‘blacksmiths’ or ‘silkworm’ do not generate many connections. Obviously the connecting words do not reveal how Bodding conceptualized his project, but we understand that for him, Santali words and expressions could evoke what we would now call a semantic field. Bodding does not use the term ‘semantic’, as the term only appeared, it seems, in the lexical field theory introduced by J. Trier in the 1930’s. The term became current only after Bloomfield’s treatise on ‘Language’ was published in 1935. Bodding cannot have read these works, but his intuition did lead him in the same direction.

Ullman (1960) who is considered as one of the founders of semantic theory saw semantic fields as crystallizing and perpetuating the values of society. Bodding certainly had the intuition that connecting words related to Santal practices could, for example, express conceptions of the individual, or ideas concerning life and death. This is true, for example, of the expression *kirin ghat*, where *kirin* means ‘to buy’, and *ghat* ‘the place where the bones of the dead are immersed in the river’. Thus *kirin ghat*, ‘to buy the *ghat*’, refers to the arrow that the midwife used to plant in the sand of the bank of the river, on behalf of a new-born baby, alluding to the fact that one day, on his death, his bones would be immersed in the river.

Bodding, then, had to pay attention to several kinds of meaning before constructing a definition. He tends to put the first meaning, which could be called ‘literal meaning’ first, followed by the second and other meanings, which he sometimes characterizes as figurative language or metaphor. As an example, I shall take the definition he gives of a tiny object, a ‘needle’ (*sui*). He first quotes some

idioms like ‘sew it with a needle’ (*sui te rogme*) and then cites some more elaborate sentences, such as ‘prick the thorn out with a needle for me’. Then he quotes a Santal saying ‘where the needle goes there the thread follows’ (*jaha sec’ge sui, entege sutam calak’a* - a Santal saying alluding to a wife as the thread, following her husband - the needle. The definition of this tiny object allows Bodding to enter into Santal social relationships by the mediation of two sayings (*men katha*).

The communication process among the Santal

Communication is universal to all human societies, but specific cultures have their own ideology regarding conversation. As speakers tend to cooperate to communicate a message to each other they have to share specific rules of conversation, as Grice shows (1975). But it may happen, in some contexts, that the process of communication is delayed, as when speakers use what anthropologists call a ‘veiled language’ to convey secret information, or to touch delicate matters, by using euphemism (Strathern 1975).

To speak, in Santali, implies ‘to push something outside’ since the utterance is compared to a ‘door’, *silpin*. Another expression relating to the term *ror* may imply a reflexive dimension, since somebody might prick himself (*ror cutin*) with his own words. Other metaphors, such as *ror chuti* «to free the speech», or *ror dok’* «to speak on the defense of somebody» suggest that speech can be used, or even manipulated. But the term *ror* used with *landa* (laugh) means to utter jokes (*ror landa*), an expression which implies a certain intimacy. The different uses of *ror*, cited by Bodding, help us to understand Santal ideas about communication. For example, the expression *ror parom* ‘to speak across’ indicates that the speaker has transgressed the boundaries of social etiquette and has proved impertinent. The verbal component *ror ruar* means ‘to answer, to give back the word’, and suggest the reciprocal dimension of speech.

Some proverbs suggest that the Santals enjoy discussing (*puthi khon da thuti ge saresa*): ‘It is better to discuss than to read books’. But don’t think that the Santals are not aware of the difficulties of communication, since a proverb quoted by Bodding warns us that ‘it is sometimes easier to cook a stone than to share one’s knowledge with an idiot’ (*ban bucha hors da Tina me bucha eyra*).

Other expressions describe inadequate use of language: ‘someone who speaks too tight’ makes lapses and those who commit a lapsus of speech or neglect their promises expose themselves to supernatural sanctions. Further, a conversation *galmaro* does not necessarily put participants on an equal footing, as shown by the example given by Bodding (1934: 372) *am tuluc’mittec’galmarao menak’tin’a*, ‘I have something to discuss with you’ which is usually told by a senior person to a junior. Speech is often an affair of power as we find in the second example given by Bodding under *galmarao*: *galmarao ketale bahu jawae reak’ mucat’ket’takkinale*: ‘we had a parley about the married couple, we ended for them (let them be divorced)’. Certainly, formal talk, often uttered by chiefs and *parganas* in Santal villages, had the force of law, as shown by the many cases quoted by Archer (1982).

