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A Seventeenth Century Ideology: The Singhbhum Chronicle on Rajputs and Tribals

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Abstract

Both by what it highlights and by what it neglects, the chronicle of the Singh dynasty is a major source for the history of the present West Singhbhum district. Starting from the 13th century, the Singh rajas had a tumultuous relation with the local population, mainly Bhuiyas. In a major crisis in 1641, Raja Kashiram II used the Hos as allies to defeat them. He had the chronicle rewritten in 1643. It contained the exploits of the rajas of the Singh dynasty. It also stated their ideology, that the Singhs ruled since ancient times, were Rajputs, subject to no one, and ruled over the Bhuiyas. It hardly mentioned the Hos and their role in the events of a few years earlier. In 1720, within eighty years after the appearance of the chronicle, the Singh dynasty split, and the Hos appeared as the major power in the area. One would never guess this from the chronicle. In 1767 Raja Jagannath appealed to the East India Company to help him. The Singhs had ignored the Hos at their peril.

Introduction

The chronicle of the Singh dynasty or *Vamsa Prabha Lekhana*¹ has been known a long time. As early as in 1767, Henry Vansittart,² the resident of Midnapur, got the gist of the *Vamsa* from Pitamber Singh, uncle of the raja of Singhbhum. He said that his family 'was never reduced by the Moguls, but for 52 generations been an independent district in the possession of the present family'.³ The next mention is by Tickell in 1840, as 'a regular chronological history [which] has been preserved in the Madela, or records of the Porahaut family'. He called it a chronicle of the Marwaris, 'disguised with much fable in the tradition of the Oorea Bramins of the country' (Tickell 1840: 697–98). Its genealogical table was copied on 13 June 1853 and again on 13 January 1854 for the benefit of the English agent in Chotanagpur (Singh Deo 1954: 39). In 1872, Commissioner Dalton called this *Vamsa* 'annals fabricated by Brahmans in glorification of the Singh family' (Dalton 1872: 179). Both Tickell and Dalton were administrators-ethnographers, who spent considerable time in the area, had great troubles with the

¹ Much of the historical information in this essay is taken from my forthcoming Paul Streumer, *A Land of Their Own, Samuel Richard Tickell and the Formation of the Autonomous Ho Country in Jharkhand, 1818-1842*. An overview of its main findings relating to the period treated here, is on my website Wakkaman, Paul Streumer's Website on tribal and Adivasi History, <http://www.wakkaman.com>

² Henry Vansittart was the English Governor of Bengal between 1759 and 1764.

³ G. Vansittart to H. Verelst, 13 December 1767, in Firminger (ed.), 1911 published 1914: letter no. 279.

Singh dynasty in Porahat, but were known for their good relations with the Hos, the main group inhabiting Singhbhum. In 1910, O'Malley gave an unprecise and much shortened account of its contents in his *Singhbhum Gazetteer*.⁴ At present, there is a copy of the Vamsa in the Saraikela state archives, but it has not yet been made public.⁵ Fortunately, the chronicle was treated extensively but unfortunately rather confusingly, in Singh Deo's *Singhbhum, Seraikella and Kharswan Through the Ages*, which is a main source for this essay.⁶ In the seventy years since that pioneering study, the chronicle has been largely neglected, or even worse when briefly mentioned taken at face value, by historians of Singhbhum and the Hos⁷ (Paty 2002: 9-11. S. Das Gupta 2011: 66-70). That is deplorable. Both in what it mentioned and in what it glossed over, the Vamsa Prabha Lekhana is a major source for the history of both.

The chronicle of the Singh dynasty consisted of three parts. To start from the end, the third and last part was a sketchy enumeration of the rajas of Porahat after the late seventeenth century (Singh Deo 1954: 39). As we shall see, Porahat was then the seat of the eldest branch of the Singh dynasty. The second part was a chronicle proper and treated all of Singhbhum in the period from 1581 to the death of the powerful Chhatrapati Singh around 1670. These two parts and loose remarks in the first part can, with due care, be used for a chronological history. However, it is not for a mere chronology and a summary of the acts of the rulers that we should look to the Vamsa. It is an ideological document which shows the wish of the Singh rajas to be part of the group of Rajput rulers of eastern India, and, more generally, of the Mughal empire. Also, more historically, it is a guide to the development of ethnic relations in Singhbhum, that is to the submission of the Bhuiyas by the Singh rulers, and, but mainly by neglect, the ultimate rise of the Hos as the main political and cultural power in the area. To understand the first point, its ideological message, we have to consider the history of the area up to 1643, the year the Chronicle was 'copied', rather rewritten.

The history of Singhbhum up to 1643

At the end of the twelfth century and in the early thirteenth century, the political constellation in eastern India was unsettled. Muhammad Bakhtiyar, known mostly for the burning of the Buddhist library of Nalanda in 1193, plundered Bihar and Bengal, and threatened Odisha. In 1206, the Muslims of Bengal invaded Odisha. These disturbances had left considerable room for local arrangements.⁸ In the area on the present Odisha-Jharkhand border of West Singhbhum district, too, there was a significant political and ritual shift.

⁴ O'Malley put the start of the dynasty at Kahinath II's rule, that is about 1640. See O'Malley 1910: 221-2. This was bitterly contested by Singh Deo as 'half-truths' and 'self-contradictory'. See Singh Deo 1954: 12-14.

⁵ Possibly this copy was used by Virottam. See Virottam 1976: 70.

⁶ I am grateful to Dr. Chittaranjan Kumar Paty, reader in the Department of History, Tata College, Chaibasa, who gave me a photocopy of this very rare book.

⁷ Roy Chaudhury mentioned the 'present palm-leaf manuscript' and compiled it from Singh Deo's rendering, in 1965. See P. C. Roy Chaudhury 1965: 11-13, 16-17.

Virottam 1976: 70. Virottam dated the manuscript at 1643 CE. But the Vamsa also covered the period after 1643, especially the rule of raja Chhatrapati in the 1660s and 1670s.

⁸ In a series of highly illuminating studies, Hermann Kulke has thrown light on the way in which between the sixth and the thirteenth century Hindu rajas in the Hindu-tribal frontier area legitimised their rule over their tribal subjects. See Kulke 1976: 404; Kulke 1978: 35-36; Kulke 1981: 26-39. For Keonjhar and Bonai, see Dalton 1872:147.

To understand this development, we must look at the different groups inhabiting the area. The evidence here is mostly, but not exclusively, archaeological.⁹ In the area of the first urban settlements, Khiching and Benisagar, were Jains (Saraks/Sarawaks),¹⁰ Buddhists, Pashupati Hindus, outside the urban spheres, were Bhuiyas and Gonds (Dorowas). There also were 'Kols', the pejorative name the Hindus used for the original population of the Chotanagpur area, especially the speakers of Munda languages. From an unknown time onwards, Munda speakers were in the north and central forest areas of Singhbhum¹¹ (Tuckey 1920: 18). From the south and west, groups of Bhuiyas immigrated mainly to the southwest and the northwest of Singhbhum.¹² Some settled in villages previously inhabited by Dorowas and Saraks (Tuckey 1920: 9). Sometime in this process, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the political order in the area of Benisagar collapsed.



Figure 1 Main ethnic groups in 12th century Singhbhum. Superimposed on a simplified version of a map in D.N. Majumdar, *The Affairs of a Tribe*, 1950, by the author

Tradition as it appeared in the chronicle, gave 1205 CE as the year in which Darpa Narayan Singh, the first ruler of the Singh dynasty, succeeded to the Benisagar kingdom¹³ (Singh Deo 1954: 18–19). This move was initiated, or condoned by the local Bhuiyas. Their cooperation with the Singh raja was expressed in the cult of the local goddess, *Ma Paudi* or Pauri Devi.¹⁴ About ten years later, the Singhs built a fort, and

⁹ See Paul Streumer, 2015, 'Kiching and Benisagar, 400-1205', on Wakkaman, Paul Streumer's website for tribal and adivasi history, <http://www.wakkaman.com/index.php/forums/topic/kiching-and-benisagar-400-1200/> (placed 10 August 2015). See also Paul Streumer, 'Khiching, some literature' on the same website, <http://www.wakkaman.com/index.php/forums/topic/kiching-and-benisagar-400-1200/#post-504> (placed 10 August 2015).

¹⁰ In Bar *pir* were 13 Sarak villages, in Aula 7, in Lalgah 4, in Saranda 4 and altogether 4 in Kotgarh, Gumra and Bantaria. See Sen 2010: 107. This he gathered from the village notes by Tuckey taken during his survey in 1913–14. See Tuckey 1920: 27. See also Craven 1898: 25.

¹¹ Tuckey mentioned 'before about the tenth century', because the Ho traditions did not mention the Chotanagpur rajas. But there is nothing against a much earlier date.

¹² Tuckey found Bhuiya villages in Saranda (16), Jamda (4), Kotgarh (2), Latua (1) and Rela (1). See Sen 2010: 105. On Chainpur in the northwest of Singhbhum, see MacPherson 1908: 244–46. Karaikela was noted in 1820 by Roughsedge. See Roughsedge to Metcalfe, 9 May 1820 (London: OIOC), BC 21,438.

¹³ 1205 is the traditional date, but the chronicle was not very precise. Even before he became raja, Darpa met Ananga Bhimadeva, raja of Orissa, in the temple of Puri and they 'greeted each other by raising two fingers'. See Singh Deo 1954: 17. But Ananga Bhimadeva was raja from 1211–1238.

¹⁴ 'The military force on which the raja chiefly depended were Bhuiyas; his titular deity, the Pawri Devi, was a Bhuiya divinity, corresponding with the Thakurani Mai of the Keonjhar Bhuiyas'. See Dalton 1872:

again a few years later the temple of Pauri Devi in Porahat (Singh Deo 1954: 20, 26). One should not take the fort and temple as measures of strength only. Porahat was a bit eccentric place, some 4 km in the hills to the north west of Sonua. Apparently, it was chosen 'on account of its inaccessibility' (Depree 1868: 44).

Singhbhum's history was not a quiet one.¹⁵ In the period up to 1590, there were eleven violent disturbances in which large parts of the population rejected the rule of the Singhs. Mostly, the Singh rajas suppressed the malcontents, sometimes the Singh rule was renegotiated. Especially, the sixteenth century showed increasing tensions, when rajas tried to force higher taxes on the population, and used it to perform Hindu rituals and to build some temples (Singh Deo 1954: 34-5). In 1581, things came to a head over taxes, when all the major groups such as Bhuiyas, Kols, and Saraks united to burn the palace of Raja Ranjit Singh and killed two of his uncles, important members of the small Rajput establishment (Singh Deo 1954: 29, 35-6). The raja had to hide the Pauri Devi and, according to the chronicle, fled to Delhi. He returned in the wake of Akbar's general Man Singh's expedition to Orissa of 1591-92 (Patnaik 1988, vol. 1: 43).

Fortunately, we are well informed about Man Singh's restructuring of Odisha. The raja of Khurda, the most important state of Odisha, was recognised as the sovereign of more than thirty fiefs. Man Singh recognised eight other rajas, and among these was the raja of Mayurbhanj (Patnaik 1988: 43-48; Binod S. Das 1984: 56-7), an extensive state in Odisha's north-east.¹⁶ Singhbhum with only one fort, presumably Porahat, was considered part of Mayurbhanj¹⁷ (Stirling 1825: 227-35).

As Man Singh did not want to go to Singhbhum in person and as the raja of Mayurbhanj, notwithstanding his claim to overlordship did not show much interest, Ranjit of Singhbhum had to deal with Singhbhum's unruly inhabitants himself. He used this opportunity to put his rule on a firmer base. He took the statue of Pauri Devi from its hiding place and made peace with the insurgents of the south and central parts of Singhbhum (Singh Deo 1954: 36). Close to Jagannathpur, he settled some '60 families of Vantaria Mundari Kols from Urugaon (in Nagpur)'¹⁸ (Singh Deo 1954: 29, 36-37). The Singhbhum chronicle did not mention the tenure of these Ho Bantria immigrants. Tenures for military service were well known in the Singh area, so they seemed to have settled on other terms. At an unknown time, Munda speakers had trickled into the north of the Kolhan, where they cleared its forests. Now, the raja of Singhbhum invited some Mundas or Hos much more south. Sixty families would mean some 300 people; this must have been a fraction of all the Munda speakers in Singhbhum. But these newcomers lived quite near to Porahat and Jagannathpur, the power centre of the Singhbhum state. Consequently, the importance of the Munda-speaking groups in Singhbhum increased.

179. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Pauri Devi had shrines in Jagannathpur and Jaintgarh in the Kolhan and temples in Porahat and Saraikela, while at some fourteen other places in Singhbhum she was worshipped in a more simple fashion. See O'Malley 1910:213-15.

¹⁵ Paul Streumer, 2015, 'Rajas fighting tribals, Singhbhum 1205-1590', on Wakkaman, Paul Streumer's website for tribal and adivasi history, <http://www.wakkaman.com/index.php/forums/topic/rajas-fighting-tribals-singhbhum-1205-1590/> (placed 24 August 2015).

¹⁶ The archaeologist Joshi found that the areas then under Mayurbhanj rule stretched from Tamar and Midnapur town in the north to the river Baitarani in the south, and from the sea in the east to the western border of Singhbhum. See Joshi, 1983: 26-7.

¹⁷ Stirling added to Singhbhum: 'Now an Independent Estate'.

¹⁸ A mere mention in Dalton 1872: 179.

The first decennia of the seventeenth century saw major changes. Ranjit Singh's second successor, Udit Narayan Singh, quelled severe unrest in the area north of the Baitarani River. Possibly, here we hear for the last time of the Saraks, who together with the Bhuiyas were indicated as 'the Kols of Benusagar' (Singh Deo 1954: 37). Some vaguely datable proofs of the end of Sarak presence were mango orchards. (Sen 2010: 104) Mango trees can get as old as 300 years, and some even reach 500 years—but with individual trees one does not talk about orchards. Thus, the approximate end date for a constructive presence of Sarak is a bit after 1600. Even so, their supremacy, if indeed it was ever there,¹⁹ could have ended long before. The evidence points to desertion of the villages by the Saraks. Their villages were either taken over by the Bhuiyas or left deserted till the Hos repopulated them (Sen 2010: 107).

In the north and west of Singhbhum, Udit's successors strengthened their base—and awoke strong resistance. His grandson Mahipat had to face one more Bhuiya revolt, and introduced militia, that is, military tenures in about sixteen places in the northern and western parts of the present-day West Singhbhum. Unfortunately the chronicle did not mention particulars, like ethnic provenance, of these militia (Singh Deo 1954: 37). He was succeeded by Kashiram Singh II, who conquered Nagra, the main fort of Saranda *pir*²⁰ (Singh Deo 1954: 29). When he was away, 'Kols' from Nagpur invaded Singhbhum, but 'Hos . . . drove them back' (Singh Deo 1954: 29). In 1641, the Nagpur Kols returned; Porahat was burned. Kashiram II had to flee to Odisha. The Bhuiyas revolted. It took him several years to re-establish his authority, reoccupy the fortress of Porahat and have it rebuilt (Singh Deo 1954: 29–30, 37–38). After pacifying his realm, Kashiram II gave it an ideological foundation.

The Vamsa Prabha Lekhana of 1643

Kashiram II ordered to 'copy' the Vamsa Prabha Lekhana, the Singhbhum chronicle, which was 'moth eaten and broken in parts'. He gave this task to his scribe Maguni Rout Dogra, who wrote that he completed his task 'with much difficulty' in the month of Vesak (April–May) 1643 (Singh Deo 1954: 14, 38). It stood not alone. In the area of the Singhbhum states and their neighbours, there was a tradition of historiography, which got an impetus from the new political constellation of the post-Man Singh era. There were chronicles of Barabhum and Birbhum. Well known, too, were the annals of the Nagbansi rajas of Chotanagpur.²¹

¹⁹ Tickell mentioned this supremacy. See Tickell, 1840: 696–97. The archaeological remains point merely to a presence, not necessarily a rule.

²⁰ Singh Deo 1954: 29. Little is known about that fort. Much later, O'Malley mentioned it in ruins, and pointed to a small image of a cow and two big iron drums, 'to which the villagers do obeisance whenever they pass them by', that is, in the beginning of the twentieth century. See O'Malley 1910: 226.

²¹ For Barabhum, see Surajit Sinha 1962: 35–80. For Birbhum, see 'The Family Book of the Princes of Beerbhoom: A Persian MS obtained from the Rajah's Dilapidated Palace', in Hunter 1868: 447–49. On 1 May 1787 Raja Dripnath Saha submitted a *kursinama*, a list of the fifty-seven rulers of Chotanagpur, to the governor general. See Banerjee 1989: 277–78. The List is also referred to in S. T. Cuthbert to Henry Shakespear, 21 April 1827. See Roy 1921: 3. See also John Davidson to Major J. R. Ouseley, 29 August 1839 in Roy 1935: 233. Further: Roy 1971: 191–207. The list is reproduced in Virottam 1972: 203–04. Possibly, Colonel Dalton had a manuscript copy in his possession in 1871. See Blochman 1871: 115–17; Risley 1877: 449. It was translated by Rakhal Das Haldar in 1871. See Haldar 1928: 259–93. Dalton, who in 1872 stated that he possessed the manuscript, used this to give the founding story of the house, without attaching much importance to it. See Dalton 1872: 164–67. The *vamsa* of Chotanagpur had little on Singhbhum, although marital ties and at least once an alliance between Chotanagpur and Singhbhum existed from the sixteenth century onwards. One can only sympathise with Magobinda Banerjee's labour of

The important fact to bear in mind here, is that the chronicle was rewritten. Thus, though it contained older material, and would continue for a few more decades, it showed the preoccupations of the Singh dynasty in 1643, the time it was copied and in the process partly rewritten. The result heralded the decisive shift of Singhbhum's rulers from an Odia to a North Indian royal model.

Continuity: the double foundation myth

The first part of the chronicle contained a double foundation myth of the Singh state, thus establishing a continuity stretching back to the early 13th century. The founding events of the first dynasty were repeated in the establishment of the second. The medieval mind, tuned to oral tradition and permanent visual aids in the form of statues, trees, fortresses, stones, etc., relied on repetition, not on surprise, to drive messages home. On many temple towers in Odisha, the tower itself was reproduced several times in miniature as an ornament. For the viewer, this presentation distorted the time sequence of his observation; when he looked at a detail, he already saw the whole, and when he looked at the whole, he could already imagine the detail. This phenomenon was not confined to India. One notices in the Gothic churches in Europe, for example, that the windows indicate the shape of the nave. Equally vexatious to the orderly mind of cause-and-effect addicted scientists, repetition carries another possibility. Like in the Persian/Urdu ghazals, in which the song lines were repeated with minor variations in the tune and the diction, repetition served to add beauty and, importantly, to draw attention to details.

The chronicle put the start of the family story of the first Singh dynasty far back and far away. After the conquest of Lanka, Rama appointed Vijay Singh as guardian of the Shiva temple of Rameshwaram on India's south point facing Sri Lanka; and he was given the title of king. The chronicle gave later generations a place in the Kurukshetra war described in the Mahabharata. For their defence of religion, the Singhs were given the title of Rathor. The story switches to the Odisha region where around 693 CE Sujan Singh received the sword Patakhanda²² from the goddess Pauri Devi in a dream. She ordered him to 'conquer the south'. As a token of gratitude, he went to Puri, where he left a huge donation, '50 mohars', to Lord Jagannath. Sujan established himself in Jaint in Singhbhum (Singh Deo 1954: 14–16). The Vamsa went on to mention a few rulers, the last of which was Kasra Sinh, who ruled till 735 CE (Singh Deo 1954: 16). It was silent about the next 470 years.

The second period of Singh rule (Singh Deo 1954: 16–20) started with the recovery of the sword. Apparently, it had been lost earlier. The sword was found 'in the sandalwood door under one of the 56 pillars of the ruined Somnath temple after the sack'. The historical sack of Somnath at the southern point of Gujarat took place in 1024. The sword was then brought to Mecca. There, a Bhat²³ bought the sword and resold it for '50 mohars' to Drutarashtra of Mewar in Rajputana. Drutarashtra bought it, because he was told in a dream that this sword belonged to his family. He renamed it 'Pihani Gujrati'. The exact price for the possession of the sword was mentioned twice.

love, working 'from uncatalogued sources of semi-historical or quasi-historical character'. See Banerjee 1989: iii.

²² '[T]he Khanda or national sword of Orissa'. See Stirling 1825:222.

²³ A Bhat can indicate several groups, but in Gujarat, the home of the Somnath Temple, it is either a Saraswati Brahmin or a Muslim name. See *Wikipedia*, s.v. 'Bhat', <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhat> (accessed 18 December 2013).

The use to which it was to be put, the military power, was sanctified again in a repetition, now of a dream, as the way to learn about the meaning of the sword.

Drutarashtra with his younger brother Darpa Narayan Singh and a party consisting of cousins, retinue, and camp followers went to Puri, where the great temple was under construction. From there, they went to Bonai, where one of them was adopted by its raja. The party went on a hunting trip to Jaint in the south of Singhbhum. All along the way, they killed beasts of prey and earned the gratitude of the population, which consisted of Bathudi, Kat and Paudia Bhuiyas. From Jaint they got an invitation from Jaleswar, the *divan* of Benugarh. That was a fort close to Benisagar and capital of the kingdom of Hara-Bhanga.²⁴ Here, the Dom ruler had just died without issue.

To state in the Vamsa that the previous rulers of the country belonged to the caste of the Doms, considered a very low ritual rank, possibly was a reflection of the attitude of the Brahmins towards the Pashupatas, a main component of the population of the towns of Benisagar and Khiching. By contrast, it purified the rule that succeeded it.

The 'old and infirm' Jaleswar was unable to control the assembly of the Bhuiya chiefs. These represented the major group inhabiting the kingdom, but did not want to choose one of themselves as successor, presumably as he would lose caste if he sat on a throne previously occupied by a Dom.²⁵ (Singh Deo 1954: 18). The *divan*, then, invited the Rajputs to take over and pacify the country. Was this what Drutarashtra's dream meant? Apparently, as it was still the same Dom throne, there was a purity issue here. The Singh brothers went to Rameshwaram, where in a dream the god Rama ordered Drutarashtra's brother Darpa Narayan Singh to become raja. From Rameshwaram, Darpa and his brothers first went to Delhi and from there returned to the kingdom of Hara-Bhanga. Here, Darpa Narayan Singh became the first raja of the second Singh dynasty in 1205.

The chronicle, therefore, did acknowledge a break in the dynastic history between 735 and 1205. The fact that the Vamsa made the start of Singh dynasty II a repetition of the start of Singh dynasty I, legitimised the rule of Singh II. To borrow a Chinese expression, the 'Mandate of Heaven' was given twice, once at the beginning of the first, and one more time at the start of the second Singh dynasty.