But Santal ideology of speech is also characterized by reciprocity since the Santal do not like to be manipulated, or worse, to be oppressed by authoritarian figures, and a few proverbs criticize the chiefs who are too authoritarian. Let us note that Santal institutions like *the Lo bir sendera*, ‘the court of justice’ which is held during the hunt, offers everybody an opportunity to speak. Bodding comments: ‘the men collected here form

the highest judicial tribunal of the people, where all social matters are decided and to which any matter be brought; here all are equal, an over-chief and a servant boy have equal rights, none being greater than anybody else' (1936: 241).

Another important word related to communication is the verbal root *lai*. « to say, to declare, to inform » which is often followed by a suffix, as in *lai doho*, 'to exchange information', *lai hapatin*, « to tell things to one another », *lai bhujhau*, « to explain » ». The same root, when followed by *erka*: *lai erka* means « to put someone on a wrong track ». But the expression *lai sade* describes a speech which resounds and gets other people's support; it defines the public speech of a chief and contrasts with the secret talk which is sometimes considered dangerous.

To illustrate the importance of the metaphors in the Dictionary, I shall start from some terms and expression relating to speech and discourse, to show that metaphor makes us understand the relationship between speech and emotions.

Speech and emotions

Images describing emotions are universal (Lutz and White 1990), and the opposition between 'cold' and 'hot' talk is found in many cultures, where "cold" relates to self-control and 'hot' to passion and anger. The Santali term *sengel*, 'fire', is found in several expressions, and it may be applied to speech since it is necessary to 'warm up' in order to speak well. We find, for example, *sengel ic ena* - literally 'fire excrement' which primarily alludes to carrying burning cow dung on a tile, when taking fire from one house to another. When used with reference to a conflict, however, the same expression means 'to accuse somebody wrongly'. This does of course provoke the anger (*eger*) of the accused, while somebody who manages to distance himself from strong emotions – a must for a good orator – is said to eat his anger (*jom edreya kanae*). The speakers must temper their emotions in order to conjure the anger (*eger*), which is likened to fire: to control one's speech and emotions is a central theme in a society where the evil eye and witchcraft exist, since it is crucial not to show one's mind and feelings too openly.

Sengel, as fire or heat, is central to another metaphor quoted by Bodding, where dry speech is compared to sand, or where the mouth of the ancestors sometimes becomes dry and must be soothed by praise and rice beer libations. Bodding reminds us that the wife holds the earthen pots over the flame before using them on the fire (*culha*). This is necessary to cook the dirt which is under the pots in order to protect the fire from the evil eye. The idea of cooking may imply a kind of trial. By an old custom called *rok' bahu*, 'to smoke the daughter-in-law', the mother-in-law would shut up the young wife in the smoky kitchen. The latter should endure the smoke, and she should not burn the cauldron over the fire. This proves that she will be a good wife.

When fire is controlled, the words may express passion but should not give room for anger or bad intentions. An excess of fire alludes, again, to anger (*eger*) which provokes fever (*rua*). Bodding (1934: 293) cites the case of a man whose 'anger rose at the top of his hair' (*cot'upte edre dec'entaea*). Angry words, especially women's words, can take off and fly, and then they penetrate the sole of the feet like arrows (*ban*) - an allusion to the arrows witches use when attacking their victims.

In Santali, as in European languages, anger is often compared to a liquid in ebullition (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Among various substances linked to speech, oil is important since the person who applies oil on his or her body protects himself – or herself – from insults and supernatural attacks. Oil is both brilliant and opaque and is used during divination. Bodding describes divination by means of oil on a leaf, *sunum bonga*, which

is performed to determine the cause of disease and death, and he gives us a full account of the ritual. Here he describes how the *ojha* deciphers or interprets (*parhao*) the drops of oil he has poured on the *sal* leaf (Santals and Diseases Memoirs 1925:16-20). The Santals have also developed an intensive reading of *sagun* 'omens', which are natural signs which portend events.

Social relationships, exchange and reciprocity

Under the term *sagai* which means 'relationship, kinship', Bodding cites two important notions. First, it is not proper to address anybody without using a kinship term. Other expressions apply to brothers who are not kin but are called brothers in accordance with the artificial relationship established in the village (*pera dole ban kana ato se bocha kanale*) while *balea sagai menakk'takina* relates to parents of children who have married each other. Other terms carry ideas of reciprocity, as do those that indicate friendship, such as *hit pirit*, or *hitpirit' menakk'koa* - they are on friendly terms. Reciprocity is assured through gifts, especially marriage gifts, in case of an arranged marriage (*gonon bapla*).

Some very common words may have a very wide range of significations. For example, *jom*, 'food, eatable, to eat', also means 'suffer, receive, accept, take to heart, spoil, destroy and kill'. Bodding starts by giving us the common meaning *dakako jojom kana*, 'they are having their food' and then turns to a metaphor *adi duke jom akat'a*, 'he has suffered much grief' contrasting with *onde do sukko jom a* 'they eat happiness, they live in comfort'. But *jom* may also indicate transgressive behavior: *nui do met'e jom ket'a, nui kara do*, 'he ate his eye, this blind one', about 'a man who in his lust does not discriminate but approaches female kin of prohibited degrees'. But *jom* can also apply to words: *amak'katha them jom ena, bankhan ohom dandomlena*, 'your own words did for you, or you would not have been fined'.

Jom is used in many expressions, one very important one is: *jom jati*, which means the 're-admission into society' (*jati*), where somebody excluded for transgressing rules, such as marriage taboos, must serve a meal to the community. Bodding writes: 'the real *jom jati* is a real and expensive affair. The outcast person collects the necessary funds and informs his village headman of his intention'. Then Bodding describes the whole ritual when the outcast man acknowledges his fault, imploring forgiveness. He must then clean his mouth before giving water to others and serving them food. Then Bodding cites the old *pargana* who says: 'From today we have taken this man among us, all defilement will be blotted out'. They declare that they will drink and smoke with him. In this expression *jom jati* the person who has transgressed the rules has eaten his community (*jati*). But he has to pay the fine and the feast to be readmitted in his community, *jati ruar* (from *ruar* return).

In another use of the ubiquitous eating metaphor, Santals say that witches (*dain*) eat their victims (using the intensive form *jojom*). This example makes us understand that a single term *jom* may, according to contexts, allude to reciprocity, to give and receive food: but it may also indicate the opposite when a man lusts after a forbidden woman or when a person transgress marriage rules. Finally, it is applied to the witches, who represent the anti-social forces. Some words describing transactions such as *kirin* 'to buy, to purchase', may also have a secondary meaning which evokes illicit transactions: *gohae kirin ket'koa*, 'he bought witnesses'.

Words with a double meaning

Some very common words have a double meaning. This is the case of the broom (*jonok*) which is plaited by the women with *sirom* straw. Bodding mentions that the word is also used to name a 'widowed man who looks like an old broom'. Bodding quotes another use of *jonok* in his book on Santal medicine when *ojhas*, during exorcism, use it to drive the disease away from the body of the patient. Though these words apply to concrete objects, these artefacts themselves have a double meaning. They underline, as Weiner (1983) shows for the Trobrianders, how words stick to artefacts to express gift transactions and translate secret intentions. In Santali, the expression *sim agom* refers to a few *sal*⁶ leaves which contain one or two feathers of a fowl promised as a sacrifice to the *bongas*.

Hatak' the winnowing fan which is oblong in shape and made of split bamboo, which is used in Santal households for cleaning rice and grain, also has a double meaning. The *hatak*' may be used to measure paddy, but Bodding cites a sentence where *hatak*' takes on another meaning. *Hatak' caole sorkataeme* 'he has placed the rice in the winnowing sieve close to him', alludes to *rum* 'possession'. But it is also assumed that witches sort out the bones of their victims in the sieve. By this gesture, they parody the domestic use of the winnowing fan, which alludes to women and food. But witches, instead of feeding their family, are supposed to eat their victims secretly, consuming their liver and heart without leaving any visible sign.

A last example applies to the grinding stone, *gurgu*, which is used to grind turmeric and spices, but also has a medicinal use. Bodding describes the grinding stone as a cylindrical stone, also used for destroying the seminal ducts of bulls, buffalos-bulls, he-goats and rams, though a flat stone is sometimes required (*irit'dhiri*). Bodding (1934: 504) adds that the *ojhas*' disciples stand on a grinding stone to learn how to become possessed. Here again, a simple artefact used in the kitchen alludes to the technique of learning possession. One of the *ojhas* I worked with, also told me that the disciples undergo a kind of castration, since they have to stop the flow of their thoughts to become possessed.