Rajputs, the new peer group

A further point of Maguni Rout Dogra's message was that the Singhs were Rajputs. The chronicle made that claim at the very start, placing it in the time of the Mahabharata,

²⁴ Hara-Bhanga was in the area of Bonai-Singhbhum. See Singh Deo 1954: 32.

²⁵ Doms were 'a really servile caste employed to kill dogs and remove dead bodies'. See Dalton 1872: 308.

In Tickell's 1840 Hodésun article, the Dom raja was connected with Keshnagarh, near Benisagar. He was told that it was the seat of a raja of the 'Raj Dom tribe who killed a cow, and wrapped a Brahmin in the hide, which tightening as it dried, squeezed him to death'. A big fire from heaven destroyed the raja 'with all its people, houses and riches'. Only one Tanti escaped, 'warned by the bullock he was ploughing with'. Tickell's informants here were Brahmins, possibly the 'mookhtur' of the Mayurbhanj raja and the 'Burkoonur' (*bara kunwar*) of Rorwan and 'several of their Brahmin attendants'. He saw only 'the remains of a square brick fort, well ditched round'. See Tickell 1840: 706-07. The story is also mentioned by O'Malley. See O'Malley 1910: 217. Apart from this story there is nothing to suggest a prominent role of the Doms in this, or any other, period in Singhbhum.

Beglar visited the place in 1874-75, but found nothing and, to make matters worse, his servants were 'threatened with violence for attempting to procure labour even at exorbitant rates'. To cap it all, he found the people 'extremely disinclined to give any information'. See Beglar 1882: 71.

with the grant of the title of Rathor, a division of the Rajputs, to the ancestor of the first Singh raja (Singh Deo 1954: 15). The second instance was around 1205 CE. Darpa Singh came from Marwar to Odisha and ended up as raja of Singhbhum. This, the more political part of the story, suggested that the Singhs were a group of military entrepreneurs and that they founded their principality after service in Odisha. In the text, their tour of duty was changed into a pilgrimage to Puri. The provenance of the Darpa group from Marwar in Rajputana, the present-day Rajasthan, stressed their claim to Rajputhood. A purpose of the Rajput myth in the Vamsa Prabha Lekhana could be to pass over a possible emergence of the Singh Rajputs from the ranks of the Bhuiyas, as E.T. Dalton thought in 1872.²⁶ By the middle of the seventeenth century, it had become a firmly established hallmark of Rajputhood to have a connection with Rajasthan (Kolff 1990: 23).



Figure 2 Map of the Bhumi Countries. Source: P. Acharya, 1945: 38.

This claim by rajas that they were Rajputs was common all over the east of India. Singhbhum is one of a group of countries in Jharkhand and adjacent tracts of Bengal and Odisha with names that end with *bhum* (country)²⁷ (Acharya 1945: 37). Man Singh's successes tied the Odisha states to the Mughal Empire. This heralded a shift in the foundations of princely legitimacy. The rajas, who earlier considered themselves Kshatriyas, the traditional warriors' caste, now established themselves as Rajputs.²⁸ The

²⁶ The chronicle, of course, could not close the ethnographic case for Rajputhood. In his 1872 *Descriptive Ethnology*, Dalton ridiculed the Rajput claim of the Singhs and their neighbours. If, he said, the chiefs of these states were Rajputs, 'they are strangely isolated families of Rajputs. The country for the most part belongs to Bhuiya sub-proprietors. They are a privileged class, holding as hereditaments the principal offices of the state, and are organized as a body of militia. The chiefs have no right to exercise any authority till they have received the 'tilak', or token of investiture, from their powerful Bhuiya vassals.... The stories told to account for their acquisition of the dignity are palpable fables. They were no doubt all Bhuiyas originally, they certainly do not look like Rajputs.' See Dalton 1872: 140. He acknowledged that they were 'by noble families ... admitted to be, Kshatriyas of true blood'. See Dalton, 1872: 179.

²⁷ Binod S. Das traced the suffix '-bhum' to early Jaina, Pala and Vaishnava sources. See Binod S. Das 1984, 44-46; 56-57. So does B. Singh Deo 1927: 90-91.

²⁸ Banerji could find no other explanation 'for this craze for Rajput origin' than 'the preponderance of the Rajputs as warriors and mercenaries in the 17th century, when under the Mughals they spread their fame'. See R. D. Banerji 1931: 435-36. See also Banerji a.o. 1931: 421, 428-29.

1640s rewrite of the chronicle coincided in time and in content with other attempts to Rajputisation of local rulers in the area. Like these, the Singhs placed themselves in the wider cultural environment of the Mughal Empire. This was what Kulke has called the 'horizontal or external legitimisation' of new rulers amongst the established rajas of Odisha (Kulke 1979: 227).

Independence, but when?

The reference in the chronicle to Darpa's visit to Delhi (Singh Deo 1954: 19) connected the Singh dynasty with the political centre of northern and eastern India without recognition of a Delhi overlordship. This cleared the way for the professions of friendship between the Singhs and the Mughals in the part of the chronicle dealing with the events around 1590. As we have seen, in 1592, fifty years before the chronicle was rewritten, Man Singh had invaded Odisha and Singhbhum's Ranjit Singh was involved in this Mughal invasion. Maguni Rout Dogra, the chronicle writer, mentioned Man Singh's 'request' to Ranjit Singh to go back to Singhbhum. It expressed equality between friends, not subordination.

It is probable that Ranjit Singh returned to Singhbhum as a largely nominal feudatory of the Mayurbhanj raja. The 1643 Vamsa was silent on this. The chronicle moved Ranjit's return to Singhbhum backward in time. It mentioned Sambat 1647 (1590 CE), two years before Man Singh's reorganised Odisha. This would imply that his return in itself had nothing to do with Man Singh's treaty of 1592 with Khurda, and that Ranjit was not subject to Mayurbhanj. Thus, both Ranjit's relation to Man Singh and the date of his return to Singhbhum pre-empted a claim by Mayurbhanj to the overlordship of Singhbhum. In the chronicle at least, Ranjit was his own man. So was, fifty years later in 1643, Kashiram II who had the chronicle re-edited.

Ethnic relations in Singhbhum and the chronicle

All through the chronicle, the Singhs did not succeed in giving their relation with the population of Singhbhum a smooth gloss. Up to the 1580s, there was one major disturbance every generation: five involving the Bhuiyas, three the Kols, plus two the two peoples together and one ethnically unspecified, led by a Tanti (weaver) (Singh Deo 1954: 26-31). Those involving the Kols did not always coincide with those involving Bhuiyas. That suggests that the two peoples had their own agendas, which made it easier for the Singh rajas to overcome their uncoordinated opponents. Till 1581, that is. The chronicle got its new edition in 1643, a mere two few years after the dynasty had nearly been swept out of power by foreign invasion and Bhuiya rebellion. The Vamsa Prabha Lekhana was silent about the realignment of forces in Singhbhum that enabled the Singh dynasty to hold on to power. But it was quite clear about the position of the Bhuiyas that was the result of the events prior to 1643, but nearly silent about the Hos.

The Bhuiyas

The chronicle was not in two minds about the relation between the Singh rajas and the Bhuiyas: the former were the rulers, the latter the subjects. That was given at the very start of the second Singh dynasty, with the invitation to the Singhs to come and rule over

The Mayurbhanj Bhanjas, too, changed their local Kshatriya genealogy into one going back to the Rajputs. See Kulke 1976: 404, note 24. Like in the Singhbhum chronicle, it was done quite drastically, pushing the Rajput story to the sixth century. See Cobden-Ramsay 1910: 239.

the Bhuiyas in the Benisagar area. The statue of Pauri Devi was, as it were, the religious charter of Singh supremacy in the area. In the story of how the Devi came to Singhbhum the relations between Singhs and Bhuiyas were mythically restated.

The chronicle connected the Pauri Devi with Rameshwaram, where Vijay, the founder of the first Singh dynasty, found her statue and, centuries later, Darpa Singh in a dream received the order to become raja of Singhbhum. Presumably, the goddess had stayed behind when Darpa moved north. Only during the rule of Darpa's grandson Kashiram I of the second Singh dynasty, did the Pauri Devi, who 'originally came from Ceylone', 'in a playful mood' decided to leave Rameshwaram for Singhbhum.²⁹ In the 'garb of a girl' she came by way of Keonjhar, Bonai, Jamda and the country of the Pauri Bhuiyas, the branch of the Bhuiyas living in the hills of the Odisha-Jharkhand border tracts. There she let herself be found out, stayed under a tree in Benugarh and sent some people to announce her arrival to Kashiram I, who had just founded the Porahat fort. When he arrived in Benugarh, the raja found that the Pauri Bhuiyas had hidden her in the waters of the river Sanjay. After some time, the Pauri Devi revealed her whereabouts in a dream. The Bhuiyas kept the idol 'under the clearings of a bamboo tree'.³⁰ The chronicle claims that, after due worship, Achuta, the son of Kashiram I (not the Kashiram II who had the chronicle copied) installed the Pauri Devi in the temple at Porahat (Singh Deo 1954: 21).

Even at that time, the Singh hold on the statue did not really put an end to the contest about the exercise of power over it. Thus, according to a letter written in Saraikela in 1820, the Pauri Devi appeared to Kashiram in a dream to tell that she did not want to go to the fort in Porahat, but that her worship should continue at Banskata.³¹ This was a roundabout way to state that the Bhuiyas had to be appeased.

There was a counterpoint to the Singh story. In Singhbhum proper, the Bhuiyas had a chronicle of their own.³² It also mentioned the 'clearings of the bamboo tree'. It stated that when the Bhuiyas came in the area, they settled in Banskata ('where the bamboo has been cut') hills, near the river Koel (Prasad 1970: 276). To drive home the troubled relationship of the Bhuiyas to the Singhs, the Bhuiya Vamsa of Singhbhum related how one Singh raja requested and got the sword Patakhanda from a Bhuiya. After that, he wanted the eight-year-old daughter of the Bhuiya. Enraged, the father called a general council of the Bhuiyas. 'They said that Singh Raja took away their Pat Khanda, their lands, their 'Isht' Devatas [family gods] and now he wanted to take their self-respect too' (Prasad 1970:282). It was a classic statement of the original population about life on the

²⁹ 'Ceylone' (present day Sri Lanka), must be Singh Deo's rendering of Ceylon, that is, Lanka in the original. There are strong theories that 'Lanka' was not the present-day Sri Lanka. Lanka was the word for island in the river. Mishra to whom we owe this information, placed Lanka somewhere in the Godavari River, and was inclined to see it at the mouth of the river. See Mishra 1985: 60–62, 64. Earlier, E. T. Dalton repeatedly stressed that Hanuman's army consisted of Bhuiyas. See Dalton, 1872: 105, 140. On the other hand, the Hos knew 'nothing of Rowan or Lanka'. See Dalton, 1872: 106. The local Bhuiya *vamsa* of Singhbhum did mention Sri Lanka by another name. According to it, two brothers Baidyanath Singh and Bahadur Singh came from the Sinhal islands', established themselves as soldiers in 'Para-hat', and Baidyanath became raja. See Prasad 1970: 277–78. The main ethnic group of Sri Lanka is the Sinhalese.

³⁰ Singh Deo is explicit that here is meant the Banskata close to Porahat. See Singh Deo 1954: 21. However, there also is another Banskata, on the Baitarani River and a few miles to the west of Jaintgarh.

³¹ 'Translation of Bickram Sing's reply, received 28th February [1820]', attached to Roughsedge to Metcalfe, 9 May 1820, in Extract Bengal Political Consultations No. 39, 3 June, 1829 (London: OIOC), BC 21,438. Banskutta in the original.

³² The Bhuiya vamsa contained a detailed description of the rites of worship of the Pauri Devi. See Prasad 1970: 287–88.

ethnic frontier, and implied a programme to get self-rule, implied by the sword, lands, family gods back and thus regain their self-respect.

The chronicle was, as we have seen, quite explicit about the often violent relations between the Singhs and Bhuiyas. No wonder that in the Singbhum chronicle the Pauri Devi was connected with the sword, with the military power. In each major incident, to keep the statue of the Pauri Devi out of Bhuiya hands was a priority of the Singh rajas. However, as we have seen, in the 1640s the Singh raja had defeated the last major Bhuiya resistance.

Kols and Hos

This they accomplished by turning to the 'Kols', who, for the time they served this purpose, were called by their own name, Hos. The word 'Hos' did not appear till late. Like other Hindu rulers in the area, the Singhs nearly always referred to Munda speakers as 'Kols'. In the chronicle, except at the first meeting, they appeared only in short references to disturbances.

The first time the chronicle mentioned Kols was in the thirteenth century, immediately after the installation of Pauri Devi in Porahat. At that time, the Kols had assembled with the intention of leaving Singbhum for the neighbouring state of Surguja from where they had come.³³ In the economic conditions of the Middle Ages,³⁴ the struggle was to keep people on the land (Nieboer 1910). The raja of Singbhum, Achuta, had to use all his persuasive powers to make them stay. It is possible that they saw the worship of Pauri Devi as an accommodation with the Bhuiyas only and insisted on a similar pact for themselves. They swore an oath, which called as witnesses, the grass, the *Buru Bonga* (the god or spirit of the mountain, one of the main figures of the Munda pantheon), the tiger and the Brahmins (Singh Deo 1954: 25). As Brahmins represented the Hindu sphere, apparently the oath was binding on the raja as well.³⁵

In the north and east of Singbhum Munda speakers were the first inhabitants, as they cleared the forests there, but the chronicle was silent about them, except when their relation with the Singh rajas turned violent. When the 'Kols' resisted, they were 'put down with a stern hand'. The chronicle did not elaborate on these events. It did mention once that the Kols burnt houses and added that after the suppression of these disturbances, many of them went into hiding. The disturbances ended with reconciliation (Singh Deo 1954: 34). The chronicle did not even dwell on the causes of the disagreements, nor did it mention the terms of the reconciliations.

In the early 1590s, when Ranjit had overcome the great rebellion against Singh rule, he sent for his family in Nagpur where they had fled in 1581. His brother Bickram brought his bride and '60 families of Ho Bantria' with him. They were settled close to Jagannathpur (Singh Deo 1954: 29, 36–37; Dalton 1872: 179). That was the earliest date

³³ This was corroborated by Tuckey in 1920. 'In the southern forest Pirs of Saranda, Rela, and Latua . . . the Hos say they came in from the west through Gangpur, not direct from the Chota Nagpur plateau'. But was the provenance from the west a later development here? About Saranda, Tuckey found that the grave stones, the *sasans*, proved in some cases, that 'men of another *killi* (clan) had lived there [in the village] before them.' See Tuckey 1920: 18, 20.

³⁴ I have used the term medieval, because of its situation in time between the classical age (ending in India around the fourth century CE), and the modern age, starting sometime in the sixteenth or seventeenth century when new administrative and economic models developed. In this I am strengthened by Hermann Kulke. See Kulke 1992–1993: 21–36.

³⁵ At least in later times, the Hos a particular dislike of Brahmins, as Roughsedge found in 1820. Roughsedge to Metcalfe, 9 May 1820 (London: OIOC), BC 21,438.

that the chronicle—and as we shall see, this part was written a mere fifty years after the event—used the name ‘Hos’. It was the turning point in the political and ethnic history of Singhbhum, but one could never have guessed from the pages of the chronicle.

The second time the chronicle called local Munda speakers Hos was just before – or during – the rewriting of the Vamsa in 1643. As we have seen, a few years before that, probably in 1640, ‘Kols from Nagpur’ invaded Singhbhum, and were repulsed by ‘Hos of Balandia and Dukri’. In 1641, the Nagpur Kols returned and burnt Porahat. In addition, the Bhuiyas revolted. But after a long struggle, Kashiram II came out victorious³⁶ (Singh Deo 1954: 29-30). The question is how Kashiram achieved this remarkable change of fortune. Here, we can turn to the story the Hos told Tickell in the 1830s. As with the first ‘Kol’ invasion, the Singh party turned to the local Munda speakers for support – and called them ‘Hos’ (Tickell 1840: 697).

The rule of Kashiram’s son Chhatrapati in the 1650s and 1660s was the highpoint of the Singh dynasty.³⁷ He established the *pir* (pargana) system of Singhbhum, but the Hos were not, or not much, involved in it.³⁸ After this towering figure, the chronicle became enumerative and sketchy. (Singh Deo 1954: 39) From other sources we know that Kashiram’s grandson Kala Arjun Singh consolidated his southern frontier by building the fort of Jaintgarh (O’Malley 1910: 216; Roy Chaudhury 1958: 433) and by concluding agreements with some Ho villages in the jungles east of Porahat (Sen 2008: 100). By 1720, however, the chronicle effectively fell silent. A mere eighty years after Maguni Rout’s major work – and within fifty years after the great but now largely forgotten Raja Chhatrapati – the fortunes of the Singh dynasty diminished greatly. After a major dynastic crisis, the Singhbhum state split³⁹ (O’Malley 1910: 229).

Conclusion

The Vamsa’s main functions were to enumerate the exploits of the successive kings of the Singh dynasty and to give these an ideological foundation. Maguni Rout Dogra’s message of 1643 was that the Singhs were Hindus, Rajputs, politically independent and, lastly, rulers over the Bhuiya population. But the Rajput message was the most important for the self-image of the Singh dynasty. The chronicle underpinned their desire to be part

³⁶ ‘Bharandia’ and ‘Dukri (Singhbhum)’ in the original. Balandia is in the centre of Hodisum; Dukri is in the valley of Mailpir, and about 15 km. to the north of Chakradharpur as the crow flies.

³⁷ Recently Chhatrapati got out of historic oblivion. See Paul Streumer, 2015, ‘A forgotten king and his pargana system, Singhbhum 1650-1700’, on Wakkaman, Paul Streumer’s website for tribal and adivasi history. <http://www.wakkaman.com/index.php/forums/topic/a-forgotten-king-and-his-pargana-system-singhbhum-1650-1700/> (accessed 12 October 2015),

³⁸ There is no evidence that *pirs* were instituted by Hos. The customary, but largely imaginary, number of twelve villages per *pir* is a Rajput administrative convention. See Singh 1971: 176.

Under influence of the Khuntkati operations in Chotanagpur, MacPherson thought that ‘[t]he Jurisdiction of a Manki is known as a Pir’. See MacPherson 1908: 108. So did Tuckey, who thought that ‘[o]riginally there was probably one Manki for each Pir, but as the country developed, it became impossible for one Manki to do the work in the larger Pirs, and they were divided into suitable units’. See Tuckey 1910: 12. That was speculation. As Tuckey noted, in the late 1830s when Tickell introduced or systematised the manki-munda system, he found that the institution of the Manki as the head of a group of villages was not general among the Hos. See Tuckey 1910: 13-14..

³⁹ O’Malley 1910: 229. There is no disagreement on the way Saraikela state came into existence, but there is about the date. Paty gave it as 1620. See Paty, 2002: 10–11. This is unlikely. Paty mentions that Bikram was the son either of Purushottam or Jagunath. Both possible fathers ruled well after 1620. Moreover, the Vamsa was rewritten in 1643 and it did not mention the split at that time which, if it had occurred so recently, it would certainly have done.

of the Mughal inspired royalty of the eastern states. Like theirs (Patnaik 1988: 53-56), the Singh prosperity did not last after 1700.

The chronicle is also some guide on the ethnic relations in the area. It records eleven major disturbances, mostly involving the Bhuiyas and the Kols, in the period up to 1590. Up to the return to power of Ranjit just after that year, it is quite elaborate on the Bhuiyas. But it glossed over the way in which Kashiram II crushed Bhuiya resistance with the help of the Hos in the early 1640s. During the rest of the 17th century, both the power of the Singh rajas and their ability to negotiate with the tribes grew. There are no more Bhuiya rebellions; and we faintly hear the chronicle about some negotiations with the Hos.

From other sources we know that after the split of Singhbhum in 1720, Chhatrapati's pir system ceased to be operative in the areas where the Hos lived. Now the Ho tribe emerged as the major power of the area, and showed that by repulsing three major invasions into their territories within 35 years, the first by the Porahat raja and the raja of Chotanagpur, the second by the Porahat raja alone; the third by the ruler of Bamanghati.⁴⁰ This outcome was not part of the chronicle, nor was it anticipated by it. As with their role during the disturbances around 1641, the importance of the Hos later on could not be guessed from the Vamsa Prabha Lekhana.

By 1767, Raja Jagannath of Singhbhum/Porahat, twice beaten by the Hos, offered his independence to the East India Company in exchange for its support. In his exasperation he did not name the Hos, but merely called them 'a tribe of plundering banditti'.⁴¹ The Company, however, did not start negotiations before 1819. That the Sing chronicle had little to say about the Hos had not been a coincidence. Whether it was on purpose or because they did not have the wherewithal to engage with them, the Singhs had ignored the Hos—at their peril.

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⁴⁰ Roughsedge to Metcalfe, 9 May 1820 (London: OIOC), BC 21,438. See also Dalton 1872: 180. Paul Streumer, 2015, 'The Ho tribe consolidates its independence: Singhbhum after 1700', on Wakkaman, Paul Streumer's website for tribal and adivasi history, <http://www.wakkaman.com/index.php/forums/topic/the-ho-tribe-consolidates-its-independence-singhbhum-after-1700/> (placed 8 October 2015).

⁴¹ Vansittart to Harry Verelst, 13 December 1767, in Firminger 1911 (published 1914): letter no. 279.

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Reconstructing Adivasi Village History Problems and Possibilities¹

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Abstract

Adivasis identify rusticity as a significant marker of their collective identity. Though sociologists and anthropologists have played a major role in developing village studies, historical intervention have so far been scant in this regard. This essay intends to fulfil this want in the context of the Adivasis of West Singhbhum district in Jharkhand. As reconstructing Adivasi rural history is problematic, the problem increasing due to its heavy dependence on collective memory, the essay begins by identifying the problems like lack of temporal depth, synoptic nature of memory, manipulation of facts, social contests and deliberate erasure of past that sets up an inevitable contest between memory and history. The next part dwells at length on how this conflict had been resolved paving the possibility of reconstructing Adivasi village history of a region.

Introduction

Bernard S. Cohn has famously said ‘There is not one past of the village, but many’ (Cohn 1990: 89). What he seeks to emphasise is that irrespective of its developmental level, every village has a history. This implies that there can be a genre of history that can be called rural history. But writing of village history does not have a long and rich lineage. During colonial rule, in which the likes of Henry Maine, W.W. Hunter and Baden Powell (Maine 1867; Hunter 1975; Baden-Powell 1896) played key roles, historical information about village life was meagre mainly because of the tendency to provide administratively useful ethnographic knowledge. During post-colonial decades, when the sociologists and anthropologists took the lead in producing rich literature on village life between the 1950s and 2010s, majority of them put focus on caste, (Marriott 1955; Srinivas 1955; Dube 1959, 1963; Majumdar 1955; Cohn 1990; Breman, Kloos and Saith, 1997; Madan 2002; Mines and Yazgi 2011) though only a few of them chose to study tribes (more popular Adivasis) and their village life. (Bailey 1960; Shah 2010; Hebbar 2011). The principal task before them was to dismantle the colonial construction of village through their intensive participation-observation methodology. But a minority

¹ This essay has developed from a chapter of my unpublished book length work entitled *Village Making and Other Stories : Dynamics of pre-colonial and colonial Adivasi Rural Life*

of them drew on colonial village records, settlement records, village handbooks, and memories of village elders. (Dube 1959: 15; Marriott 1955:24; Srinivas:1955: 19-21, 44; Madam 2002:5) Two recent exponents of historical methodology are Cohn (Cohn 1990: 343-421) and A.M. Shah (Shah 2002). The former invoked Mughal-day accounts like *Ain-i-Akbari* and British settlement records preserved at the India Office Library, Allahabad and Banaras. Likewise, the latter relied on records in the Secretariat Record Office, Bombay, presently Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai as also printed official sources preserved in London and Mumbai.

This essay seeks to provide historical perspective to village life in the context of the Hos of West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand. The question is what purpose may this essay serve: will it simply historically situate villages or it will serve purposes other than epistemic? Scholars studying Adivasis of Jharkhand are well aware that identity with the landscape (*Jal-Jungle-Jameen*, literally water, forest and land) is central to the ongoing assertion of their selfhood. Of the triad, the idea of land has three components, the territory which constitutes their habitat; the village they inhabit that confirms their rural identity and the plots of land they own for living and livelihood as a peasant, which affirms their agrarian identity. So appropriation of history determines the nature of relationship of the Adivasis with the landscape, to be more precise, a confirmation of their status as the *khuntkattidars* or the original clearers of soil from primeval forests of a particular territory. This in a way provided the charter for their certain claim over the homeland i.e. Chotanagpur, as the bastion of the Mundas and Oraons; Santal Pargana that of the Santals; and Kolhan-Porahat that of the Hos. Similarly, the next unit i.e. village had a politico-cultural meaning when the issue of village founding determined which of the killis and communities had or should have a principal position in village geo-polity and certain privileges accruing from that status during pre-colonial period. To this was added the advantage of privileged rate of land rent to the founding *killi* (clan) under British rule.

Studying village history has yet another purpose. This will reveal that the history of Kolhan-Porahat had a pre-Ho past to which colonial ethnography and post-colonial studies allude but fail to elaborate. This essay therefore opens up the possibility of writing a more comprehensive history of the region (Singh 1978; Sahu 1985). In three sections, the essay seeks to fulfil the above purposes. The first section unfolds the epistemological problems that we encounter when this source is deployed as a major historical tool. The second explores and examines the prospect of writing village history with the information collected. The last section outlines the broad framework to enable the reconstruction of a detailed and comprehensive Adivasi village history.

Problems

We cannot deny that writing village history, more so Adivasi village history, is both tricky and problematic. The first problem relates to the conflict in the meaning of village history at official and social levels. According to administrative perception, history of a village is nothing but the record of the succession of the village heads, and in rare cases that of a significant event like the anti-British tribal upsurge occurring in the village.² So

² Tuckey Settlement Village Notes preserved at the District Record Room, Chaibasa.

officially, village history was more or less politico-administrative in nature with British rule as its decisive milestone. Its social meaning is however completely different. Content-wise this is more comprehensive that includes the entire span of events leading to the conception, birth and gradual making of a village. This has greater temporal depth spanning between pre-colonial and colonial times. Second problem relates to the nature and source of historical materials. Conventionally, colonial archive is considered the primary and authentic source of information about Adivasi history. But oft used correspondences and reports generally remain silent about life in and around villages. Similarly, when we explore oral tradition, this also falls short of our basic requirements. This may create the impression that either there is no Adivasi village history or that the rural past is not retrievable.

However, our pessimism dissolves when we engage with a different genre of source material, where we find a happy mixture of literate and oral information. This contains collective memories of Kolhan villagers concerning village making. We cannot deny that collective memory has become a debatable concept, ever since the like of Maurice Halbwachs introduced it in the intellectual domain (Halbwachs 1992). The main objection is that despite the fact that 'it is a collective phenomenon but it only manifests itself in the actions and statements of the individuals' (Kansteiner 2002: 180). Scholars instead invoke such alternative expressions as 'social memory', 'collective remembrance', 'public memory' and 'cultural memory' (Kansteiner 2002: 181-82; Assmann and Zaplicka 1995: 128-29). Despite this debate, we cannot ignore what Halbwachs (Funkenstein 1989: 9) said 'it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, reorganize, and localize their memories' (Halbwachs 1992: 38). Kansteiner further adds 'although collective memories have no organic basis and do not exist in literal sense, and though they involve individual agency, the term "collective memory" is not simply a metaphorical expression. Collective memories originate from shared communications about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life-worlds of the individuals who partake in the communal life of the respective collective' (Kansteiner 2002: 188).

The memories under review were reproduced by individual villagers and recorded by British-day officials during the land revenue survey and settlement (1913-18) in Kolhan under A.D. Tuckey. Classified under *Kursinama* or *Khuntkatti* Papers, these are preserved at the District Record Room, Chaibasa. The present paper seeks to portray Adivasi village life in Kolhan in erstwhile Singhbhum district mainly with the help of these papers. However, this is supplemented by other archival and printed sources.

Conventional historians do not consider memory as a dependable and rich source of history. The reasons they broadly enumerate are: oral sources are unstable, achronological, fragmentary, besides having narrow spatial coverage, and cultural bias (Vansina 1985: 94-102, 120; Prins 1991: 114-15; Graham 1987: 14-17).³ Their criticism stands confirmed as we surf village papers. We come across such problems as amnesia causing complete or partial knowledge-blank, lack of temporal depth, tendency to invent fiction, social dispute about authentic village history and deliberate erasure of the past

³ About lack of chronology, Vansina however adds that the genealogies may 'form a basis for local chronology'. *Oral Tradition*, 24.

belonging to others. I shall now elaborate how these constraints render reconstruction of village history a contingent exercise.

Memory: absence and lack of temporal depth

About the loss or absence of the history of a village, an investigating officer remarked: 'The origin of the village has been lost in antiquity and no one can say who is the original founder.'⁴ In another case, the witnesses deposed 'they do not know about the originator as this is an old village.'⁵ These two quotes testify that 'old' or 'many years' i.e. ancientness or antiquity is the principal cause of absence of memory. Another reason seems to be the inability to transmit memory generationally. A snag in the transmission channel occurred mostly due to early death of parents. One witness testified 'My father died while I was young and so I did not hear anything about the old stories of the village from him.'⁶ The absence of village old man/men, custodian of village tradition also factored memory loss. A villager remarked 'there was no old man who knew the original history of the village.'⁷ And then, 'There are no old men in the village who might have related the old history of the village.'⁸

Lack of temporal depth characterised Adivasi collective memory. Vansina informs that in oral societies village traditions 'are concerned with a limited spatial framework and a time depth that is usually less than a century deep' (Vansina1985:99). Another scholar limits it to eighty years or three or four generations (Assmann and Zaplicka 1995: 125-33). In the present case, we find that villagers hardly remembered beyond two/three generations i.e. between fifty and seventy five years in official calculations.⁹ Local officials considered this as a chronic ethnic deficiency. D.M. Panna, the Assistant Settlement Officer, remarked 'They do not know their ancestors beyond their grandfather or great grandfather.'¹⁰ This should however be accepted with a grain of salt because this was more or less true about literate social groups also. But the latter enjoyed the advantage of objectifying culture in the form of texts, images, rites, buildings, monuments, cities, or even landscapes, a culture that digresses it from the domain of memory to that of history (Assmann and Zaplicka 1995: 128). But as pre-literate Adivasi communities did not develop these techniques, they failed to reproduce the past in depth. Moreover, when their memory was stretched, as it had often happened during khuntkatti enquiries, there was fumble and falter. In one case, the Munda, an old man, could not properly trace back his descent even up to his grandfather. Due to the pressure of the situation 'when first asked who his grandfather was he mentioned the name of his uncle'.¹¹

⁴ Tuckey Settlement Khuntkatti Papers (TSKP), Lakhiposi, 6-8, 33.

⁵ TSKP, Tangar, 6-8, 34. An additional quote seems to be more eloquent: 'So many years have elapsed so I do not know the name of Turi Ham's father nor do I know of his mother, nor of his brothers.' Ibid., Bara Nanda, 3-12, 69.

⁶ Ibid., Jamjoi, 3-5, 70.

⁷ TS, Cases u/s 89, Topkocha, 6, 2.

⁸ TSKP, Baduri, 3-5, 21.

⁹ Officially, a generation comprised twenty five years.

¹⁰ TSKP, Pawapi, 3-7, 50.

¹¹ TS, Cases u/s 83, Dobrosai, 4-5, 14.

Abridgement of memory

Memory often tended to be condensed and synoptic. The reason for this, as Vansina assigns, lay in the changing impact of the historic event with time, rather in the homeostatic nature of oral tradition itself (Vansina 1985: 119-20). This relates to events both big/tumultuous and small. British armed attack over Kolhan during 1836-37, resulting in its subjugation to the East India Company's empire and the formation of Kolhan Government Estate, and the anti-British civil rebellion of the Hos and others in 1857-58, were tumultuous events (Sahu 1985; Sen 2008b). These caused large scale exodus of the villagers, administrative resettlement of villages and change in the nature of village and regional geo-polity. Naturally therefore, these events survived in corporate memory. But the content of this memory was very brief and unspecific. People only remembered that there were some disturbances in 1836-37 and 1857-58. But often these events were lumped together into one disturbance. Memory provided hardly any further details. Top of all, representation of these events were not uniform, when villagers portrayed the events, particularly the latter, from their social positions. This meant that past per se did not matter much to them and the reality of the present often determined the representation of the past (Sen 2011: 82-96). Even then, memory of these events is historically significant. People remembered these events as time markers, rather historical landmarks. Recalling 1836-37, villagers deposed that their village was settled during Lt. Tickell's (Tickell was the first Assistant Political Agent in Kolhan) time.¹² Referring 1857-58, it was said 'Bhuiyans, the early settlers, had left the village in Raja Arjun Singh's (Raja of Porahat) time and the Hos had followed.'¹³

Furthermore, people hardly made any distinction between big and small events, to paraphrase differently, so called small was as important to them as a big event. Often insignificant and great events were treated at par. This is deemed as a serious limitation in scholarly circles (Vansina 1985: 118). So death due to lightning, small pox and tiger menace survived in their memories in the same way as the tumultuous events referred above. In one village, people recalled that their first Munda could continue in office for one year only because of his death by lightning.¹⁴ In a large number of villages, the important issues were small pox and tiger, which were endemic problems in jungle infested Kolhan, rather areas adjacent to or within its Saranda forest regions. People reminisced that all the original settlers, 'died of small pox, only one man was left & he left this village'.¹⁵ About tiger-menace, it was reported 'Muri Ho was the Munda of this village. His mother was killed by tiger. All the *raiya*s of the village deserted the village when the Munda was killed.'¹⁶ Mainstream historians may accuse Adivasis of their failure to distinguish between big i.e. historic and small i.e. frivolous and un-historic events. But perhaps the lack of discrimination is a pointer to the fact that significance of events had been place and people specific. Particularly, in subaltern, nay Adivasi

¹² TSKP, Naranga, 3-6, 41.

¹³ Ibid., Khas Jamda, 3-5, 72. See also Ibid., Pachpaia, 3-5, 2 Manoharpur Thana (MT)

¹⁴ TS, Cases u/s 83, Kandegutu, 8-9, 20.

¹⁵ TSKP, Rela, 3-4, 1MT. See also Ibid., Rairowa, 3-4, 1MT.

¹⁶ TS, Tanaza Papers, Note for Orders, Sankara Ho s/o Mundi Munda vs, Bhavo Gour & others, 10, 1 MT. A village belonging to Tarkot killi Hos had witnessed the similar group exodus 'on account of the ravages of tigers.' Ibid., Rairowa, 3-4, 1MT.

perception, an event attained significance more because of its consequence rather than precedence. Bereft of consciousness of causal connection, content of memory of big event stood compressed and simplified as compared to elaborate and complex narrative of the same event by mainstream societies.

Inventive and manipulative character of memory

Scholarly critique of memory centres round its inventive and manipulative nature. Nora observes that memory 'is perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present' (Nora 1989: 8). Despite the fact that it 'can take hold of historically and socially remote events but it often privileges the interests of the contemporary' (Kansteiner 2002: 9). Consequently, memory 'remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its subsequent deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived' (Nora 1989: 8). Due to present-centrism, oral societies reproduced the past according to the imperatives of the present. While literate history's constant dialogue between the past and present renders it interpretive and often inventive (Funkenstein 1989: 22), what makes memory an unstable ¹⁷ source is its basic manipulative nature. I shall here deploy the Khuntkatti Papers at length to unravel the endemic manipulation of the past and invention of fiction by the villagers. This caused damage and that was the tendency to selectively erase the past. But to this we shall return later.

To understand what fiction is, it is relevant to know what is history or true story. In social and official perceptions (this convergence is detailed below), 'recognised tradition' or true story is the sum total of facts, about which there is a social consensus. In a Khuntkatti dispute case, the official noted 'There is generally a consensus of opinion about the original founder'.¹⁸ Similarly, residents of another village were in agreement about the original killi and later comers.¹⁹ But where there was not, past became a contested zone. This forced such a comment as 'The evidence of witnesses shows that there is no recognised tradition about village founding.'²⁰ Above facts prove that consensus was the measure of truth or village tradition and through generational transmission this was inscribed in social memory. In a khuntakatti dispute case, the objectors claimed descent from one Dode Ho, the cousin of the original founder Damu Ho. But when the Munda forgot about him, the official remarked 'how Dode's name escaped Munda's memory. If Dode had really been connected with Damu the tradition must have come down as such & there would have been no chance of missing.'²¹ This meant that in Adivasi perception tradition was true history itself. Significantly, local administration also endorsed it. But to this we shall return later.

¹⁷ Halbwachs also draws our attention to the unstableness of collective memory due to its constructive and presentist nature. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40.

¹⁸ TS, Cases u/s 83, Kotsana, 7,1.

¹⁹ TSKP, Sidma, 3-5,24.

²⁰ Ibid., Etar, 3-5, 34. See also Ibid., Mahuldiaha, 3-4, 34.

²¹ TS, Cases u/s 83, Ulihatu, 12-14, 13.

However, court cases over khuntkatti right unravel the endemic contest over recognised tradition and its fabrication. But before dwelling at length over this, we should seek to know why khuntkatti became the occasion for tailoring tradition. The issue came to the public domain during land revenue settlement (1913-18) in Kolhan. Since the passing of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908, the British administration made it imperative to ascertain who the khuntkattidars were, i.e. those who had reclaimed a village from forest, and who were not, to allow the former the privilege of paying half the rent than the latter. Interesting fact however was that within the area presently known as Jharkhand, village founders were accorded a special status and people made social distinctions between them and those who came later. Within Chotanagpur plateau, this was expressed in the spatial language of insider (*hatuhoroko*) for village makers and outsiders i.e. *prajahoroko* for later comers (Roy 1970:64), and in Kolhan in temporal terms as *marang* (senior) and *huring* (junior). However, when pecuniary condition was introduced by district administration, a series of litigations convulsed Kolhan. But to understand the cause behind it, we have to grapple with the contested official and social meanings of the term khuntkatti itself.

Official and social meanings varied because of difference in the denotation of forest itself. Officially, it meant the primeval forest, the clearance of which entitled khuntkatti right. But socially, people did not make a rigid distinction between primeval or re-grown forests. The latter had come up in large cases due to the long interval between original and later settlements. So generally the Adivasis confused resettlement as settlement itself. We cannot deny another reality. There was ongoing debate among ethnic communities over the meaning of village foundation itself. The family/killi, which conducted the baggage function of site selection in the forested tract, demarcation of the village boundary, clearance of the demarcated area and allotment of village land for habitation and cultivation, was considered the village founder and the person leading this original act was socially reputed as *Ham* or early settler. But conflict arose because other member/s of his family/killi, which had either accompanied him or subsequently participated in the reclamation of the allotted forest space within the village, claimed himself/themselves as original founder/founders. That this claim had considerable social approval is evidenced by the fact that in a public meeting convened by the district administration, social leaders also stood by the wider definition of the term.²² Thus, socially wider meaning of khuntkatti co-existed within the privileged position of the *hatuhorokos* and *marang killi*. But the problem was confounded because local administration was rigid about the official definition of the term.

Villagers invented fiction being driven by the urge to prove themselves as original clearers. This leads us to the strategy of weaving a fiction leading to the creation of a realm of friction. Of these, I shall first elaborate the strategy, while the latter will be enumerated below. The invention of fiction in large cases began with the village name. The Munda claimed that the name of Kokarkata village was a combination of two words

²² Government of Bihar and Orissa, Revenue Department, FN S/6 of 1915, Nos 1-12, Resettlement of the Kolhan Government estate in the district of Singhbhum, Serial No 6, Letter No 17-215-5, dated the 14th December 1914, from the Board of Revenue, Bihar and Orissa, submitting proposals for the continuance of the resettlement operations under the provisions of the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908, Appendix C, Copy of Memorial presented by the Hos at Chaibasa 9 July 1914, 28-29, paras. 4,7.

Kokar i.e. owl in Ho and *kata* i.e. to cut. But the claim was rejected because the suffix *kata* was a non-Ho term, the Ho equivalent being *ma*.²³ In another case, it was claimed that the village Biskata derived its name from the event of the village maker Bishi (also Bishia) Ho's foot being injured (cut) while he was ploughing his land. This was also officially rejected as 'a farfetched explanation' due to the lexical intrusion of the *diku* word *kata*.²⁴ In both the cases, the Munda was the inventor of the fiction. This indicates its elite origin. But more interesting was how it was socialised. In the second case, it was revealed during investigation that the tale told by the Munda received support from two Ho and one Tanti witnesses also. While stating that Bishia Ham was the original reclamer, the latter deposed that 'he had heard this from the Munda'.²⁵

The second strategy was to pop up an original reclamer and fabricate the story of village origin. D.M. Panna wrote, 'It appears to me that owing to the slight similarity in the sound of the village name which is pronounced as Pawapi and Pawanpi by some, the ingenuity of the Hos led them to connect it with Paun Ham a common name among the Ho.'²⁶ No less revealing is another example. The Munda deposed that Banka Ho, his predecessor, was the original clearer. He had a cock which crew out *Dhar* in the early morning. So Bankodar was so named after 'the original founder and the crowing of the cock.'²⁷ The third strategy was to superimpose Ho presence on that of the earlier settlers first by ignoring archaeological evidences of the latter and faking a Ho-centric parallel theory of origin. In one village, despite the remains of old tank named *Bonga pokhari* of Sarak origin, majority of the Ho witnesses deposed that Pokharia Ho was the early settler, implying that the village had been named after him. This shows that the fiction had a community origin. But besides witnesses from the principal killi, men from other killis and a Tanti also deposed in the same line. Obviously, they were manipulated by the principal killi, rather the community. Tanti witness admitted he 'had heard from the Hos' that Pokharia Ho was the founder.²⁸

It should be admitted that invention of fiction originated due to the prevailing social confusion regarding the meaning of khuntkatti stated below. Confusion was confounded because of the fact that several villages had a multi-layered past. The Hos, the later settlers in several villages, had either reclaimed the re-grown forests or reoccupied an empty village or the British had re-allotted the village to them. Due to the meaning confusion, they misconstrued resettlement as original settlement. Another reason may be traced to the hiatus between Adivasi sense of legitimacy and that governed the mainstream societies. According to their perception, ownership of village devolved as a matter of natural right to the people who had first stepped on a tract, demarcated it and put axe on the tree. When the occupation was socially endorsed, this became the basis of empowerment. It means that Adivasis considered social endorsement to be an evidence of right. On the other hand, colonial administration treated state approval as the sole basis of authority. During khuntkatti enquiry, Adivasis were therefore thrown into a strange world

²³ TSKP, Kokarkata, 3-7, 36.

²⁴ Ibid., Biskata, 3, 37.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., Pawapi, 3-7, 50.

²⁷ Ibid., Bankdar, 3-6, 35.

²⁸ Ibid., Pokharipi, 3-8, 70.

where legal evidence, rather than social tradition, came to be considered as a basis of entitlement. At this stage, ingenuity and imagination came into play. This imagination often drew on the cultural symbols of village naming and village governance. Traditionally, they named a village after the village maker and more often after the hill, tree, river and not infrequently momentous experience at the time of village making. The occupation of such offices as the Munda and Deori, which customarily devolved on founding family/killi, was cited as evidence of their khuntkatti right. This shows that people, who are often accused of lack of consciousness and reasoning, have their sense of logic engrained in their cultural ethos.

Contested realm of memory

During khuntkatti enquiry, numerous familial, intra/inter-killi and inter-community disputes made memory hotly contested historical evidence. An instance of intra-killi dispute was presented by Dirigo. The witnesses alleged that the village was founded by Hembrom killi as evident from the fact that different families of the killi held the offices of Manki (head of a *pir* i.e. a cluster of villages) and Munda (village head). Three witnesses of the killi named three of their predecessors as the original reclaimers. This forced the investigating official to dismiss the veracity of oral evidence by commenting 'Apparently there is no recognised tradition about the original reclaimer.'²⁹ Inter-killi disputes over original history were however more numerous. Like almost all the villages of Kolhan, Mahuldiha was a multi-killi village being inhabited by five Ho killis. Two witnesses from one killi, which held the post of Munda, claimed that this had been founded by them. But two villagers of another killi assigned it to them.³⁰ In another case, claims and counter-claims were more discrepant. Kusmunda was socially known as a Gagrai village. But disputes over the name of village maker and of the founding killi muddled the original history. A Gagrai witness named his ancestor Kusnu Ho as the founder. But the witness of Sinku killi named Kusnu's son Kundia as the maker. But at the same time, he alleged that, not the Gagrais alone, but Sinkus, Hesas and Gagrais had together settled the village. Yet another witness added a new element to the dispute. He deposed that 'this village was a Lakhiraj village of the Bhuian Deoris during the time of the Rajas.'³¹ Another area of contest was inter-community in nature. In one village, while the Ho Munda claimed that his grandfather had originally reclaimed the village, the Goala residents deposed that they had founded the village.³² The Naek (Gond) and Ho villagers were pitted against each other in another village.³³ Claims and counter claims made the past a contentious zone leading to distortion of facts. But another type of fabrication was rampant when villagers indulged in distorting pre-Ho history of Kolhan.

²⁹ Ibid., Dirigo, 3-5, 36. See also Ibid, Bara Raikhaman, 305, 36; Ibid., Benisagar, 3,38.

³⁰ Ibid., Mahuldiha, 3-4, 34.