A similar idea is implicit in the blood offering of the *ojha*, which is called *sitka mayam*, an offering of human blood. Here, Bodding again informs us: *sitka mayam*, the same as *bul mayam*, is an offering of one's blood to the *bongas* to appease them, and he notes that *sitka* also applies to women and means a "puerperal fever". Indeed, some *ojhas* consider that when they offer their own blood to the *bongas*, they give away their 'menstrual blood' - since they become feminized during their initiation. The idea is to offer an impure blood to malevolent deities, such as tantric Jugunis, who are also impure, in order to satisfy them (Carrin 1997, forthcoming).

Bodding gives us a privileged access to metaphors by paying attention to secondary meanings attributed to words and expressions. Many Santal metaphors are built on simple objects who are used daily, like the needle, the broom, the winnowing fan or the grinding stone. I shall now turn to another of Bodding's contributions to semantics and anthropology which concerns the symbolism of sounds and echo words.

⁶ (*Shorea Robusta*, L.)

Echo words

While many metaphors are visual, echo words evoke the ‘resonance’, *sade*, of the Santali language. Sapir (1929) wrote an article on sound symbolism which has been a source of inspiration for anthropologists, but Bodding seems to have considered this problem quite independently. In Santali, sound symbolism is often represented by echo words which offer different kinds of morphological composition, either combining the reduplication of two nominal or verbal roots, or repeating an adverb to convey the idea of repetition. Santali language being an agglutinative language offers many possibilities for derivative expression. Zide (1976) studied the echo forms in *geta*, a South Munda language spoken by the Dideyis in Koraput, where he showed that echo words are built on morphological processes employed are pre-fixation, infixation, suffixation, re-duplication and compounding (see also Ghosh 1994). Echo words offer us examples of compounding where a morpheme can be reduplicated. In many cases, it is possible to use only the first term, which has a definite meaning: for example *gâhar hor* describes ‘a person who whispers’ but the repetition of the term *gâhar gâhar hor* means that the person murmurs continuously. In other cases, the second component of the echo word is altered and we have *dhare dhapar* ‘briskly’, while *dhapar* alone has no meaning. Echo words seem to work to reduce the gap which exists between the arbitrary character of the language and the sensory domain (Nuckolls 1999).⁷ Some echo words express a spatial image to suggest a sound image: a talkative person is called *lapar lapar*, an echo word which expresses the repetition of a movement, ‘the lips move continuously like the ears of an elephant which make flip-flop’. Bodding cites other echo words which concern body parts when they are targeted in joking: he tells us, for example, that the expression *dehel dehel*, ‘rock slightly’, applies to a woman’s breasts while she is running, while women say *loroc’ loroc’* ‘swing swing’ to describe a man who walks immodestly clothed (Bodding 1935: 174). In some cases, Santali language features sound imitative words of bird-songs which are used to express feelings in poetry or in love songs (*don seren*).

Echo words define a kind of metaphoric communication and it is not always necessary to explain them. Some echo words describe a dancing step, like *kocor bacor*, which is composed from the reduplication of an adverb *kocor* which means ‘jumping’. This echo word aims at describing this particular step which takes place during *don enec’*, a dance shared by village youth. Echo words reveal the beauty of the Santali language and evoke the different noises we can hear when spending a day in a Santal village. They express sound images and have an evocative power since they give sonority to the language, by making a couple of words sound in such a way that they are made to represent an idea.

Certainly, the definitions of the Santal dictionary offer us many pieces of ethnography, which Bodding has often completed in other works, such as *Studies in Santal Medicine and Folklore* or in the three volumes of *Santal folktales*. To give

⁷ Feld (1982, 1996) examines interconnections between linguistic and musical sound and emotional expression among the Kaluli of Papua, New Guinea. He demonstrates linkages between linguistic sound symbolism and core cultural values of emotional and aesthetic expression. The Kaluli language features an abundant inventory of lexicalized sound-imitative words called ideophones which figure prominently in poetic evocations of bird cries, waterfall sounds and environmental phenomena.

relevant definitions he has worked on the first definitions collected by Skrefsrud but he has systematized them, without becoming dry, while paying attention to all the meanings which can pervade a word or an expression, reflecting the passions of the tongue. I have given salience to metaphors in daily life as they express reciprocity, but often go beyond the first meaning to inform us of a belief like in the expression *buying the ghat*. In other cases, their use implies that what is told explicitly does not exclude further thoughts. In yet other contexts, they carry implicit meanings related to *bongas* and witchcraft.