³¹ Ibid., Kusmunda, 3-9, 43.

³² Ibid., Tarapai, 3-5, 41.

³³ Ibid., Tangar, 6-8, 34.

Memory as the tool of usurpation and erasure of the past

The usurpation and erasure of past is assigned to the selective and exclusive nature of memory. Nora observes: 'Memory is blind to all but the group it binds – which is to say... that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual' (Nora 1989: 9). This critique underlines the basic subjective nature of memory as against the supposed objectivity of history. But Peter Burke reminds:

Both history and memory have come to appear increasingly problematic. Remembering the past and writing about it no longer seem the innocent activities they were once taken to be. Neither memories nor histories seem objective any longer. In both cases historians are earning to take account of conscious or unconscious selection, interpretation and distortion. In both cases they are coming to see the process of selection, interpretation and distortion, as conditioned, or at least influenced by social groups (Burke 1997:44).

What happened in Kolhan was that the Ho and present non-Ho residents indulged in ignoring the pre-Ho past by either glossing over or decimating such palpable evidences as tanks, mango groves and other symbols of previous settlers. The victims in large cases were the Saraks and Bhuiyans. Ho residents of one village claimed khuntkatti right alleging that their three predecessors had founded the village ignoring the presence of two *surmidurmi* tanks. A Goala villager in support deposed that he had 'heard it from old men'. This meant that the above story had gained the status of a social fact. There was another twist to the episode of village making. A Ho witness admitted the presence of the Saraks but he was confused about the exact chronological precedence of Saraks and Hos. To quote: 'I heard that the Surmi Durmis were generally residents in this village. I cannot say whether we came first or the Surmi Durmis.' This may be an innocent case of amnesia. But another incident gave a different turn to the entire episode. It was learnt that the Ho villagers had re-excavated two such tanks and renamed these as *Lupung Pokhari* and *Uli Pokhari*. This was a conscious attempt to distort historical evidence.³⁴ Not that the Hos always indulged in faking of history, they were also no less precise about the past as in another case, Ho villagers acknowledged the existence of pre-Ho settlers and their historical remains.³⁵

Not the Saraks alone, but Bhuiyans and Hindus had also to face the denial of their past. On the former occasion, the Bhuiyan residents resisted this attempt by citing the plots of lands belonging to their predecessors.³⁶ In Benisagar, when the Ho Munda and another member of his killi alleged that their grandfather was the original reclamer, they glossed over the presence of a large tank called Benisagar and a temple with the idols of *Ganesh* and *Siva*, which evidenced prior Hindu presence. But significantly, villagers did not support them.³⁷

³⁴ TSKP, Bara Raikhaman, 3-5, 36.

³⁵ Ibid., Bichaburu, 3-4, 42.

³⁶ Ibid., Kusmunda, 3-9, 43.

³⁷ Ibid., Benisagar, 3, 38.

Memory vs. History: conflict and conflation

The above facts bring back the issue of reliability on the centre stage, making it difficult to posit, memory as a viable source. This was the reason why mainstream historians affirm the dichotomous relationship between memory and history. Pierre Nora writes, 'Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear to be now in fundamental opposition' (Nora 1989: 8). Explaining the theoretical basis of this opposition, W. Kansteiner observes, 'Collective memory is not history, though it is sometimes made from similar material' (Kansteiner 2002: 180). Some scholars however contend that the prejudice of mainstream scholars is basically cultural rather than epistemological. Ascribing this apathy to latent ethnocentrism, Rappaport argues that Euro-american vision of history considers their 'own construction of the past as "history" while alien modes are called "myth"' (Rappaport 1998: 12). Such a prejudice is however epistemologically diminishing, both factually and conceptually. This is remarked:

To date, in fact, the survivor's memory has played little, if any, role in Holocaust historiography, due primarily to the somewhat forced distinction historians have maintained between memory and history: history as that which happened, memory as that which is remembered of what happened. Not only does such an ironclad distinction impose an artificial distance between the two categories, ... but it also leaves no room for the survivor's voice, much less room for the survivor's memory of events, whose value is thereby lost to the historian' (Young 1997: 50).

Kansteiner adds, 'In particular, through the concept of memory, we can demonstrate to the few remaining postmodern critics how representations really work and how the power of representations can be explained' (Kansteiner 2002: 180). But he cautions us against the unreflective deployment of collective memory because its votaries have not been able to resolve the issue of conceptualisation of collective memory as distinct from individual memory. Furthermore, there is the problem of reception in terms of methods and resources. He then suggests:

we should conceptualize collective memory as the result of the interaction among three types of historical factors: the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the memory consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artifacts according to their own interests' (Kansteiner 2002: 180).

We notice that an uncertainty prevails not only at scholarly level to-day, but it prevailed also at social and official levels during British rule. Socially, this conflict is visible when villagers drew both on oral tradition and deviated from it. They therefore laid claims and counter claims that produced narratives and counter narratives. Likewise, British officials swayed between the urgency to appropriate oral information, while retaining serious distrust about its veracity. Though this should have normally set the stage for a conflict between memory and history, administrative imperatives prompted both the villagers and colonial administrators to cull information that could be more reliable. As a test of reliability, available information was put under strict scrutiny. This

way, even during khuntkatti enquiry, the caution sounded at scholarly level in recent times³⁸ was responded to.

Knowledge verification: indigenous and exotic artefacts

Tools for verification available to us are of indigenous i.e. Adivasi and exotic i.e. non-Adivasi, including British, origin. Kursinama (genealogical tree), *sasandiri* (vertically placed sepulchral stones) and *desauli* (village deity) belonged to the former group, while the latter group was represented by such artefacts as tank and mango grove associated with the Saraks and Bhuiyans, besides temples and images of Hindu and Bhuiyan origin. Some others were the nomenclatural evidences like names of village and arable lands, which were common for both these groups as also demographically specific.

Specific and subjective nature of these artefacts however made verification a tricky exercise. Often, these were pitted against each other, like genealogical tree (GT) against tank/mango grove, and Desauli against *Pauri*, representing the Bhuiyans. Problem intensified when villagers indulged in the mental and physical decimation of the symbols of others. This required village memory to be subjected to further verification. The British officials, who needed information for efficient governance, sought to solve this baffling situation (Tuckey 1920: para 19-20). This created a shared realm of knowledge verification by adapting indigenous tools and getting the information adduced from these sources cross-checked by the exotic artefacts. As an additional measure, they deployed official correspondences and settlement reports to further test the veracity of memory. The following pages will explore and critically examine the interplay of these tools, as also latent conflicts in the verification of historical knowledge.

Social modes of verification

Common place scholarly understanding is that oral societies retained their memories through generational transmission but they could not develop tools of verification. But on closer reading, we find that this notion is not wholly true. We have learnt that village old men were the socially accepted custodians of Adivasi village tradition and history. But it was also true that information of village founder, founding killi and the details of the demographic settlements were kind of social memory that gave it the status of village tradition. Moreover, they had invented other tools of corroborating information. These in fact represented Adivasi notion of socially approved technology to appropriate and authenticate historical information.

The first of these tools was Kursinama or genealogy. Past as genealogy and past as chronology, to loan from Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm 1997: 20-2), in fact respectively represent pre-literate and literate societies. In normal cases, genealogies survived in the family. So people generally remembered the man who had founded the village and set up family settlements. But the problem arose, as cited before, due to the early death of parents. We have also learnt about the shortness of memory as well as familial and social amnesia due to the absence of old men. There was however a social technique of

³⁸ To quote: 'It is the unreliability of memory that requires historian to apply critical analysis and verification in order to substantiate it as a source of evidence.' N. Gedi and Y. Elam, 'Collective Memory –What is it?', *History and Memory*, 8, 1996, 33.

preparing the GT when such problems arose. This was to cobble together genealogies with the help of old people. This is proved by the statement that the 'Munda has filed a Genealogical table which he prepared after consulting the old men of his killi.'³⁹ Genealogies informed and provided confirmation about the unbreakable link between the present inhabitants and the original founders, besides profiling the authentic demographic history of a village. Village Papers inform that people generally expressed their time of entry in a village in reference to the village head. This implies that genealogy of the Munda family served as the temporal scale in Adivasi village history.

Desauli

According to Adivasi tradition, villagers demarcated and preserved a part of the forest at the time of village reclamation. This was called Desauli or Sarna by the Adivasis in Jharkhand. This was the abode of the village god, who they believed, secured the general welfare of the village, besides ensuring good rainfall and safety from diseases. Desauli functioned as an archaeological artefact to verify whether a village had an ethnic origin. During khuntkatti enquiry, officials learnt and legitimised this as a conclusive evidence of a village founded and owned by the Adivasis. E.C. Probal, the investigating officer, remarked, 'The Hos cannot expect to have khuntkatti rights when they cannot show their deshawalli. According to their custom, the original Ho settlers in a place, keep by a portion of jungle as a home for their village God.'⁴⁰ So when the Ho inhabitants of a village failed to show their desauli, their claim of khuntkatti right was officially turned down.⁴¹

The other historical significance was that Dasauli often confirmed the trans-village link of the Adivasis. While narrating the history of village foundation, the Hos generally named the village from which they had migrated to set up a new habitat. But often their link with the mother village was not terminated. This signified that the village had not culturally attained the status of a full and independent village. As a mark of this dependence, they remained fastened to a common desauli and deori. Burumpada village once formed part of Baliapada. But since they had not developed their separate desauli, both were considered one village religiously.⁴²

Sasandiri

Next cultural symbol of the Adivasis was the *sasan* or graveyard of their ancestors in the village, where they placed sepulchral stones either vertically (sasandiri) or horizontally (*biddiri*) (Roy 1970: 222). Dalton considered these 'ancient and modern monuments' useful archaeological tools to appropriate the indigenous past in the absence of 'traditions' (Dalton 1873: 112-21). In Jharkhand, such graves and memorial stones (Roy 1970: 222) more or less verified whether villages were settled by the Hos or others. The custom was that each killi had its own sasan to underline its difference from other killis within the

³⁹ TSKP, Bankodar, 3-6, 35.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Khas Jamda, 3-5, 72.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., Burumpada, 3-4, 38.

village. The other was the practice of using the sasan of the mother village⁴³ when a new village had not attained the cultural status of a village. But history relates that with fusion killi fission was in function. This is evident from the growing practice of family sasans found among Adivasi communities in Jharkhand (Tuckey 1920: para 20; Dalton 1873: 114, 117).

Colonial officials applied sasandiri test for adducing information of village past and verifying memory. Firstly, the age of the sasan helped to identify the founding killi. In Bhaluka, the Bobonga Hos were known as the *Marang* (chief) *killi* and Malu Ho the reputed founder. The more clinching evidence in their favour was that they had the oldest burial ground. Secondly, burial evidences were privy both to inter-killi transfers and multi-layered village histories. In one village, there were burial grounds of the Sirkas, the Purtsis and the Bobongas. Of these three, the Sirka was the original settler, after they got extinct the Purtsis came, but they too got extinct. The last to come was the Bobonga, the present settler.⁴⁴ Thus separate sasans came to represent three distinct archaeological layers. This finding also pushed the history of the village sometimes back.

Exotic artefacts

The social mechanism of knowledge appropriation and corroboration came under severe stress when the colonial bureaucracy engaged in determining the nature of tenancy, quantum of rent and appointment of village officials. This led to the tailoring of genealogies, faking the origin of village names and effacement of the past belonging to others. This necessitated the invocation of other tools to corroborate facts. The first were the mango groves and historic tanks of Sarak and Bhuiyan origin. These functioned as socially recognised archaeological evidences specifically representing the above communities, a specificity that survived the ravages of time and human decimation. The Saraks, the lay Jainas by faith, were a developed agrarian community, as evidenced by their tanks and mango garden. They were also a technologically developed mining community as supported by their copper mines found in the Dhalbhum subdivision of erstwhile Singhbhum. Their settlements spread over southern and eastern parts of Kolhan. These seemed to have originated in the 9th century AD. Early British ethnography merely made cryptic mention that they were defeated and driven out of Kolhan by the Hos (Tickell 1840: 696-97). Village Papers identified the villages that formed Sarak settlements which they had abandoned after the 17th century A.D.

The Bhuiyans were contemporary to the Saraks and were depicted as an ‘inoffensive agrarian group’ in early colonial ethnography (Tickell 1840: 696). Their political link with the Porahat dynasty, seemed to have factored their control over large tracts of Kolhan. This however became a major reason why they had to desert a large number of the villages here in apprehension of British reprisal for their supposed link with Raja Arjun Singh of Porahat, the rebel leader during 1857-58 (Sen 2011: 90). Though colonial-day sources fail to dilate on this aspect of history, archaeological evidences cited above authenticate their presence and settlements. Colonial officials also applied these

⁴³ Ibid., Popkoda, 3-4, 1 MT. See also Ibid., Kadalsokwa, 3-5, 72.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Popkoda, 3-4, 1 MT. See also Ibid., Kadalsokwa, 3-5, 72.

tests to examine and ascertain which of the Kolhan villages were originally established by the Bhuiyans, as also by the Saraks.

Tanks and mango groves

In social parlance, old tanks (Craven 1898: paras 21-46) were assigned to bongas or gods but not to the Hos i.e. human beings and were called either *surmidurmi* or *bonga pokharis*.⁴⁵ Verbal testimony of villagers about the demographic specificity of these archaeological evidences, as legitimised officially, gave these the status of tools of verification. In respect of a village, an official commented 'The existence of Sarawak tanks raises a reasonable doubt in the mind if the Hos are the original reclaimers.'⁴⁶ And then, the ASO wrote 'it was a custom with the Sarawaks not to take water from a tank or well excavated by others. Where ever they halted even for a short time, they dug their own Bandh.'⁴⁷ The presence of as many as four tanks in one village and ten in another, and mango grove or five old trees therefore testified the Sarak origin of these villages.⁴⁸ There were villages where these tools conclusively established their Bhuiyan origin also.⁴⁹

Remains of religious symbols

The remains of Hindu temples as also the images of Shiva, Ganesh and Pauri related pre-Ho phase of Kolhan history. The remains of a temple at Benisagar proved its Hindu origin, though the Munda had alleged that 'probably his grandfather was the original reclamer'.⁵⁰ The discovery of an unnamed Hindu idol similarly bore testimony to the fact that 'some Hindu castes were originally residents' in another village.⁵¹ But remains of such religious symbols did not always authenticate the past, as the following instances show. The discovery of the remains of a Shiva temple otherwise evidenced the Hindu origin of a village. But the parallel evidence of Sarak tank and mango grove affirmed that Saraks were actually the original settlers before the Hindus occupied it.⁵² Another village presents a more interesting story. The Bhuiyan residents claimed that they had founded the village. But their claim was contradicted by the finding of an idol of Shiva which, it was learnt, Brahmins of Jaintgarh still worshipped. This should have normally affirmed the Hindu origin of the village. But an old mango garden containing several mango trees established that in fact the village did not originate either with the Hindus or Bhuiyans.⁵³

Goddess Pauri was the deity of a class of the Bhuiyans who were known as Pahari Bhuiyans. So the presence of her image provided archaeological proof either of Bhuiyan origin of a village or Bhuiyan settlement. The social knowledge and endorsement of this

⁴⁵ TSKP, Pokhripi, 3-8, 70; Ibid., Bankodar, 3-6, 35.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Etar, 3-5, 34.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Bankodar, 3-6, 35.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Pawapi, 3-7, 50; Ibid., Karanjia 3-6, 50; Ibid., Tangar, 6-8, 34 : Ibid., Sarda, 3-4, 39.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Gamharia, 3-8, 42; Ibid., Jaipur, 3-8, 42; Ibid., Goberdhan, 3-5, 39.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Benisagar, 3, 38.

⁵¹ Ibid., Panduaburu, 3-4, 38.

⁵² Ibid., Sarda, 3-4, 39.

⁵³ Ibid., Darposi, 3-8, 46.

cultural link was also officially accorded the status of an authentic test of verification. Consequently, before according khuntkatti right, besides the above archaeological remains, officials verified whether the village had the image of Pauri or a Desauli, the latter evidencing its Ho link. The Bhuiyan ancestry of *Diku Ponga* was officially determined on the basis of the discovery of an image of Pauri.⁵⁴ But invocation of this archaeological parameter was problematic. There were innumerable examples of acculturation where the Hos had also worshipped Pauri as their village deity. The following quote will prove Bhuiyan-Pauri link and Ho acculturation. It is noted 'This Pauri is worshipped only because there were Bhuiyans in this village before.'⁵⁵

Politico-administrative symbols

Remains of a fort, iron-drums, sword-shield-bugle, iron arrow and feudal land tenures helped local officials to verify history. These sources conclusively identified the extent of political control exercised by the chiefs of Porahat, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar. Colonial ethnography vaguely informed that Porahat chiefs claimed themselves as the Rajas of Singhbhum. But on the eve of British conquest, the political control of this dynasty had shrunk considerably (McPherson 1906: 18). On the basis of tools named above, we can form a greater understanding of the nature and extent of Porahat control. An old fort at Jaintgarh, mango trees, the *Rajabandh* and *paikali mouza* (lands assigned for the maintenance of the paiks of this dynasty) provided evidences that Jaintgarh was the bastion of Porahat dynasty in south Kolhan and neighbouring Rajabassa, Chanpada, Darposi and Pokam villages originated as its satellites.⁵⁶ Likewise, Kharband was the base of Porahat dynasty in south-eastern Kolhan to which villages like Kumardungi, Chukri, Lakhiposi and Tangar owed their origin. Similarly, the old fortress at Garh Kesna was the bastion of Keonjhar Rajas who controlled such villages as Nawagaon, Tarapai and Amda from that base.⁵⁷ Yet another purpose that these symbols served was to verify claim of village foundation. About the origin of Kharband, witnesses deposed that the village had been founded by one Bade Ho, who had hailed from a far off village in Bantaria pir. The claim was considered fictitious on the basis of the fact that Kharband fell within the domain of Mourbhanj Rajas and this implied that village had a non-Ho origin.⁵⁸

Linguistic archaeology

Names of villages and plots of land served as useful tools of knowledge appropriation and verification. A village with a diku or Ho name established its demographic origin against the claim of the present inhabitants. Both Gond and Ho witnesses of Tangar claimed khuntkatti right, the latter backing this up with the claim that their predecessor Tango Ho was the village maker. But this was officially dismissed on the ground that

⁵⁴ Ibid., *Diku Ponga*, 3-4, 1 MT. See also Ibid., *Kulaiburu*, 3-4, 1 MT.

⁵⁵ Ibid., *Diku Ponga*, 3-4, 1 MT; *Kudriba*, 3-4, 1 MT.

⁵⁶ Ibid., *Jaintgarh*, 3-6, 46; Ibid., *Rajabassa*, 3-6, 45; Ibid., *Chanpada*, 3-5, 45; Ibid., *Darposi*, 3-8, 46; Ibid., *Pokam*, 3-7, 46.

⁵⁷ Ibid., *Garh Kesna*, 3, 41; Ibid., *Tarapai*, 3-5, 41; Ibid., *Nawagaon*, 3, 41; Ibid., *Amda*, 3-5, 41.

⁵⁸ TS, Cases u/s 83, *Kharband*, 25, 33.

Tangar was a diku word having etymological link with huge stones which were scattered over the village.⁵⁹ In another village, the Ho residents deposed that two of their predecessors had laid out Joaribhanga, their village. But the investigating officer found that the village name had actually originated from the Oriya roots *Juari* (yoke) and *bhanga* (to break).⁶⁰ Likewise, in Kusmunda village Bhuiyan residents cited lands called *Patbera* belonging to them as proof for their claim over the village.⁶¹

However, invoking this linguistic evidence was problematic for different reasons. Firstly, names were often borrowed. On the basis of the prefixes *San* (small) and *Bara* (Large), both non-Ho words, we should be convinced of the non-Ho birth of San and Bara Mirgilindi villages. But more significant was the etymological composition of Mirgilindi, which grew out of the sum of *Miri* i.e., jungle and *dili* i.e. a small village in Ho.⁶² These proved that the villages had actually a Ho origin. It means that nomenclatural test must be supplemented by other evidences like the numerical preponderance of the killis, and holding of such key posts as Munda and Deori by a killi.⁶³

Secondly, linguistic evidence often proved misleading as names were changed and distorted. As cited before, giving Ho names to Sarak tanks was a more common practice. In the same way, villagers of Kokarkata rechristened the historic place *Darbar Mela* with the Ho word *Uliburu*.⁶⁴ Lastly, there was a tendency by the principal demographic group to ignore the nomenclatural evidences also.⁶⁵

It becomes clear that above tools of verification, rather than authenticating facts, often led to conflict. To resolve this problem, investigating officials invoked literate evidences like Tickell's list of abandoned villages of 1838 and settlement papers. During British invasion of Kolhan in 1836-37, people had abandoned their villages. After their conquest of Kolhan and formation of the Kolhan Government Estate in 1837, several of these villages were resettled. Names of these villages formed part of Tickell's above list of villages. During khuntkatti enquiry, officials verified whether the village remained in continuous possession of the founding killi or it was resettled after 1837. In the former case, after subjecting the village to other tests of verification, authenticity of original history was established. But in the latter case, despite the above verification, khuntkatti right was denied. To substantiate, Gurgaon, a small village on the Mourbhanj border had a mixed population and a contested history. During khuntkatti enquiry, the Ho witness deposed that this village was 'settled after the first disturbance in Kolhan in Tickell's time. The village was not occupied before then'. He further said that the Ho name of the village was Goonga. But Lt. Tickell's list included the name of the village. This therefore became the basis for the rejection of Ho claim of foundation and the origin of the village after 1838.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ TSKP, Tangar, 6-8, 34.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Joaribhanga, 3-4, 37

⁶¹ Ibid., Kusmunda, 3-9, 43.

⁶² Ibid., Miriglundi, 3-14, 50.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., Kokarkata, 3-7, 36.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Kochra, 3-12, 50.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Gurgaon, 3-8, 44.

Land revenue settlement records

The other tool of verification was the land revenue settlement records. I shall continue to refer the above village to examine its function. A Ho villager claimed that his 'grandfather's father' Dugud was the original founder and his son Borea was the Munda in 1867, the year of Hayes' land revenue settlement in Kolhan. On the basis of settlement papers, the official commented that 'it would be impossible to have 270 bighas of rice land in the village in 1867 if Borea's father cleared and first settled here. The extension of cultivation from 1867 to 1896 was 177 bighas of rice lands only & at this rate the village must have been settled long before the time fixed by the Hos'. Further evidences in support were the mango trees and the image of Siva.⁶⁷

Possibilities

The above pages make it clear that, despite several objections, memory can be deployed as a rich and verifiable source. This enables us to map some broad trends that shaped the entire course of Ho rural life. Spaced about a millennium, the first was the immigration and gradual movement of the community across Singhbhum and their colonisation of its southern region. Since their entry into north Singhbhum, migration seemed to have been influenced by their relationship with the Bhuiyans, the chiefs of Porahat and the Saraks (Tickell 1840: 696-98). But after they settled in permanent villages, it was the increase in population that necessitated moving out into the unoccupied forested zone for carving out new settlements. While in general cases, the destination was not too far off,⁶⁸ slowly and steadily we notice a killi moving from the north Singhbhum to its southern border and beyond.⁶⁹ Inter-village migration was also factored by the recurrence of epidemic and fear of tiger. It is reported about one village 'The deadly disease small pox visited this village & all fell victim to it and died.'⁷⁰ In fact, small pox was a scourge for the people who considered communal exodus as the safest way to escape it.⁷¹ Similarly, when the Munda and his mother were killed by the tiger, people abandoned their village.⁷²

Associated with this was the transformation of an itinerant group of people into a sedentary village life.⁷³ We learn how different killis founded their villages, peopled them and evolved their notion of village community.⁷⁴ Another milestone in Adivasi village

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, Lisimoti, 3-6, 68.

⁶⁹ The method to be followed in sketching the course of migration is to continually regress from the present lived village to the one from which the incumbent had come and further. But this will require intensive search of Village Papers followed by field work.

⁷⁰ TSKP, Rairowa, 3-4, 1 MT.

⁷¹ Ibid., Rela, 3-4, 1 MT. This was the Ho strategy to escape an epidemic. Tickell, 'Memoir', 706.

⁷² Tuckey Settlement, Tanaza Papers, Roam, 5-10, 1 MT. See also TSKP, Biwan, 3-5, 2 MT; Ibid., Ankua, 3-4, 2 MT.

⁷³ I have elaborated this process in 'Peasantization and the changing socio-economy of the Ho Adivasis of Singhbhum', National Seminar on *Environment, State and Society* organised by Department of History, Jadavpur University on 1-2 March 2010.

⁷⁴ For details see my 'Collective Memory and Reconstruction of Ho History', *Indian Folklore Research Journal*, Vol., 5 No.8, December 2008, 87-103.

history was the origin a killi-centric village grid, with the original or mother village being the epicentre of satellite formation in its neighbourhood.⁷⁵ These details dismiss the notion of isolation of villages as enumerated by colonial ethnography (Bremner, Kloos and Saith 1997: 16). We notice the close cultural linkage with the mother village that continued organically till the new village attained independent identity. But even after that the memory of the village from which people came survived and with it the linkage.

Furthermore, I would like to allude to the multi-layered village history of Singhbhum, representing different phases and people. This is close to Bernard Cohn's famous saying 'There is not one past of the village but many.' However, Adivasi village history does not present a spectacle different from village histories elsewhere in the country. But there is an important difference that needs to be underlined. Since some of the communities were displaced from power, the wide temporal gap between the earlier and later settlements rendered the history to be discontinuous. Added to this was the very sketchy and shallow nature of history that early colonial ethnography depicts.⁷⁶ Thirdly, the narrative is lopsided in nature. The reason is that since the upper layer of this archaeology more or less belonged to the Hos, this phase remains more elaborate and focussed than earlier phases. This creates two misconceptions, firstly, the history of Kolhan-Porahat originated with the advent and expansion of this community. Secondly, since we know very little about the earlier phase, this past is generally considered insignificant.

The multi-layered history however discounts the above bias and stretches it much beyond the Ho phase. At the base, we have the Saraks, followed by the Bhuiyans, while the Ho occupied the top most. This is instanced by Iligara.⁷⁷ Kusmunda village tells another story. During *khuntkatti* enquiry, the village was socially known as 'a Gagrai (a killi of the Ho) village'. But the remains of Sarak tanks and five mango trees narrated Sarak phase. A Bhuiyan witness claimed that the village devolved on them as a *lakhiraj* property awarded by the Porahat rajas. It meant that village had two intervening layers of Porahat rule and the phase of the Bhuiyan, before it finally passed to the Ho.⁷⁸ But while the above layers were community-specific, we have instances of inter-killi transfers in village ownership, where two different killis represented two layers.⁷⁹ But perhaps the pervasive trend, found largely among the Ho, was the tendency, as elaborated above, to own the self-centric past and deny the past that belonged to others.

Above facts indicate that a major aspect of village history is the feudal phase, represented by the chiefs of Porahat and Mayurbhanj. Foundation of the Singh dynasty of Porahat, who claimed to be the rulers of Singhbhum, dates back to the 13th century AD.⁸⁰ In 1620 AD, Seraikela and Kharsawn seceded from Porahat to emerge as independent

⁷⁵ TSKP, Damodarpur, 3-6, 50; TS, Cases u/s 83, Objections No 660, 669-71, Sonro, 11-2, 5.

⁷⁶ See for instance Tickell's 'Memoir'.

⁷⁷ TSKP, Iligara, 3-9, 51.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Kusmunda, 3-9, 43.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Kasiapetcha, 3-5, 1 MT. See also Ibid., Nuia, 3-4, 1.

⁸⁰ There are two versions to the period of foundation. According to the tradition of the family the dynasty was founded in the 6th century AD, while according to the British their rule commenced from the 13th century AD. For details see Sahu, *The Kolhan under the British Rule*, 1985, 9-10.

chieftaincies.⁸¹ Colonial ethnography however provides meagre information about the extent of control exercised by this dynast (Tickell 1840: 697). Village Papers however are more informed. We learn that besides the capital at Porahat, Jaintgarh in Kolhan was the other power centre of the Porahat rajas from which they built their power network in the Ho region. Archaeological proofs in support were the police *thana* at Bara Jamda, locally known as Garh Jamda, the *Rajabandh* and another large tank excavated by the chiefs, the fort at Jaintgarh and the memory of Gobergaon as the *khorphosh mouza*.⁸² This story further disproves the idea of village isolation. It reveals that when village centric Adivasi polity was merged in feudal state system, Ho villages came to be connected with regional politics. Another important aspect, though not a generic phenomenon, was the reciprocal relationship between the chiefdoms and the Hos. The Rajas inducted some of them in their services by anointing them with the title of Sirdars. Abin Manki of Sinku killi was the sirdar of Raja of Porahat. He preserved the sword and shield befitting this post as also a bugle given to one of his ancestors.⁸³ About the duties of this official, Soma Munda of Jamdiha deposed that his predecessor Domka held the post of Sardar when Ikup Singh was the Raja of Porahat. He acted as the Manki and performed 'police duties and in some cases he had magisterial powers.'⁸⁴ While this linkage consolidated feudal rule to a great extent, this connected Kolhan villages with the regional feudal network. The impact that this transformation brought about is best elaborated by the political history of Chotanagpur plateau which came under the control of the Raja of Chotanagpur. This introduced exotic institutions, promoted the influx of non-Adivasis and their culture and values. This is no less true about Kolhan-Porahat where some of these changes occurred which affected Kolhan village life.

Conclusion

Thus, on the basis of the above findings we can conclude that, because of its heavy dependence on collective memory, writing Adivasi rural history is riddled with problems. Problems centre round the difference in the official and social meanings of such terms as village history, forest and khuntkatti. Replicating the scholarly reservations about the efficacy of collective memory, a researcher has to face such other problems as absence of history, lack of temporal depth, condensation of information, manipulation of facts, erasure of the past belonging to others and wide contests about the past. Memory therefore stands in sharp contrast to acceptable meaning of history reducing the information derived from it highly debatable. But the most redeeming feature of the entire exercise is the application of both indigenous and exotic tools which help us in measuring and verifying information. Therefore, collective memory emerges as both complementary and supplementary source that helps reconstruct village and regional histories that takes us beyond the empirical discourses produced so far.

⁸¹ For a detailed history of these princely estates see C.K. Paty, *History of Seraikela and Kharsawan States* (1620-1956 AD), Classical Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2002.

⁸² It was testified to by a villager 'It was her khorphosh mouza for expenses of hair, oil etc.' TSKP of Chhanpada, 3-5, 45; Ibid., Bara Jamda, 3-5, 72; Ibid., Rajabassa, 3-6, 45; Ibid., Gobergaon, 3-7, 45; Ibid., Darposhi, 3-8, 46.

⁸³ Ibid., Khairpal, 3-10, 44. See also Ibid., Jamdiha, 3-16, 51; Ibid., Baliaposi, 3-13, 44.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Jamdiha, 3-16, 51.

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Debating Colonialism and Muttadary System: Perspective from Hill People in Agency Areas of Andhra

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Abstract

The present study examines contesting nature of colonialism and its impact on Hill People in Agency areas of Andhra. It proposes to examine how the colonial state, in the name of Agency Administration, imposed several restrictions on Hill areas with support of local rulers or Muttadars who were mainly responsible for the implementations of colonial policies in Agency areas. The study addresses questions such as why and how the Agency administration was formulated. What were the factors which had influenced their nature and direction? What were the reasons for origin of Muttadari system in pre-colonial Andhra? How the Muttadary system was strengthened by intervention of colonialism in Agency areas? This paper analyzes the nature of colonial state's intervention and local rulers' attitude towards Agency areas from Hill peoples' perspective.

Introduction

The experience of Hill people in the agency areas produced an awareness of the illegitimacy of colonial hegemony. It is the colonialism, for the first time in the history, which could affect the tribal social organization through formulations of policies and administrative mechanism which eventually had far-reaching effect on Hill people livelihoods. This paper proposes to examine how the colonial state, in the name of Agency Administration, imposed several restrictions on Hill areas with support of local rulers or Muttadars who were mainly responsible for the implementations of colonial policies in Agency areas. The consequence of the Agency rule was the strengthened of various revenue officials in the society such as Zamindars, Munsabdars, Muttadars etc. their main duty was to collect revenue and favour the government. The Muttadari system played an important role in the tribal society, which strengthened the colonialism in Agency areas of Andhra.

Bipan Chandra writing on the impact of colonial rule on the tribals opined that, 'the colonial administration ended their relative isolation and brought them fully within the ambit of colonialism (Chandra 1998: 45). It recognized the tribal chiefs as Zamindars and introduced a new system of land revenue and taxation of tribals' products. Above all, it introduced a large number of moneylenders, traders and revenue farmers as middlemen among the tribals. These middlemen were the chief instruments of bringing the tribal people within the vortex of the colonial economy and exploitation. The middlemen were outsiders who increasingly took possession of tribal lands and ensnared the tribals in a web of debt. In course of time, the tribal people increasingly lost their lands and were reduced to the position of agricultural labourers, share croppers and tax-rented tenants on the land they had earlier brought under cultivation and hells on a communal basis'. K.S. Singh argues that the entry of the colonialism into the tribal regions of India through various philanthropic strategies of the communal tribal mode of production and attributed judicial nature of the regions by way of adopting survey and hence, the emergence of the private right on land. The very entrance of the colonial state into these areas was resisted violently by the tribals of the respective regions (Singh 1985).

The restrictions imposed on Hill people by the colonialism through their law enforcement, had endangered the 'freedom of the natives', and forced them to question the imposition of new types of authority. Due to the imposed British policies, a segment of the new native ruling authority emerged, which exploited tribal people in various forms. Their challenges had taken the shape of insurrections witnessed in all the tribal belts of the country from time to time. In every part of India the impact of British rule led to new social formations among the tribal people.

In pre-independence days, the study of the social and economic conditions of the tribal people were difficult, as the areas inhabited by them were inaccessible, making it insuperable to establish contacts with them. However, a few Government officers, anthropologists, welfare workers and missionary workers who maintained constant touch with them, have left valuable accounts which depict the conditions under which they used to live. All these aspects of tribal people under Andhra Agency are a visible area to think, rethink and construct a historical perspective.

Debating Muttadary system in pre-colonial Andhra

David Arnold argues that historically three factors were responsible for unity among the hill communities in Agency areas. First, a largely self-sufficient economy based on shifting cultivation, second is the shared religious beliefs and third is an overarching Muttadari system. Given for the present day one can observe that in the tribal society of the area that strong feelings of community are prevalent, particularly at the clan and village level, and are manifest in several tribal practices. It is a common practice to share the produce of certain trees in the village and to have mutual cooperation in the clearing of new land (Arnold 1982). The third point which argued by him, formed a doubt among the present day historians that whether the Muttadari system was created from tribal society itself or colonial construction.

Furer Haimendorf argues that the Muttadari system played a significant role in tribal society. The origin of the Muttadari system is obscure, but it was fairly established in the region by the time of the British arrival. The Muttadari system might have therefore

resulted from extraneous influences which penetrated the more inaccessible hill regions. Gradually, they were assimilated into the tribal society and were cut off from the low land civilization. By the 19th century they were so fully assimilated that all traces of a non-tribal identity was disappeared. Having entered the tribal region and established themselves as Muttadars, the intruders became part and parcel of tribal society (Haimendorf 1948).

Aiyappan mentioned the functions of Muttadars in his report that the Muttadar used to pay revenue to the Mansubdar and it was a very insignificant amount. He had to maintain law and order, settle disputes, perform rituals and act as a link between the hill men and their over-lord, the Mansubdar. All these functions established his power over the hill people who accepted his sovereignty. The village headman was responsible to the Muttadar (Aiyappan 1948). That is the reason that David Arnold argued in the above that the Muttadari system united various hill communities into compact groups. In this hierarchy, the burden of outside authority was never felt by the tribals (Arnold 1982).

However, one of the important in the Agency administration was the Muttadari system. The mutta means small district or sub-divisions of a country (Brown 1852). Groups of villages in the accessible and backward hill tracts came to be held as revenue units called muttas and the intermediary who collected the revenue and paid a certain amount of it to the government was a Muttadar. A Muttadar was only a revenue collector and not a cultivator of land. To ensure against loses in revenue collections he got a percentage as commission. Before discussing about the colonial intervention in agency areas, it is necessary to discuss about the traditional land revenue systems in tribal areas as to understand the conflicts that have arisen with the land tenure systems introduced by Muslim rulers and followed by British rulers.

The Andhra became a part of various kingdoms but no record was available to show the status of the tribal areas in their respective periods. But the Gajapathi kings of Orissa were perhaps the first rulers who held sway over the tribal areas of Vizagapatnam and Ganjam districts. The Rajas appointed their own men as smaller Rajas in tribal areas to collect rents and also to check the tribals from plundering plains villages. The smaller Rajas in turn appointed Muttadars for groups of villages (Sastry and Subba Reddy 1991: 75). These Rajas were called as Zamindars (owners of land) by the Muslim rulers. Similar system existed in tribal areas of Godavari ruled by Rajas of Badrachalam, Polavaram, Gutala etc. These Rajas also called themselves as *Dev* meaning god. These Rajas were receiving ceremonial payments during festivals and they were also reciprocating. The tribal tradition was incorporated by great tradition (Dhanaraju 2014). Some of the important aspects of great tradition, therefore, found its origin from tribal tradition. The important tribal group of the area Khond even called themselves as Samantha (meaning subordinate king) in the process of *Sanskritization*. This close relationship between the tribals and Hindu rulers was exploited for the latter's advantage, especially after the advent of British.

The Andhra area prior to the invasion of Golconda rulers of Deccan was ruled by several kings. The Golconda kings who invaded the Circars preferred to continue the administration of these regions through local chiefs and Hindu rulers (Sastry and Subba Reddy 1991). The Hindu rulers who earlier subjugated hill chief were collecting *Swatantams* (fees to village officers) from the local crops and the subordinate chiefs were

paying annual tributes to the Hindu rulers. The Hill chiefs also followed this process while administering their own areas. They were also paying tributes to the Hindu rulers on all Hindu festivals and Hindu rulers were reciprocating with gifts and were honoring the chiefs on all important occasions.

Some of the Tribal communities like the Khonds had even adopted the Sanskrit names like Samantha to their tribe meaning subordinate king. Elsewhere in the country also, the tribal committees like Raj Gond claiming Kshatriya (ruling class) status. Therefore, the relationship between the Hindu rulers and the Hindu chiefs was in the manner of reciprocation. In the process of interaction, the tribal tradition was recognized as an important aspect of Hindu tradition and was even to have originated from the tribal tradition. It is sufficient here to say that the tribal society became a part in overall Hindu tradition. As the time passed, the frequency of interaction of tribal society with larger society increased thereby the tribal economy also became a part of a larger economy.

The Muslim rulers of Golconda first gave the name Zamindar to the Rajas meaning possessor of land. These Zamindars or Rajas were asked to pay fixed rent and the administration of Zamindaries was left to the Zamindar. The big Zamindars or Rajas appointed by Muslims were reported to have in turn appointed smaller Zamindars for tribal areas who in turn appointed Muttadars or Samuthudars to collect rents fixed by Zamindars. While Muttadar was a head of the Mutta, referring to group of villages in Rampa area in Godavari district and Golconda and Madugala areas in Visakhapatnam district, the Samuthudar refers to head of group of Koya villages (*Samuthu*) in Badrachalam areas of Godavari district. So far no records available to know about Muttadari system during Muslim period, but the available records of British period have thrown some light on this subject.

The area was ruled by various Zamindars since Muslim rulers came to power. The important Raja as far as tribal areas of former Visakhapatnam district comprising of present day Visakhapatnam, Vijayanagaram and Srikakulam districts appears to be the Raja of Jeypore. The Jeypore estate was part of Vishapatnam district till 1936 when it was transferred to the newly formed state of Orissa. Most of the Zamindars in these two tribal areas owe their existence to the Raja of Jeypore who appointed them. In case of Godavari district including the present day East Godavari and West Godavari district, the links of smaller Zamindars seems to be with Zamindar of Badrachalm. The reason for not extending the rule of Raja of Jeypore to these areas was perhaps due to the fact that Godavari district was separated geographically by mighty river Godavari.

The smaller Zamindars also called themselves as he traditional setting collected the rents from Muttadars or Samuthudars. These Muttadars appears to have come from upper strata of tribal society of the area. In Godavari district where the Koya and Konda Reddi tribal inhabited areas were more or less mutually exclusive, the Muttadars or Samuthudars were from Koya or Konda Reddi tribal communities. But in the multi-tribal areas of Visakhapatnam district, most of the Muttadars were from the Bagatha tribal community which claims highest social status in the tribal hierarchy of the area. The British records referred the Bagathas as plains Kapu caste men who migrated to tribal areas from outside of the tribal belt in Andhra Agency.

Below the Muttadar was traditional tribal chief at village level. The tribal areas were sparsely populated and rents were paid only as symbolic act of recognition of authority of

Zamindar; it was a very informal traditional organization below the Muttadar especially at village level. In fact, the concept of village itself did not exist then as tribals lived in an area migrating within it depending on availability of food resources.

Almost all the plains Zamindars maintained very good relationship with the hill chiefs and also with intermediate Zamindars. For example, almost all Zamindars in present Srikakulam and Vizayanagaram districts like Andra, Salur, Pachipenta, Chemudu, Sangamvalasa, Merangi, Kurapam and Palkonda were appointed by the Raja Jeypore. (presently located in Orissa State) (Sastry and Subba Reddy 1991). The Zamindars of Vizayanagaram belonging to Prajapathi family also maintained good relationship with the tribal chiefs. Similarly, the Zamindars of Polavaram, Gutal, Bhadrachalm and Korukonda were having good relationships with the tribal chiefs and Muttadars.

The Madugula Zamindari consisted of Hill Madugula, Ghats and Lova country (valleys), the Hill Madugala of the Zamindari consisting of tribal areas was mortgaged to Raja of Jeypore. Sometimes, Zamindari was also purchased by another Zamindar or taken on lease. Rekapalli Estate was thus leased in 1574 A.D to Korukonda Zamindars who were said to have enjoyed it for nearly 250 years. Similarly Gutala estate was purchased by Polavaram Zamindar. In spite of all this, tribal chief–Zamindari relationship did not change much.

As per as gifts from Zamindars were concerned, the Muttadars and smaller Zamindars were giving presents to the Raja of Jeypore during *Dessera* besides providing military services. He was collecting these feudatories by sending *Kola* (a bow and arrow) as a symbol. This symbol was forwarded from one Chief to the other and the messengers were given a feast before paying the rents and presents called *Anjali* (Government of Madras 1864). Similar relationship existed in other Zamindari in Godavari district who used to receive *Rajalanchanalu* (symbolic gifts to the rulers) even though they did not have control over the hill chiefs. Thus the relationship between the hill chiefs and Zamindars and Rajas was cordial even during the Muslim period as it was only the Raja who was defeated by Muslim rulers and the smaller Zamindars continued to be under Rajas.

Thus, the gradual extension of the Muttadar system brought radical changes in Agency areas of Andhra. Due to direct interference with the tribal mode of life the Mansabdars/Zamindars extensively exploited the tribals in Andhra Agency.

Debating colonialism and agency administration

During the British period, unlike the Zamindars/Mansabdars, they tried to interfere in the way of life of the tribals. It is to be mentioned here that the tribal areas which were endowed with large potentates attracted the attention of the British rulers as they thought that revenues can be raised from these areas by establishing direct rule over these areas. They also wanted to lessen the control of the Zamindars of plains areas over the hill chiefs and hill areas as the Zamindars were treated as mere agents of Muslim rulers who were created for the sole purpose of collecting the revenue (Hemingway 1907: 168).

When the agency came under the British there was a long drawn out battle between the government who were forcing their way into the forest area and the people of the hill areas who resisted the move. There were as many as villages in the muttas and when they came under the British, the Governor of Madras wrote, 'a system which is adopted to districts where the authority of government is paramount cannot fail to be those

mountainous tracts where, up to the present period, after a lapse of more than thirty years, we, in truth, possess no police and no power' (Mangamma 1984: 11).

By providing insights into colonial land revenue policies such research help us to understand their negative consequences on the local tribal economy between 1776 and 1947.

When the tribal areas came under the English control, there was no regular survey of the hill areas for a long time. Uncultivated and wastelands were given to the Zamindars perpetually and without extra rent. The land survey was arranged in the agency in 1792, the court of directors particularly ordered that 'this should be a more land survey, expressing the kind of land, without any reference to the value, which might raise jealousy and discontent' (Letters from Court of Directors to Madras, 1792). Many times the survey could not be completed because of the nature of the land and people. It took nearly a hundred years for the British to enter the areas with the help of the Muttadars. Though the surveyor made a preliminary visit in 1815, the actual survey of this difficult terrain began in 1820 and continued for 15 years. An assessment was made on the basis of old records, and revised periodically.

Thomas Munro's views on insurgencies

As a result of the survey in the tribal belts made by the Company government several agitations/disturbances took place. In 1822 Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras, examining the causes for agitations in the hill areas attributed much of it to the attempts of Government to enforce the rights of traders and other speculators who had lent money to the Zamindars and the proprietors on the security of their estates. His warnings were not observed by the Company. Later years in the name of containing the raids of tribals on villages in the plains, it started tightening its control over the hill areas. The extension of authority in the name of checking incursions can be seen as a deliberate and determined attempt of the British government in order to plunder the forest wealth. This enabled the plains trader to exploit the tribals under the cover of judiciary and official machinery.