Santals have developed oratory as an art and Bodding succeeds in re-enchanting Santal words. The definitions of the dictionary, though necessarily concise, are never dry, since Bodding seems always to be listening, with an inner ear, to the emotions which pervade the language.

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Appendix

A Biographical Note

Rev. P.O. Bodding (1865-1936) is the most outstanding of the missionary-scholars who lived amongst the Santals and studied their language. He was born on 2 November 1865 in Gjøvik, Norway as the son of a bookseller.

Bodding achieved his formal theological education at Kristiania (later Oslo) University in and was ordained as a priest in the Norwegian Church before he went to India. He arrived in 1890 and worked in the Indian Home Mission to the Santals (IHM), established as a Baptist Mission in 1869 by the Norwegian, Skrefsrud and the Dane Børresen. Later, the Mission had moved gradually towards a Lutheran position, including the baptism of children and avoidance of the 're-baptism' of converts from other Christian groups as practiced among the Baptists. Other Christian missions had been active, in different places, among the Santals

before their rebellion (the Hul, 1855-56) and The Indian Home Mission was established some years afterwards (Carrin and Tambs-Lyche 2008).

Bodding was soon initiated into linguistic work. A few months after his arrival, he was put in charge of editing the new journal, *Hor hoponren pera* (The Santal Friend). Bodding improved the transcription of Santali in Roman script introduced by Skrefsrud. Later that year, Bodding became involved in Skrefsrud's preparations for a dictionary of the Santali language⁸. Soon, he also began to record folktales from the Santals by inviting informants (he called them 'helpers') to dictate the tales to him, but then he decided to let other Santals collect the tales. This was partly due to lack of time, but Bodding also had another motive: 'There was another consideration which weighted much for me: I tried to be accurate, but there was always the possibility that the tales might be more or less tainted by passing through a European brain, both as to language and contents. It would be very much preferable to get the tales written down by a Santal' (Bodding 1924: 41).

Over the years Bodding's collections increased, up to 1926, when he left the Santal country. First, the Santal collector wrote down or authored the story, and then Bodding prepared a 'fine copy'. Both originals and fine copies of about 1.500 stories are now kept at the Oslo University Library (Soren 1999). There may be several reasons for Bodding's interest in the folktales, but he himself wrote that these collections helped me to acquire a better knowledge of the colloquial language into which he wanted to translate the Bible (Bodding 1915).

He seems to have selected the stories from their literary qualities. He must also have had in mind the collections of Norwegian folk-tales, published by Asbjørnsen and Moe (1982), originally published from 1841, and clearly inspired by the earlier work of the German brothers Grimm. Bodding thought that the Santal tales offered comparative types of stories and motives, and he arranged the folktales thematically. They deal with the social life of the Santals as well as with their deities (*bongas*). Hindu castes and religious characters such as *jogis* also figure in some of the tales. The published folktales display a very rich language, often tinged with humor, both in Santali and English (Carrin 2015, 2019).

Bodding also collected stories of clans (*paris* and *khut*, see Gausdal 1960). The material dealing with historical events unpublished, such as the narrative of the Santal rebellion (Hul) of 1855 and of the Kherwar movement, was not published by Bodding. Some of these narratives have been edited and translated recently (Andersen, Carrin and Soren 2011). Bodding also collected autobiographical statements from several Santals. He wrote a biography of his female housekeeper and assistant, Sona Murmu, to show how a Santal convert could be a true Christian (Bodding 1919: Tambs-Lyche, English translation, *forthcoming*). In 1914, he also completed the translation of the Bible into the Santali language.

But Bodding's most outstanding contribution is the dictionary of Santali, which offers a rich, semantic view of Santali language. Though he shows it is an austro-asiatic language (then called Kolarian), he also traces its links with Indo-European languages. He died on the 25 September 1938, in Odense, Denmark.

⁸ At that time, Skrefsrud had collected about 10, 000 words; Bodding expanded this to about 25, 000, but he also considerably increased the commentary to most of the terms.