The Permanent Settlement, 1802

The Madras Permanent Settlement, 1802 (Regulation No: XX1802) was promulgated to declare the proprietary rights of the lands to be vested in the individual persons and for defining the rights of such persons under a permanent assessment of revenue (Hemingway 1907: 164-165).

However, the hilly and thinly populated Agency areas were not brought under the permanent settlement for following reasons:

1. The revenues were not many
2. The lands were only cleared for temporary cultivation and abandoned after a year or two for fresh ones.

There are two important aspects to be noted here:

3. The plains Zamindars took refuge in the hilly areas, whenever a problem occurred to them.
4. They also took the help of hill chiefs to attack the Government whenever there were threats to their estates. The attacks on government were made with the vested interest of protecting

their own zamindaries. When the rights over their zamindaries were finally established in permanent settlement in 1802, the disturbances subsided.

Report of George Russell on Insurgencies, 1832

It was during this period that Russell, special commissioner was appointed to ascertain the causes of disturbances of 1832 in Vizagapatnam district and Parlakimidy Zamindari of Ganjam District (Dubey and Murdia 1977: 9-10). In this report he observed that the imperfect manner in which the authority of the company had been established in these hilly tracts, with no place, power or knowledge about the nature and geography, made it difficult for the government given the country.

He, therefore, said that a policy be adopted to suit the colonial interest both to add to the weight and influence of the local country and to remove as far as possible the existing causes of insurgencies on the part of the hills Zamindars arising from the unbending form of regulation procedure.

He further suggested that these areas now exempted from the jurisdiction of the ordinary country and be placed exclusively under the collector of the district in whom should be vested the entire administration of civil and criminal justice that rules for his guidance be prescribed by order in council. But government did not implement his recommendations.

Vizagapatam and Ganjam Agencies Act, 1839

Meanwhile disturbances again started in 1839. This necessitated state intervention more cautiously. In these circumstances the government accepted Russell's proposals which formed the basis of the Act XXIV of 1839, leading to the formation of Vizagapatam and Ganjam Agencies Act in 1839 (Vizagapatam and Ganjam Agencies Act, 1839). The important features of this act are follows:

- Accordingly, in 1839 a separate system of administration was established in the agencies.
- The administration of civil and criminal justice and collection of revenue shall, be vested in the collector of district and shall be exercised by him as 'Agent' for the state government concerned. The areas administered by Agents came to be known as 'Agency' areas since that enact of this act.

The Scheduled District Act of 1874

The rules for implementation of Ganjam and Vizagapatnam Agency Act of 1839 were framed only in 1860. Accordingly, in 1839 a separate system of administration was established in the agencies. But the procedures for separate treatment were not laid down. Therefore, Ganjam and Vizagapatnam Agency Act of 1839 became ineffective. This had led to a detailed review by the British government and the Scheduled District Act, 1874 was enacted (The Scheduled District Act, 1874). The Scheduled District Act of 1874 was a landmark in the administration of tribal areas as this act has laid down procedures for separate treatment for the areas notified under the provisions of the Act. Most of the areas notified were inhabited predominantly by aboriginal tribes as the other areas were deleted in 1864. Second important aspect was that this Act owes its origin from Ganjam

and Vizagapatnam Act, 1839. The third important aspect to be noted was that the Act itself comes into existence as a Government of India Act as a result of growing unrest in tribal areas of the country and the need for separately administering these areas. As such, even though exclusion of the area started as a measure for maintenance of law and order, it assumed protective aspects also.

Agency Tracts Interest and Land Transfer Act, 1917

By the time this Act was promulgated, a change in the attitude of British government towards Agency tracts can be seen clearly. While the mood of British government at the time of promulgation of Ganjam and Vigagapatnam Act, 1839 was only to exclude the areas for purposes of law and order, the Scheduled district Act, 1874 has an element of protection to the scheduled areas. In the Act-I of 1917, the anxiety of the Government to protect the economic interests of tribals and also on land was more pronounced because of increasing exploitation (The Agency Tracts Interest and Land Transfer Act. Act, 917).

The Government of India Act, 1919 (wholly excluded areas and areas of modified exclusion)

By Government of India Act, 1919, the areas were removed from purview of Legislatures but limits of exclusion deferred in their extent and degree. Thus arose two categories namely 'wholly excluded areas' and 'Areas of modified exclusion' (Dhebar Commission, 1962). The Godavari and Visakhapatnam Agency areas were declared as backward tracts and were included in the constituencies returning members to the provincial Legislature and also nominated members to represent the tribals.

The Government of India Act, 1935

On the recommendations of Simon Commission, government decided to declare the 'Backward Tracts' as Excluded and partially excluded areas. These recommendations of Government were embodied in the Sections 91 and 92 Government of India Act, 1935. These two sections provide for declarations, by an order in Council, of 'Excluded areas' and 'Partially excluded areas'.

I have briefly summarized origin of the Agency administration and its historical importance in the following table. This table helps us to understand the nature of colonial interventions in the hill regions of Andhra.

Origin and growth of the Agency administration (Andhra)

Origin of Agency Administration	Importance
First Visit of Court of Directors of East India Company-1792	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The land survey was arranged in the agency and expressed their interest of land survey.
The Permanent Settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Under this settlement the tribal areas were not come under this

,1802	settlement
First Land Survey,1820	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actual survey begun in the Agency and assessment was made on the basis of old records
Report of George Russels on Insurgencies-1832	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> George Russels suggested that the tribal areas should be exempted from the jurisdiction of the mainstream country and be placed exclusively under the collector of the district. H would be treated as Agent. But government did not implement his recommendations
Major disturbances in Gnajam and Godavari Region-1839	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This necessitated state intervention more cautiously.
Vizagapatam and Ganjam Agencies Act of 1839	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In these circumstances the government accepted Russell's proposals which formed the basis of the Act XXIV of 1839, leading to the formation of Vizagapatam and Ganjam Agencies Act in 1839. In 1839 a separate system of administration was established in the agencies. The areas administered by Agents came to be known as 'Agency' areas under the district collector. This Act was only to exclude the areas for purposes of law and order
The Scheduled District Act of 1874	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scheduled district Act, 1874 has an element of protection to the scheduled areas The important aspect to be noted was that the Act itself comes into existence as a Government of India Act as a result of growing unrest in tribal areas of the country and the need for separately administering these areas. It strengthened the Vizagapatam and Ganjam Agencies Act of 1839.
Agency Tracts Interest and Land Transfer Act of 1917	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the Act-I of 1917, the anxiety of the Government to protect the economic interests of tribals and also on land was more pronounced because of increasing exploitation.
The Government of India Act of 1919	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By Government of India Act, 1919, the areas were removed from purview of Legislatures but limits of exclusion deferred in their extent and degree. Thus arose two categories namely 'wholly excluded areas' and 'Areas of modified exclusion'. The Godavari and Visakhapatnam Agency areas were declared as backward tracts and were included in the constituencies returning members to the provincial Legislature and also nominated members to represent the tribals.
The Government of India Act of 1935	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the recommendations of Simon Commission, government decided to declare the "Backward Tracts" as Excluded and

	<p>Partially Excluded Areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These recommendations of Government were embodied in the Sections 91 and 92 Government of India Act, 1935. These two sections provide for declarations, by an order in Council, of “Excluded areas” and “Partially Excluded Areas”.
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Analysis of Muttadary System

In the Visakhaptnam agency, the Muttadari institution had its beginning in the Golugonda and Madugula areas (Mangamma 1984: 10). On the condition that they paid their revenue partly in cash and partly in kind to the Raja of Vijayanagaram, two cousins of the Raja of Jeypore (Orissa) were made Muttadars of the two villages. In the crucial battle of Padmanabham in 1794, the Raja of Vizayanagaram was killed and his lands came under British control. The Muttadar of Golugonda agreed to pay Rs. 10,000 as *peshcush* (tribute) to the East India Company and a *Sanad* (letter of permission) was granted to him in 1802. As this huge amount could not be realized year after year, the *mutta* fell into arrears and the British government purchased it for a nominal amount of Rs. 100 in 1837. In the *mutta* of Golugonda there were 60 villages excluding the hill area. A commoner was appointed to collect rent and the agency farmers refused to recognize him as the representative of the collector and thus began the confrontation.

In the Golugonda hills there were ten *muttas* were leased out to hereditary Mokhasdars. These are as follows: 1. Dutcherti (Rs. 1200), 2. Makavaram (Rs. 500), 3. Koyyur (Rs. 400), 4. Gudem (Rs. 857), 5. Dharmakonda (Rs. 857), 6. Antada Kottapalli (Rs. 130), 7. Guditur (Rs. 80), 8. Lotugadda (Rs. 30), 9. Chittempadu (Rs. 30), 10. Bandivalasa (Rs. 20), Dutcherti and Guditur *muttas* were transformed to Rampa Agency in the Godavarai district in 1881.

In Godavari Agency the institutions of Muttadars seems to have been created only the ‘Rampa Rebellion’ of 1879 (Report of the Abolition of the Muttadari and Malguzari Tenures in the Andhra Pradesh, 1970-71). Rampa continued for a long time as an independent Zamindari and no tribute was received either by the Nizam’s Government or the Company. During the permanent settlement of 1802-1803, Rampa was not considered for any settlement or assessment and the Zamindar was made to acknowledge the sovereignty of the company in 1813. The Zamindar was satisfied as the land and power were retained by him but he did not foresee that his successor generations would lose land, property, freedom and all.

No hereditary right to the office of Muttadar was recognized and on his death, registration, dismissal or removal the Agent was to personally investigate all claims and submit his report, whereupon the government selected the successor. The Muttadar was empowered to suspend any *munsif* for not more than twelve months and could even dismiss him but such a *munsif* could appeal to the Special Assistant Agent within three months. The Muttadar could not impose any fine on the *munsif*. The Muttadar was to assist the authorities in the upkeep of roads and travelers’ bungalows, and in keeping the principal forest paths cleared so as to enable the elephants to pass. He had to provide the necessary labour for carrying luggage and supplies. He had no right to the revenue from

duties, *akbari* or taxes on the sale of spirits and liquor or from market and fairs. The Muttadar was to maintain registers of births and deaths in villages.

In Agency areas lands were not surveyed and the farmers were to pay the same amount as they paid when the government took over. Same rate of rent prevailed for the newly occupied lands and the adjoining lands of the same class. The Muttadar did not improve the lands and farms finally turned into *Ryotwari* farms. Munro anticipated rebellions with petty armed chiefs, who may here after combine to disturb the public tranquility; and that the system is, on the whole detrimental to the country and dangerous to the government.

Removal of mansabdar and settlement with muttadar

By the time Scheduled District Act, 1874 was enacted, several discussions were going on in the British Government on the desirability of continuing the intermediary Zamindars in the tribal areas especially after the experience with Mansabdar of Rampa. The Government of Madras has sent M. E. Sullivan, 1st Member, Board of Revenue to enquire into the course of Rampa Rebellion and suggested some remedies. He gave his report in 1879, January, 1880, Government of Madras in which he not only analyzed the problem but also suggested for settlement of muttas directly in Agency Areas as most of these were usurped by the Mansadars resulting in conditions of unrest and loss of faith in the government (Judicial Department 1880). He mentioned three causes for discontentment among the tribals in hill areas.

1. The repeated acts of aggression and oppression on the part of Mansabdar dating from the time when under official authority the agreement of 1847-1848 was arranged between himself and the hill Muttadars.
2. The administrative error in having brought under the Rampa country under the operation of *Akbari* law.
3. The absence of proper supervision and control on the part of the European officers, in both the revenue and revenue departments.

M. E. Sullivan has further pointed out 'the support given to Mansabdar at the time of his restoration in 1848 was not proper since success of such an experiment was doubted even at the time of agreement as the hill chiefs were persuaded by the officers of government to agree to pay tribute to a man who they hated by an agreement that the hill chiefs and their populations will be protected by the Mansabdar on payment of rent. Simply because these tracts were wild and unproductive, it was thought an intermediary Zamindar was necessary to maintain an ascendancy over the semi-civilized tribes who inhabit these hill ranges.' Later on, the Agents were reporting not only on the incompetency of this Mansabdar but also about his mischief. But no action seems to have been taken by the Government. The observation made by Sullivan in this context was relevant even today because the positive intervention by Government at right time questioning the acts of omission by the Mansabdar (with reference to the agreement written before the hill chiefs and the British government representative) would have saved the situation. In the absence of such a watch by government, the Mansabdar with his astute advisers managed to usurp more and more muttas. The tribals started protesting from 1858 onwards but the appointment of Sullivan was made only after 20 years. The Mansabdari tenure was cancelled absolutely and forever, not only for the Mansabdar of

Rampa but also the Mokhsa tenure of the villages given to his forefathers in 1879 (Hemingway 1907). Another important observation made by him pertains to Akbari (Toddy) Act which should not have been made applicable to scheduled areas especially after Scheduled Districts Act of 1874 was brought into force. He has also explained how the plains merchants exploited the hill men especially in the purchase of tamarind.

The extortions by police were also enquired into by him and he explained how a *Musalman* head constable by name Shike Tanny who extorted a bribe of Rs. 60/- from tribals was beheaded by the rebels at the commencement of the rising. All these also speak that separation of these areas for special treatment remained only on paper.

The conditions of tenure of Muttas, *Mokhasa* and *Inam* differed as follows:

The muttadar had to pay a fixed rent called *kattubadi* which included *Chigurupnnu* (toddy tree tax) also. He was conferred with rights and privileges over the mutta and the villages falling in the mutta were also indicated in the same sanad (appointment orders). The Muttadari tenure was basically a service tenure and the muttadar had to conduct himself 'loyalty and peacefully affording every assistance to the Sircar in maintaining quiet and order by giving timely information of any disturbances or offence against the law and apprehending and delivering up to the authorities the robbers, rebels and other bad characters'.

If any muttadar failed to implement these conditions, the mutta was liable to be resumed. The mutta can be inherited by children of Muttadar at the pleasure of government. It can be allotted by government to anyone else also if Muttadar does not obey the agreement. A mutta cannot be transferred by the Muttadar and the mutta can be enjoyed only under the protection of the Circar.

M.E. Sullivan also mentioned that the government has not taken any action on the reports of Agents against the Mansabdar. No action was also initiated against Munsabdar by government for nearly 20 years even though tribals have been protesting all these years against misdeeds of Mansabdars. Sullivan's report also throws blame on British officers, police and excise officials who cooperated with the Manabdar in exploitation of the tribal chiefs. This only shows the ineffectiveness of Agents in administration of Scheduled Areas. On the recommendations of Sullivan, the Mansabdari tenure and Mokhasas were 'cancelled absolutely and forever'. The British entered into direct settlement with Muttadars and from then, the Muttadari system became part of administration of Scheduled areas.

The settlement with Muttadars was after the Rampa Rebellion was done in 1880. While the Muttadars had to pay fixed rent called Kattubadi which included tree tax the persons who cooperated with British by providing services to military sent to suppress the resistance movement were conferred with Mokhasas which are rent free favourable tenures. The settlement with Muttadars was also made by issuing Sanad (appointment order) which included several conditions of service. Therefore, the mutta was held by them on service tenure.

In case of muttas of Visakhaptnam district settled in 1918, the muttas were given as 'service tenures' without right over forests. They were not heritable and only enjoyable under the pleasure of British. The Muttadars have to provide so many services as per agreement, that it was impossible to perform them without exploiting their relatives and fellow tribes' men. To pay the rents and provide services with meager income from backward tribal tracts was a very difficult task. Some of them lost tenures due to default

in payments of rents and some other lost muttas or got punishments for not adhering to the conditions in the sanad issued at the time of settlement.

Some of the Muttadars in Golugonda Agency were also put to lot of financial losses as they could not control traditional practice of shifting cultivation called *Podu*¹. In these circumstances it was not surprising if they had kept good cultivated lands with them and resorted to extraction of forced free labour or attached labour. Ultimately, the popular government of Andhra Pradesh has abolished Muttadari system in 1969 and the common complaints against them before abolition were that they kept good lands for them and resorted to free labour called *vetti*. What was surprising that the Indian anthropologists who were associated with two important committees (Aiyappan Committee, and Malayappan Committee) appointed by government of Madras and after independence also did not enquire into the circumstances under which Muttadars resorted to such a practice. However, Aiyappan committee was more sympathetic to Muttadars by declaring them that Muttadars were not sinners. If Muttadars were really usurpers, they would have been very rich like plains Zamindars, on the other, according to officials who worked in those days and now retired from service, the Muttadars were very poor people, being tribals, they were kind to tribal areas. After 1970, the government helped the non-tribal settlers more than the tribals as the tribals were anyhow enjoying the lands as per traditional recognition of their ownership. The difference was that the tribals now have a title recognized by government under a non-tribal concept of *patta* (certificate of right). The individual ownership on land made alienation of tribal land easier than when the land was owned by community.

When Muttadari system was abolished in 1969 by the Indian government, the Mukhasas were not covered by this regulation. Therefore, they continued till they were also abolished in 1989. A strange situation has arisen in 1969 when the traditional Muttadars who fought against British lost the muttas due to abolition and the persons who got Mokhasas for arranging supplies to British troops against tribals and loyal to British, continued the enjoyment of Mokhasa. The Mokhasadars being intelligent from the beginning, 'managed' to escape from Muttadari abolition Regulation Act of 1969 until 1989 which means they had two more decades of enjoyment of Mokhasa. Even though Mokhasa were abolished in 1989, it was informed that the officers to implement the Regulation were not appointed to complete formalities of abolition and conversion into Ryotwari system.

Conclusion

The following observation has been made from Hill Peoples perspective in the study of Muttadary system in Agency areas of Andhra. Firstly, since pre-colonial Andhra the Hindu kingdoms tried to encourage the plain people into Hill regions for collection of taxes and consolidation of their power. For achieving this they had adopted the tribal culture, symbols, festivals etc., and influence the tribal chiefs to accept the power of the

¹ The *Podu* cultivation essentially provides the bare requirement of tribals for survival rather than generating surplus and profit, nevertheless, it plays a vital role in the economy of certain tribal groups as it ensures food supply almost round the year. Over the ages it has become an inalienable part of their life and culture with a number of ceremonies built around it.

kings. Sometimes the kings used to gift to the tribal chiefs on the occasions of tribal festivals. In the process of assimilation the plain people became the part of the tribal society. The tribal chiefs and plain upper caste people hold the positions of Muttadars that they themselves recognized as the local rulers and exploited in a great extent. Though the tribal people consider them as their own community but they could not participate in the social formation process.

Secondly, the colonial records did not adequately appreciate the sincerity of tribals and loss incurred by them in the invasion by colonialism and migrants from plains. The British officers on the other hand took fancy in projecting including George Russel who was specially deputed to this aspect and rebellions had no first hand information. Their reports were based on 'make believe' stories under circulation in those areas and some circumstantial evidence found by military officers. Their reports only reflected general European tradition continued from days of explorers, travelers and voyagers of writing fantasies about native groups living beyond Europe. This approach continued here also, and reflected in treatment of tribals as 'peculiar' people.

The intervention of the British in the name of checking incursions can be seen as deliberate and determined attempts to establish control over Agency areas. At the same time the government never warned the Mansabdar against activities such as annexation of muttas and leasing the villages to non-tribals and imposition of additional taxes. This enabled traders from the plains to exploit the tribals under the cover of judicial and official machinery. This intrusion posed a grave danger to the self-sustaining subsistence lives of the tribals. The tribals, caught between different exploiters, finally resorted to Rampa rebellion in 1879.

The traders used advance money to tribal in return for specified quantity of tamarinds to be delivered at the end of the harvest. Traditionally land was not a saleable commodity to tribals. When the tribes fail to repay debts more fertile and accessible land passed into the hands of traders, who either retained the tribal as tenant or leased the land to migrants from the plains. Besides this, contractors exploited the forests by offering between Rs.1000 to 1500 woodcutting fees to Muttadars. One of the most profound consequences of the intrusion of the trader and moneylender into the forest was the alienation of land.

The entry of the trader-moneylender and contractor introduced a new system of land use and labour in the place of podu and the traditional economy. The commercial exploitation of the forests and the extension of settled agriculture were alien to the tribals, which made them as either poor tenants or labourers for the forest contractors. One can observe that over the period, on one side Manasabdar who created a general belief that all his acts, had the approval of the government including the collection of excess rents harassed the tribals had the approval of the government. Government peons and police too began extracted cash and in kind as they liked and traders from the plains obtained decrees in the country courts against the tribal debtors. On the other side, the Forest Department and contractors got access to the remote areas, alienated them from their traditional livelihood and converted them into hired forest labour.

Thirdly, interestingly an important point rose by scholars that the Muttadars were belonging to tribal community. In this case, the class division should have been existed based on the economic sharing among the Hill people. But they were failed to show the nature of stratification of the Hill community. Due to the communal ownership of land,

the tribal society by and large failed to generate any classes within. It does not mean that the tribal society is not divided into groups. In fact it is the ritual compulsion that stratified the tribal society into different groups. Since it is not the economic base that divided the tribal society, it remained almost classless society. Only the outsiders as representatives of state power right from the medieval times tried to form as separate political entity and showed tendencies towards class formation.

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A Note on ‘The “Kols” of Chota-Nagpore’ by E.T. Dalton

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‘The “Kols” of Chota-Nagpore’ by E.T. Dalton was originally published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XXXV, Part II, Supplementary Number, of 1866. This volume contains two papers, one entitled ‘The Ethnology of India’ by Mr Justice Campbell and the other entitled ‘The “Kols” of Chota-Nagpore’ by E.T. Dalton, Commissioner of Chotanagpur. It was later republished by the *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* in the *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, Vol. 6 (1868), 1-41. This source has been used for this presentation.

Dalton, along with Justice Campbell, H.H. Risley, Rev. Hoffman and P.O. Boddington, initiated and developed ethnographic studies in Chotanagpur which was taken up further by trained ethnographers like S.C. Roy and D.N. Majumdar. Justice Campbell in the above said volume gave precedence to physiological factors over linguistic ones in the understanding of the Indian people and introduced the ‘Kols’ as a distinct racial group of aboriginals in the ethnological map of India. Dalton also sought to understand the distinctions within the heterogeneous population of Chotanagpur on the basis of language and physical characteristics. However, he gave more emphasis to the former. Differences in ‘linguistic characteristics’ and ‘physical peculiarities’ made Dalton to reach the conclusion that the Mundas and Oraons were not of a common stock or of a common origin. In Dalton’s above account the ‘non-Aryan tribes’ of Chotanagpur, including the Oraon, Moondah, Kheriahs, Sonthals, Bhoomij, Hos, Juangos, Khund etc., were collectively referred to as the ‘Kols of Chotanagpur’.

Dalton was an administrator posted in Chotanagpur for more than two decades. He was a popular officer who had the benefit of first-hand knowledge of the people gathered in the course of his long tenure of over twenty years as Commissioner in Chotanagpur. He was primarily a man of the field; his articles were therefore often personal accounts based on his travels. His experiences in administration and his interactions with the people, rather than claims to scientificity, were his forte. While Dalton’s ethnography i.e. the description of the tribes, was quoted by colonial administrators, missionaries and

anthropologists, his ethnological classifications of the tribes of Chotanagpur formed part of the Census Report of 1872.

We present here, for the benefit of the readers, the whole text in the original of 'The "Kols" of Chota-Nagpore' by E.T. Dalton. This forms the first text in the series captioned 'Pages from the Old Records'.

TRANSACTIONS
OF THE
ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

I.—*The “Kols” of Chota-Nagpore.* By Lieut-Col. E. T. DALTON, Commissioner of Chota-Nagpore.

[Read January 8th, 1867.]

THE country called Chota (or properly Chuttia) Nagpore* is the eastern portion of the extensive plateau of Central India, on which are the sources of the Koel, the Soobunreka, the Damoodah, and other less known Indian rivers. It extends into Sirgoojah, and forms what is called the Oopur Ghat or highland of Juspore, and it is connected by a continuous chain of hills with the Vindhyan and Kymore ranges, from which flow affluents of the Ganges, and with the highlands of Omerkuntuck, on which are the sources of the Nurbudda. That the population of this watershed is found to be, for the most part, a heterogeneous collection of non-Aryan tribes, is in itself a fair proof that these tribes were at one time the inhabitants of the plains who, driven from their original sites at different periods by Braminical invaders, gradually fell back, following converging lines of rivers in their retreat, till, from different directions, nations, some bearing marks of common origin though separated for ages, others bearing no trace of such affinity, met at the sources of the streams, and formed new nationalities in the secure asylum they found there.

The plateau averages more than 2,000 feet above the sea level; it is on all sides somewhat difficult of access, and it is owing to the security thus given, that the primitive tribes, still found on it, retained for ages so much of their independence and idiosyncrasy. After overcoming the difficulties of the approach, these first settlers must have rejoiced at finding they had not merely reached the summit of a range of hills, but had ascended to a new country, well suited to their wants,

* *I.e.* Little Nagpore.—EDITOR.

and out of reach of their enemies; and here they made their final stand.

They found a genial climate at this elevation, and a well-wooded undulating country, divided and diversified by interior ranges of hills, uplifting the fertilising streams, or breaking out in rocky excrescences, sometimes in vast semi-globular masses of granite, like sunken domes of gigantic temples, sometimes in huge fragments piled in most fantastic forms, viewed with awe by the new settlers as the dwelling-places of the local gods.

The total area of the plateau thus occupied is about 7,000 square miles, and the present population may be estimated at a million; more than half of whom are of the race best known to us by the name of "Kol."

This word is one of the epithets of abuse applied by the Braminical races to the aborigines of the country who opposed their early settlement, and it has adhered to the primitive inhabitants of Chota-Nagpore for ages. It includes many tribes: the people of this province to whom it is generally applied, are either Moondah or Oraon; and though these races are now found in many parts of the country occupying the same villages, cultivating the same fields, celebrating together the same festivals, and enjoying the same amusements, they are of totally distinct origin and cannot intermarry without loss of caste.

The received tradition is, that the Moondahs first occupied the country, and had been long settled there, when the Oraons made their appearance. The Moondahs believe themselves to be autochthonous, or at all events declare that they are all descended from one man and woman, who were produced or established themselves, at a place called Satyomba, which is revered by the whole tribe as the cradle of the race.

Satyomba is the name of a *pergunnah** on the edge of the plateau overlooking the valley of the Damoodah. It is not improbable that the Moondah race had previously occupied a position on that river, and that, in departing from it, the division took place which separated them from their brethren the Sonthals. The Sonthals, unquestionably a branch of the same people, have to this day a veneration for the Damoodah, and call it their *sea*; and the ashes of their dead are always preserved till they have the opportunity of disposing of them by throwing them into that stream or burying them near its banks. The Sonthals, remaining in the plains, had easy access to the river and retained their veneration for it. The Moondahs, settling on the highlands, were less faithful to it, but

* Correctly, *pargana*, a district or province.—EDITOR.

from its name they might claim it as their own ; for, though Damoodur has been adopted as one of the sacred names of “Krishno,” does not Dah-Moondah in their own language mean “the water of the Moondah”?

We find the Moondah settlements chiefly in the eastern and southern parts of Chota-Nagpore, the Oraons predominating in the western ; and this strengthens the hypothesis that the Moondahs ascended from the eastern side of the plateau.

The intimate connection between the Sonthals, the Bhoomij, and the Chota-Nagpore Moondah tribes, has long been known. I have pointed out their affinity with the Korewahs of Sirgoojah and Juspoor, and have given some account of that wild clan.* I have now to add to the list the Kheriahs, another aboriginal tribe settled on the plateau of Chota-Nagpore, and the Juangas of the Cuttack tributary mehals,† whose women are so conservative in their notions, that they still adhere to the fashion in dress first introduced by mother Eve, and wear nothing but leaves. I had often met with individuals and families of the Kheriah tribe, living in mixed communities, but from contact with other races they had lost much of their individuality, and I found it difficult to place them.

This year I happened to come upon some of their principal settlements in pergunnah Bussiah, on the southern borders of the portion of the plateau occupied by the Moondahs, and collected round me the elders of the tribe. These settlements all lie near the Koel, one of the streams from the watershed of Chota-Nagpore, which, after its union with the Sunkh in Gangpore, becomes the Bramni and terminates its career at Point Palmyras.

The Kheriahs venerate the Koel as the Sonthals the Damoodah. They were in all probability once settled on its banks in the lowlands, and clinging to it in their retreat and adopting the place of refuge that it led to, regard it still as communicating with their fatherland, and with this idea the urns containing the ashes of their dead are dashed into a rock-broken rapid of the river, so that their contents may be rapidly borne away by the current to mingle with the ashes of their forefathers.

They say their first settlement was Pora, a village on the Koel, and that there were no Moondahs in the country, at least in that part of it, when their ancestors first came there. There is sufficient resemblance between the Kheriahs and Moondahs in language and customs and appearance, to make

* Asiatic Soc. Journal, vol. xxxiv, p. 1.

† Correctly, *mahal*, from the Arabic, a department.—EDITOR.

us certain of their consanguinity, and at the same time sufficient divergence to lead to the inference that the relationship is a remote one, and that the two branches of the family had been long separated when they met again on the banks of the Koel. These points of resemblance and divergence I will describe, when treating of the manners and customs of the race generally.

The Juangas or Puttoons (leaf-clad) are noticed in a paper by Mr. E. A. Samuells.* They are found in the Cuttack tributary mehuls of Keonjur, Pal Lehra, Dhekenal, and Hindole. They are thus isolated from all other branches of the Moondah family, and have not themselves the least notion of their connection with them; but their language, a specimen of which is given in the table appended, shews they are of the same race, and that their nearest kinsmen are the Kheriahs, a fragment of the tribe left behind when the remainder ascended the valley of the Koel. The Hos of Singbhoom have a tradition that they once wore leaves only, and not long ago threatened to revert to them, unless cloth-sellers lowered their prices!

The Bhoomij form the majority of the population in all the estates of the Manbhoom district to the south of the Kassae river. As they approach the confines of Chota-Nagpore, they appear to be called indiscriminately Moondahs or Bhoomij, and they intermarry. More in the east the Bhoomij have become Hindooised, or rather Bengaleeised, to a great extent, and many of them have acquired considerable estates, like the Mankees of Chota-Nagpore, and positions of influence as "Sirdar Ghatwalls," the hereditary custodians of the passes.

The characteristics of the tribe that they most tenaciously cling to, are the national dances and songs. The Bhoomij appear to have been the first to colonise the large pergunnah called Dhulbhoom or Ghatsillah, attached to the Singbhoom district. The Rajah or Zemindar is, in all probability, himself a Bhoomij by race, though (without thereby improving his pedigree, so far as I can see) he endeavours to conceal his extraction under one of those hazy traditions that Brahmins always have ready for families in want of them. His ancestor, according to their version, was a washerman, a Dhoby who saved the goddess Kali,† when, as Runkini, she ran away from Pochete. Discredit has attached to the Bhoomij and Sonthal in consequence of the human sacrifices offered at this shrine of

* Asiatic Soc. Journal, vol. xxv, p. 295, 1856.

† Kali or Durga, spouse of Siwa, "the destroyer" of the Tendu Triad.—
EDITOR.

Runkini, but the whole establishment and ritual are essentially Braminical. The Bhoomij and Sonthal races personally do not much care for the bloodthirsty goddess. The Bhoomij is the branch of the Moondah race that has spread farthest in an eastern direction. Bhoomij are to be found in Mohurbhunj and Keonjur, though perhaps not so much at home there as in Dhulbhoom.

The Sonthals are now chiefly massed in the Sonthal Pergunnahs, but they muster strong in Mohurbhunj, and there are several colonies of them in the Singbhoom district. They are an erratic race, and their ancient traditions are lost in the history of their modern migrations; but my idea is that their chief settlements in Bengal were once on the Damoodah river, and that they gave way to the Koormees, an industrious Hindoo race, who now form the bulk of the population in that part of Manbhoom.

In a southerly direction the next tribe of "Dasyus" that we come across are the Khunds, but I am unable to trace any point of resemblance between them and the Moondah, either in their religion, with its morbid superstitions and horrible human sacrifices, or in their language.

To trace the further ramifications of the Moondahs, we must proceed west, not south, and take up the link in the hills and highest table-lands of Sirgoojah and Juspore, where we find the wildest of the race in the Korewahs. I have given a brief note on them in the paper above quoted, and have only to add that the Korewahs are quite unaware of the connectionship between themselves and the Kols. They do not acknowledge, and do not see, that the languages are almost identical. This would not, I conceive, have been the case if the Korewahs had broken off from their Satyomba kinsfolk.

The Korewahs are another branch of the family, and the history of their migrations is no doubt an independent one. It is probable that they were forced back into the hills they now occupy by the Gooands, as a Hindooised clan of that people became the dominant race in the plains of Sirgoojah. Moreover, as pointed out by Mr. G. Campbell, at a late meeting of the Asiatic Society, we have in its *Journal** a brief notice of a tribe called "Coour Gooand," and a vocabulary which proves them to be not Gooand at all, but another branch of the great family we are describing, occupying the Gavilghur range of hills near Ellichpore. Dr. Latham mentions in connection with them another tribe which he calls Chunah, but I have no further information about them. If the investigation be carried out, we

* *Asiatic Soc. Journal*, vol. xiii, p. 19.

shall, no doubt, find connecting links in the intervening ranges of hills.

Thus we have in the Coours of Ellichpoor, the Korewahs of Sirgoojah and Juspore, the Moondahs and the Kheriahs of Chota-Nagpore, the Hos of Singbhoom, the Bhoomij of Manbhoom and Dhulbhoom, and the Sonthals of Manbhoom, Singbhoom, Cuttack, tributary mehals, Hazareebagh, and the Sonthal Pergunnahs (the author of the introduction to the Sonthal language, the Rev. J. Phillips, adds "Nākāles and Kodas," I do not know where they are to be found), a kindred people sufficiently numerous, if united, to form a nation of several millions of souls. They were, in all probability, one of the tribes that were most persistent in their hostility to the Aryan invaders, and thus earned for themselves the epithets of "worshippers of mad gods," "haters of Brahmins," "ferocious lookers," "inhuman," "flesh-eaters," "devourers of life," "possessed of magical powers," "changing their shape at will."* To this day, the Aryans settled in Chota-Nagpore and Singbhoom firmly believe that the Moondahs have powers as wizards and witches, and can transform themselves into tigers and other beasts of prey, with the view of devouring their enemies, and that they can witch away the lives of man and beast. It is to the wildest and most savage of the tribe that such powers are generally ascribed; and amongst the Kols themselves the belief in the magic powers of their brethren is so strong, that I have heard converts to Christianity assert they were first induced to turn to our religion, because sorcery had apparently no power over those who were baptised! The upper classes of the Moondahs, those who aspire to be Zemindars,† have assumed the "*poita*" and taken to Brahmins and Kali, but the mass of the people adore their "mad gods" still, after their own primitive fashion. The great propitiatory sacrifices to the local deities or devils are carousals at which they eat, drink, sing, dance, and make love; but though the austere "*munis*" of old must have stood aghast at such wild ebullitions of devotion, it is a fact that, whilst the mass of the Kols have not taken to the worship of any Hindoo idols, the Hindoos settled in the province think it expedient to propitiate the gods of the Kols. It is gratifying that the darkness in which this primitive and interesting people have so long dwelt, is now being dispelled by a brighter light; that their paganism is at length yielding to the gentle influence of Christian teaching; that there is abroad amongst them a widespread feeling that a change is necessary,

* See Muir's Sanskrit texts.

† Correctly, *Zamindar*, a landholder, from the Persian.—EDITOR.

a change more perfect than can be typified by the adoption of a "*poita*."*

As the Moondahs first settled at Satyomba spread over the country, they formed themselves into communities called Purhas, or the country was divided into Purhas, each consisting of twelve or more villages under a chief. They do not appear in their earlier days to have acknowledged any chief, superior to the head of the Purha; the ordinary business of the community was conducted by him, and on extraordinary occasions, the Purha chiefs met and took counsel together.

Vestiges of this ancient system are still met with in many parts of the country. Though ignored as geographical or fiscal or territorial divisions, the Purhas still exist in the eyes of the people, and they still have chiefs whom they call Rajahs, men of influence and weight, who preside when a meeting is called to adjudicate regarding breaches of social observances, and who take the lead on the great hunting expeditions and national festivals.

It is said that the Moondahs were in a very wild state, occupying but a small portion of the plateau, when the Oraons, driven from the Rhotas hills, swarmed into the country, and sought and obtained permission to occupy it jointly with the Moondahs. Both Moondahs and Oraons declare there was on this occasion no fighting. The former were glad to obtain assistance in reclaiming the country they had adopted, and the Oraons are said to have come with large herds of cattle and implements of husbandry previously unknown to the Moondahs.

It is probable that the Moondahs of those days were not more advanced than are to this day their brethren, the hill Korewahs of Sirgoojah, a tribe that know not the use of the plough: but they were great hunters, and could sing and dance and make merry. The Oraon youths and maidens speedily acquired the songs and the steps, and this I doubt not aided greatly the harmonious blending of the two peoples.

There are no ancient temples or other antiquities on the plateau of Chota-Nagpore to indicate that the early Braminical races or Buddhists ever obtained a footing there; there is no tradition even of the "Munis"† having sought retreats amongst its rocks or by its waterfalls for their devotional exercises. We find such monuments in Sirgoojah to the very foot of the western face of the plateau; and, as I have recently described in a paper devoted to the antiquities of Manbhoom, we find

* Correctly, *paita*, a patch of level ground in a hilly country.—EDITOR.

† Muni, a Hindu saint.—EDITOR.

numerous remains of Ayran colonisation close to its southern and eastern approaches, but none on the plateau itself. Left to themselves, the Kols increased and multiplied, and lived a happy arcadian sort of life under their republican form of government for many centuries; but it is said that a wily Brahmin at last obtained a footing amongst them, and an important change in the form of government was the result.

The Rajah of the Purha of which Satyomba was the head quarters, was a Moondah named Madura. His occupation of the supposed cradle of the race gave him precedence in the confederate councils; and a child of his house, reared in it if not born there, was, through his influence and by the advice of a Brahmin he had taken into his service, elected supreme chief over the whole confederacy; but as it would not suit the noble family, his descendants, to have it supposed that their ancestor was one of the despised race called Kol, they have adopted the following legend as their origin:—

“When Jonmajoya, Rajah of Hustinapoor, attempted the destruction of the Nags or Serpent race, one of them, Poon-dorik, assumed the form of a Brahmin and went to the house of a Brahmin at Benares to study the ‘shasters.’ The Benares Brahmin, pleased with the intelligence and grace of his pupil, gave him his only daughter ‘Parbuttee’ to be his wife. Poon-dorik and his wife, Parbuttee, together visited Juggernath, and on their return, passing through this country, then called ‘Jharkhund,’ the forest land, she was seized with the pains of labour near Satyomba, and gave birth to a child and died.

“Madura’s Brahmin happening to pass, bearing an image of the sun worshipped by the Moondahs, saw the child sleeping and protected by a snake with expanded hood. The snake was Poondorik, relapsed into his original form. He addressed the Brahmin, told his own story and the story of the child’s birth, declared that the babe was destined to be a great Rajah, and that his name was to be Funimatuk Roy, ‘the snake hood crowned,’ a worshipper of the sun, whose image the Brahmin bore, and the Brahmin was to be the family priest. The snake then vanished. The child was taken to Madura’s house, and adopted and brought up with his own son, a boy of much the same age. When Funimatuk Roy was twelve years of age, Madura convened the Purha chiefs, and it is said the neighbouring Rajahs, including the Rajah of Sirgoojah and the Dytya Rajah, and suggested that one of the two lads should be selected as the Rajah of Nagpore. The lads were subjected to an examination, when it was found that the snake boy had already acquired all the accomplishments necessary for his destined position, while the other was a mere rustic. It was then

(according to the annals of the Nagbunsee family) ruled, that Funimatuk Roy and his heirs for ever should be the Rajahs, and that the Moondah's child and his descendants should bear burdens ; and thus, all who claim to hold lands as descendants of the Moondahs and Oroans that first cleared them, are bound, when called on, to bear the burdens imposed on them by the Rajah and his assigns ! ”

It is frankly admitted in the annals I quote from, that a difficulty arose regarding Funimatuk's birth, when he sought in marriage the daughter of the Sikurbhoom (or Pochete) Rajah. The Sikurbhoom family priest was sent to examine the certificates of birth, and found none ; but Rajah Matuck Roy prayed for the intercession of his *ophidian* parent. He had calmly contemplated his position, and put it to his father, that if the Sikurbhoom priest was not satisfied, a Moondah or an Oroan girl should become Queen of Nagpore. This was not to be thought of. So the nag once more entered an appearance, satisfied the Brahmin by a relation of wonders, and since then the Nagbunsis have always intermarried with the best Rajpoot families. It is particularly noted that at Funimatuk Roy's wedding-feast the Oroans and Moondahs all got drunk and began to fight, and the Rajah of Nagpore and Madurah had to obtain the assistance of his guests, the Rajah of Sirgoojah and the Dytya Rajah to separate them. The Dytya Rajah was, I presume, the Rajah of Patkoom, as that family bear the surname of Adytya to this day.

The marriage was celebrated at Satyomba, and there the first Rajah resided in a mud fort. The fourth in descent from Funimatuk moved his court to Chuttia, where we have the remains of a fort with masonry walls, and some stone temples ascribed to him. Subsequently Doisa was chosen as the seat of government, and here are some fine buildings, showing that the family were improving in art and in civilisation when they moved there. This site also has been abandoned, and the present Rajah lives in a very mean house at Palkote.

The sway of the Rajah of Chota-Nagpore does not, in early times, appear to have extended beyond the plateau or fringe of hills which divide it from the plains ; but the Moondahs overran those limits and formed colonies in what are now called the five pergunnahs—Silli, Tamar, Barundah, Rabey, and Boondoo—which did not acknowledge the Rajah-elect of Satyomba. In time, each of these pergunnahs elected a Rajah of its own, who (their descendants declare) were each of a divine or miraculous birth, like Funimatuk Roy ; and on the strength of it they all call themselves Chuttreys, and wear the cord. They intermarry amongst themselves, or with the petty Rajahs of Man-

bhoom, who are of similar origin ; so their claim to be Chuttrees, or, at all events, Hindoos of respectable caste, is not disputed. According to their own tradition, the Rajahs of the five pergunnahs first forfeited their independence by submitting to pay tribute to the Rajah of Cuttack. Eventually, however, they were subjugated by the Maharajah of Chota-Nagpore, and submitted to pay tribute to and accept the "Tilluck" or symbol of investiture from him. The Moondahs comprise about two-thirds of the population of the five pergunnahs, and all who are not Moondahs are settlers of no very ancient date.

In the northern and western parts of Chota-Nagpore, the authority of the old Moondah or Oraon chiefs has been almost effaced by the middlemen who have been introduced by the Zemindars, as more profitable farmers, or by the Brahmins, Rajpoots, and others to whom, for religious or secular services, grants have been made by the Maharajah and members of his family holding under him. In many instances the Kols have been entirely dispossessed of the lands their ancestors brought under cultivation, and ryots from other parts of India, more subservient to the wishes of the farmers, have been introduced. In some villages the peasant proprietary right of the aborigines has been entirely extinguished, and the few of that class that remain are found in the position of farm labourers.

In the southern parts of Chota-Nagpore, the Moondah chiefs, there as in Singbhoom called Mankees, have managed to retain their position, first, by resisting in open arms all attempts to encroach upon it, and lastly, by a settlement suggested and brought about by the officers of the British Government, and concluded with the Maharajah shortly after the Kol disturbances in A.D. 1833.

These Mankees have each under them about as many villages as formerly were included in a "Purha," and they pay a quit rent to the Maharajah as a commutation of the service and tribute in kind formerly paid to him as lord paramount ; and they collect this and a little more, as the contribution for their own support, from the heads of villages, who again collect according to ancient custom at fixed rates from the villagers. There is fixity of tenure throughout, from the Maharajah to the cultivator, notwithstanding the intervention of the Mankee, the village Moondah, or Mohto. This is no doubt a living exemplification of the relation that, in older times, subsisted between the cultivator of the soil and his chief in most parts of India.

In the Hoor Lurka Kols of Singbhoom we have a people who, till recently, had no notion of what it was to pay rent to any one, or even to give pecuniary support to their chiefs. They had their Mankees and Moondahs ; but no one exercised any

right arising from a title in the land except the cultivators. We have a very interesting description of the Hos, their country, and their languages, by Colonel Tickell,* and to this, before proceeding further with my memoir, I will add a brief sketch of their history.

The Singbhoom district is of a singular interest to the ethnologist. That portion of it called the Colehan, the Ho-desum or country proper of the Hos, is a series of fair and fertile plains, broken, divided, and surrounded by hills; about sixty miles in length from north to south, and from thirty-five to sixty in breadth from east to west. It has to the south and south-east the tributary estates, Mohurbun, Keonjur, Bonai, and Gangpore, inhabited by Ooriah-speaking Hindoos, to the east and north the Bengalee pergunnah of Dhulbhoom and district of Manbhoom, and north and north-east the Hindee district of Lohardaggah, and it is occupied by a race totally distinct by descent, custom, religion, and language from any of the three. A people on whose smiling country covetous eyes have often been directed, but into which no one ever attempted with impunity to intrude.

It is impossible to say when the Hos first entered Singbhoom; but as we find that the Chota-Nagpore Moondahs more and more assimilate to the Hos, as we approach Singbhoom from Chota-Nagpore, we may safely infer that the Hos came originally from that country; and this is their own tradition. They appear to have brought with them and retained their system of confederate government by Purhas; but in Singbhoom the word now used to express it, is Pirhi or Peer. Thus the Colehan is divided into Pirhis, each under a Mankee as chief of the Pirhi, and each village having its Moondah or headman.

According to their own tradition, the Hos displaced a nation of Jain† settled in the eastern parts of Singbhoom, some remains of whom are still extant, and a nation of Bhuyahs from the western and southern parts, driving them out of, and appropriating to their own exclusive use, the richest part of the country. From these early times, probably more than two thousand years ago, they have proudly held the country they acquired; and, in my humble opinion, they have the right to say they never submitted to rulers of an alien race, till they were forced to do so by the power of the British Empire.

At the commencement of the present century, Singbhoom

* Asiatic Soc. Journal, vol. ix, pp. 783, 997, 1063.

† The name of a Hindu religious sect, whose doctrines much resemble those of the Buddhists, who themselves no longer exist in Hindustan.—EDITOR.

was only known to the British Government as a country under the rule of certain Rajpoot chiefs, all of one family, whose independence, when we first occupied the Orissa Provinces, Lord Wellesley promised to respect. After the final cession of all the surrounding districts in 1819, these chiefs, occupying a territory that embraces the Colehan, voluntarily submitted to the British Government, and immediately sought the assistance of that Government in reducing the "Hos" to submission, asserting that the Hos were their subjects then in rebellion; but they admitted that for fifty years they had exercised no authority over them, and I find no proof that the Hos had at any former period ever submitted to them. It is not pretended that they were conquered; but supremacy was claimed by the Rajpoot Rajahs over the Ho tribes next to them, thus dividing the country and the people amongst four Rajpoot chiefs, the Rajahs of Mohurbhunj and Perahat, Koer of Seraikilla, and Thakoor of Khursowan.

It is true that the chiefs of Singbhoom, ancestors of the Rajahs of Porahut, Seraikilla and Thakoor of Khursowan, obtained great influence over their wild neighbours. They were gradually induced to believe tales which gave to the founder of this family a miraculous birth in their country, and they accorded to him divine honours, whilst they repudiated the idea of his being their temporal chief. The oldest surviving member of the Porahat family tells me that no regular tribute was ever received from the Colehan; but they were treated and employed rather as friendly allies than as subjects, and at certain seasons presents of trifling value were received from them, and presents given in return.

When a division of the estate of a Singbhoom chief occurred, the brothers each took, with the share assigned to him, a share in the goodwill of the Hos. Thus the Seraikilla and Khursowan families claimed the allegiance of the tribes nearest to them. The claim of the Mohurbhunj Rajah sprang up as the Kols extended their cultivation, till it touched or ran over his boundary. But it is admitted that all recorded attempts of the Rajpoot chiefs to subdue them had been signally defeated.

On the last occasion, the great grandfather of the present Maharajah of Chota-Nagpore, at the head of twenty thousand of his own men co-operating with the forces of the Singbhoom Rajpoot chiefs, entered the Colehan. The Hos allowed him to do this; they then fell on his army in masses, and, routing it with immense slaughter, ignominiously expelled him, pursuing him into his own territory, and severely retaliating on the border villages of the Maharajah and his allies.

It was no doubt in retaliation for these attacks on their inde-

pendence that the Hos now became, as they were found to be when first brought to our notice (in 1819-20), the scourge of the inhabitants of the more civilised parts of Singbhoom and of all the surrounding districts. They shewed no mercy to the Brahminical inhabitants of the villages which they attacked and pillaged. A long line of Brahmin villages on the Brahmin river in Gangpoor were laid waste by them, and have remained depopulated ever since. No traveller ever ventured to pass through their country. No Brahmin, Rajpoot, or other Hindoo caste, or Mussulman, was suffered to reside in it.

In 1820, the Agent Governor-General, Major Roughsedge, entered the Colehan at the head of a force consisting of a battalion of infantry, with cavalry and artillery. He was surprised to find the wild race, of whom he had heard such disparaging accounts, in possession of an open undulating and richly cultivated country, studded with villages in groves of magnificent tamarind and mango trees, abounding in unusual indications of rural wealth. He was allowed to enter on this scene unmolested; but the slaughter of some of his camp-followers, who had incautiously strayed into one of the villages, demonstrated the hostility of the people, and an attempt to capture the murderers brought about the first collision between the Hos and our troops. A party of cavalry, sent to the offending village, was met in the open field by three hundred warriors, who undauntedly advanced to meet the charge, rushed between the ranks of the horsemen, hacking especially at the horses with their formidable battle-axes, and showing no disposition to yield or to turn, till half their number had been sabred or shot. In the village where the murder was committed was found a reserve of sixty men, who fought desperately, and were all killed! The same evening another body of Lurkahs* attacked the rear of the column and cut off a convoy of supplies. It became necessary to act with vigour, and the old Hos of the present day describe the retaliation that now fell upon them as dreadfully severe. Eventually some intercepted mails were restored uninjured, as a token of submission, and the Lurka chiefs in the vicinity entered into engagements to acknowledge and pay tribute to the Rajah of Singbhoom.†

Major Roughsedge met with further opposition in his progress towards Sumbulpoor through the Southern Peers: he had in fact to fight his way out of the country; and on his leaving it a war broke out between the Kols who had submitted, and those who had not. One hundred Hindustanee

* "Laraka", the fighters, a common name for the Hos.

† Major Roughsedge's Despatches.

burkundazes, under a Soobadar, were sent by the Agent to the support of the Rajah and his Lurka allies, and this for a time gave them the advantage; but the Soobadar having been induced to enter the Colehan to assist in levying a contribution, was attacked, and he and the *whole of the party cut up!*

In 1821, a large force was employed to reduce the Lurkas to submission, and, after a month's hostilities, the leaders, encouraged by a proclamation, surrendered and entered into engagement, binding themselves to subjection to the British Government, and agreeing to pay to the chiefs at the rate of eight annas for each plough. It was now noticed that the Lurkas evinced a perfect willingness to be guided and ruled by British officers, and the utmost repugnance to the authority arrogated over them by the Singbhoom chiefs; and it would have saved much blood, expense, and trouble if this feeling had at the time been taken advantage of. Made over to the chiefs, they soon again became restive, and reverted to their old practices of resistance and pillage. The circle of depredations gradually increased, till it had included Dhulboom, devastated Bamunghatee, and extended to some parts of Chota-Nagpore. The chiefs under whom the Lurkas had been placed could not control them, and for some five years, from 1830 to 1836, the Hos maintained this hostile attitude.

In consequence of this unsatisfactory state of affairs, a proposal made by Captain Wilkinson in August, 1836, to employ a force and thoroughly subdue the Lurkas, and then to take the whole tribe under the direct management of British officers, was favourably received by Government, and promptly acted on. Two regiments of infantry and two brigades of guns entered Singbhoom in November, 1836, and operations were immediately commenced against the refractory Peers; and by February following all the Mankees and Moondahs had submitted, and bound themselves by fresh engagements to obey and pay revenue to the British Government, and no longer to follow the orders of the chiefs to whom they had previously been required to submit. Six hundred and twenty-two villages, with a population estimated at ninety thousand souls, of whom more than three-fourths are Hos, were thus brought and have since remained under the immediate control of the British Government. Since then, the population and spread of cultivation have immensely increased, and the people are now peaceful, prosperous, and happy. From the region round about the station, Chybassah, one hundred and seventy miles due west from Calcutta, the waste lands have entirely disappeared. Colonies of Hindus may now be found settled in the heart of the Colehan, occupying villages apart from the Hos, but with-

out demur placing themselves under the Ho Mankees of Peers. For their own system of government is, as far as possible, preserved, and the Mankees are officers of police as well as the tuhsildars or rent-collectors of their circles. One great change is now being peaceably introduced, the old system of assessment on ploughs is under process of commutation to a light assessment on the land.

This is, undoubtedly, the nucleus of the Moondah nation, the most compact, the purest, most powerful, and most interesting division of the whole race, and in appearance decidedly the best looking. In their erect carriage and fine manly bearing, the Hos look like a people that have maintained and are proud of their independence. Many have features of sufficiently good caste to entitle them to rank as Aryans; high noses, large but well formed mouths, beautiful teeth, and the facial angle as good as in the Hindu races. The figures both of male and female, freely displayed by the extreme scantiness of the national costume, are often models of beauty; but this description applies only to the people of the highly cultivated part of the country who have seldom been subjected to severe privation, and who generally fare right well. The inhabitants of the imperfectly reclaimed hill forests are more savage-looking; but they seldom deteriorate to the almost simian physiognomy that the Oraons are found with under similar circumstances. When the face of the Moondah varies from the Aryan or Caucasian type, it appears to me rather to merge into the Mongolian than the Negro. High cheek-bones, small openings for the eyes, having in some rare instances a tendency to the peculiar oblique set of the Mongolian, and flattish faces without much beard or whisker. They are of average stature, and in colour vary from brown to tawny yellow.

II.—THE ORAONS.

The Oraons have a tradition that they were once settled in Guzerat. They were expelled from that part of India, and retreating east, made a stand at fort Kalinjur, where they fought the “Loorik Sowrik” of “Palipipri,” were defeated, and, retreating still east, settled on the Rhotas Hills. Here, they say, they remained unmolested till attacked and driven from the hills by the Mahomedans in the reign of the emperor Akbar; but as they aver this occurred fifty-two generations ago, there is an anachronism somewhere. I think they were settled in Chota-Nagpore centuries before the days of Akbar; but it is probable that some of the clan remained in the Rhotas hills until the Mahomedans constructed their fortress there.

The accounts of ancient Guzerat faintly confirm the Oraon

tradition. I find from Thornton's Gazetteer that there is a race settled there from remote antiquity who are called Coolies ; but there is nothing in the name, which, as I observed before, appears to have been applied very generally to the aborigines by the Aryans, and the account given of the Coolies does not lead me to suppose they are of the Oraon family. There is, however, a short description of what appears to be a remnant of a tribe, which would answer perfectly for the Oraons,—“ A small, active, well-built race, engaged to some extent in cultivation, but by choice deriving their subsistence, as far as possible, from the chase, fishing, or the collecting of wild fruits and the marketable produce of the jungles for sale. Their peculiar pursuits, little relished or shared in by the rest of the community, caused them to be viewed with dislike and dread, and the reputation of possessing great powers in sorcery subjects them to much cruel treatment.”

Every word of the above description applies to the Oraon tribe, and the name given to this remnant of a people, viz., “Dunjas,” is an Oraon word not unlike the term Dhangurh, so commonly applied to the Oraons in the countries to which they emigrate for work.

The names traditionally handed down amongst the Oraons, as Loorik Sowrik, allude probably to some tribe of Sravacks or Sowoks or Jains, and the Palipipri might refer to the Palithana mountains, the Jain temples on which are amongst the most interesting architectural works in India. The etymology of the word Oraon, I have not been able to trace satisfactorily, but it may have been applied to the tribe in consequence of their migratory habits. They call themselves “Khoonkir.”

Between the language of the Oraons and the language of the Moondahs and their cognates, I can trace no similarity either in pronunciation, formation, construction, or general character. With pretty copious vocabularies before me, I can find no analogues, and, whilst the language of the Moondahs is soft and sonorous, that of the Oraons is guttural and harsh. Dr. Latham, in his descriptive ethnology, has noticed the near connection of the Oraon, Rájmahal hill, and Tamul languages, and especially observes on the similarity of the personal pronouns.

<i>English.</i>	<i>Rajmahal.</i>	<i>Oraon.</i>	<i>Tamul, etc.</i>
I	En	En	Nam, En
Thou	Nin	Nin	Nin
He, she, it	Ath	As	Ata
We	Nim	Em	Nam
Ye	Nina	Nim	Nim
They	Awar	Ar	Awar

Out of a vocabulary of about twenty-four Oraon and Tamul words, I find the following analogues.

<i>English.</i>	<i>Tamul.</i>	<i>Tuda.</i>	<i>Oraon.</i>
Man	Al	Al	Al
Eye	Kam	Kan	Khan
Tooth	Pal	Paroh	Pulla

But I find in the language now spoken by the Oraons, words of Sanscrit origin not in common use, as "*pupl*," flower, "*amb*," water, "*kesh*," hair, indicative of their having occupied some country in common with people speaking a Sanscrit or Prakrit dialect.

Their physical peculiarities are as different from those of the Moondah as are their linguistic characteristics. The Oraons must be regarded as a very small race, not short and squat like some of the Indo-Chinese stock, but a well-proportioned small race. The young men and women have light graceful figures, and are as active as monkeys. Their complexions are, as a rule, of the darkest; but if we take as our type those who dwell in mixed communities, we find great variety in feature and colour. If we take those who, living in isolated positions, may be supposed to offer us the purest blood, we find them generally dark and ill-favoured. They have wide mouths, thick lips and projecting maxillary processes, nostrils wide apart, and no elevation of nose to speak of, and low though not in general very receding foreheads. I have seen amongst them heads that in the woolly crispness of the hair completed the similitude of the Oraons to the Negro. It may be said that the class I am describing have degenerated in feature from living a wilder and more savage life than others of their clan; but I do not find this degeneracy of feature amongst the Jushpore Korewahs, who are to the Moondahs of Chota-Nagpore what the Jushpore Oraons are to the Oraons of the same district.* I found the Korewahs mostly short of stature, but with well knit muscular frames, complexion brown not black, sharp bright deep set eyes, noses not deficient in prominency, somewhat high cheek bones, but without notable maxillary protuberances. In the more civilised parts of the province, both Oraons and Moondahs improve in appearance. The former indeed still retain their somewhat diminutive appearance, but in complexion they are fairer, in features softer, some even good looking, and the youthful amongst them all pleasing from their usual happy contented expression and imperturbable good humour.

Driven from the Rhotas hills, the Oraons, according to their own tradition, separated into two great divisions. One of

* Asiatic Society's Journal, vol. xxxiv, p. 15.

these, moving east, found a final resting place in the Rájmahal hills; the other, going south, sought refuge in the Palamow hills, and wandered from valley to valley in those ranges, till they found themselves in Burway, a hill-locked estate in Chota-Nagpore proper. From thence they occupied the highlands of Jushpore and formed the settlements in the vicinity of Lohardugga, on the Chota-Nagpore plateau, where they still constitute the bulk of the population. The Satyomba Moondahs had not effected settlements so far to the west.

The identity of the language spoken by the Rájmahal hill people (not the Sonthals) and that of the Oraons is full and sufficient confirmation of the tradition of their common origin, and of the division of the tribe spoken of above; but a comparison of the customs of the Rájmahal hill people, who being isolated must have retained those they brought with them to the hills, with the customs of the Oraons, demonstrates that the latter are derived from the Moondahs.

Referring to Col. Walter Sherwill's account of the Rájmahal hill people,* I find, in regard to marriage, that it is customary for the young couple to sleep together on the same bed before marriage. The Oraons would consider this a very indecorous proceeding, though a public recognition that the young couple have slept together after the marriage is with the Oraons an important sequel to the ceremony. In the Rájmahal hills, says Col. Sherwill, the dead are buried. The Rig Veda and Ramayan tell us that this was the custom of the Dusyas, but the Moondahs and their cognates all burn their dead, and the Oraons follow their example.

The Rájmahal hill men swear on salt, the Oraons have a veneration for salt, but swear on *dub* grass,† *huldee*, and rice. The Oraons know nothing of Bedo Gosain, the invisible spirit adored by the Rájmahalies. Their supreme deity is the sun, under the title of Dhurmo, but as that and the Rájmahalee term are both of Sanscrit origin, it evinces that neither race have in their own language any word for the Deity.

Lastly, the hill man is described as less cheerful than the Sonthal, less industrious, and as not joining in the dances that the people of the Moondah stock are so devoted to. In Chota-Nagpore the Oraons are more lively than the Moondahs, quite as industrious, and the most enthusiastic and nimble-footed of the dancers.

The two races, Moondah and Oraon, must have been for ages the only colonists of the plateau; it is singular that they have no tradition of any dispute having arisen between them.

* Asiatic Society's Journal, vol. xx, p. 544.

† *Agrostis linearis*.

Affecting jealousy to guard against admixture of the races by sexual intercourse, they in other respects lived as one people, the Oraon conforming more to the customs of the Moondah than the Moondahs to those of the Oraon, and in many instances adopting the Moondah language and losing their own.

In villages east of Ranchee, though inhabited wholly by Oraons, the Moondah, not Oraon, is the language spoken; but the Moondah language is not much known in the vicinity of Lohardaggah or in Jushpore.

The village systems of the two people became almost identical in form. The village priest, called the Pahan, is probably an Oraon institution, as, I think, amongst the Moondahs the principle is that the head of the family is priest; but the Moondahs of Chota-Nagpore adopted it, and in their villages, as well as in those of the Oraons, there is always a Pahan. The village system now existing is such as it became after many encroachments by the Rajah and the middlemen introduced by him. Still, as bearing the impress of a very primitive form of government, it is worth describing, and in doing so, I shall make use of a very elaborate report on the subject written by Doctor Davidson in 1839.

The actual descendants of the men who formed the villages are called Bhuinhurs. They are a privileged class, who hold their lands at low fixed rates or rent-free, but they are bound to do service to the chief or his representative. The head of the Bhuinhurs is called the Moondah, and is generally the representative of the old Moondah chief of the village. He presides when meetings are held to settle disputes about social customs; and all demands for service on the Bhuinhurs by the proprietor or farmer are made through him. He holds his lands as Bhuinhurree, and has no other emolument.

The Mahto, though second in point of rank, is the most important functionary in the village. He has the assessment and settlement of all lands not held by the hereditary cultivators; collects all dues and rents, and is responsible for them to the farmer or proprietor. He holds for his services one *powa* of land rent-free, and in some villages gets a fee of one or two pice annually from each ryot. The office is not hereditary.

The Pahan is the village priest. He is a Moondah or Oraon by caste, but all observances for propitiating the village gods or devils are performed by him. No Brahmins are permitted to interfere. The office of Pahan is generally hereditary, but is not necessarily so. The Pahan has under his charge the land called "Dalikhatari," and from the proceeds of this land he has to support himself and to provide the rice and rice-beer required for the great festivals.

The Bhandari assists in the collection of rents, summoning ryots who have to do work, or whose attendance is required by the Zemindar or farmer, and in looking after the collections made in kind. He has an allowance of one *powa* of land, and gets from each ryot one *kerai* or bundle of each crop as it is cut.

There is a Gorait for each village, and a Kotewar for one or more villages. The former is the messenger of the zemindar or his representative, the latter is the police officer.

The villagers maintain a blacksmith and a gowala or herd: the latter takes care of all the village cattle, and is supposed to be responsible if any are stolen. They each get a maund of dhan for every plough, and three *kerais*, bundles, of other crops.

According to the tradition of the Kols, the rajah is entitled to the rent of only half of the land in each village. The remainder is bhuinhurree, or rent-free under some other denomination, but in most villages rent is now taken on from two-thirds to three-fourths of the land. The land is thus divided:—

i. Rughus—the land that pays rent to the owner or his representative.

ii. Bhetketta, a certain portion of the rughus which each ryot, not a bhuinhur, is allowed to cultivate free of rent, but for which he has to perform various services to the landlord or farmer.

iii. The land allotted to the Mahto, the Pahan, and the Bhundari.

iv. Munghus—the land at the disposal of the landlord or his agent, or the farmer of the village. For the cultivation of this land, the holder of the village can make any arrangement that he pleases.

v. Bhuinhurree is the land held rent free by the descendants of the founder of the village, who are, however, bound to render certain services to the rajah or his representative.

vi. Bhootketta—the land, the produce of which is appropriated to the expense of the great village poojas and festivals; a portion of this called “*dalikhatari*” is assigned to the pahan for the ordinary annual poojas, and the proceeds of the remainder are reserved for the triennial sacrifices and extraordinary occasions.

The rent is assessed on the irrigated land only. The cultivator is entitled to upland in proportion to the wet land for which he pays. If he cultivates more, the custom is for a payment in kind, called *muswur*, to be made when the crop is harvested.

The Bhuinhurs cling most tenaciously to their bhuinhurree lands. Insurrections have followed attempts to disturb these

tenures, and even now such attempts are sure to lead to serious affrays. The Kol insurrection of 1833 was, without doubt, mainly caused by the encroachments of alien farmers and sub-proprietors on the rights of the descendants of the old settlers. The first burst of the outbreak was a pretty broad hint, a general conflagration of the houses of alien farmers and sub-proprietors, and the massacre of all that the incensed Kols could find.

The Kols of Chota-Nagpore, generally a good-tempered, mild, inoffensive race, become wild with excitement on this question, and nothing can reconcile them to a decree or order which in any way infringes on what they consider their proprietary right. According to their theory, dispossession for generations can no more annul their right in the land than it can extinguish the ties of blood. The courts will not always accept this doctrine, and the Kols cannot regard as equitable any decision that excludes it.

An Oraon family lives very promiscuously in a small, indifferently constructed and untidy looking hut, and their village often consists of a street or court of such huts. In all that relates to their inner domestic life, they are less susceptible of improvement than the other tribes. They have no gardens or orchards attached to individual houses, but the groves of fruit-trees that they plant outside the village form a beautiful feature in the scenery of Chota-Nagpore, and they have generally, in and about the village, some fine trees which are common property. In every Oraon village of old standing there is a house called the "doomcooreea" (bachelor's hall), in which all unmarried men and boys of the tribe are obliged to sleep. Any one absenting himself and spending the night elsewhere in the village is fined. In this building the flags, musical instruments, yaks' tails, dancing equipments, and other property used at the festivals are kept. They have a regular system of fagging in the doomcooreea. The small boys have to shampoo the limbs of their luxurious masters, and obey all orders of the elders, who also systematically bully them to make them, it is alleged, hardy. In some villages the unmarried girls have a house to themselves, an old woman being appointed as duenna to look after them. She is always armed with a stick to keep the boys off. A circular space in front of the doomcooreea is kept clear as the village dancing ground. It is generally sheltered by fine old trees, and seats are placed all round for spectators or tired dancers.

The doomcooreea is never used by boys of the Moondah tribe. It is an institution quite unknown to the Hos, but the Moondahs and Hos build themselves houses in which all the family

can be decently accommodated. Their houses are more isolated, occupy much more space and are in appearance much more civilised than those of the Oraons, with verandahs, well raised plinths and separate apartments for the married and single members of the family. Every Moondah village has its dancing place, though it has no doomcooreea. The best Korewah villages consist of about forty houses built round a large square, in the centre of which is the dancing arena; but as the Korewahs are nomads, changing their abodes every second or third year, their villages may be regarded as mere standing camps. The Kheriahs build substantial comfortable houses like the Hos. It is curious they have the same word "O" for a house and the sky. The Moondah word "ora" is, like the Turkoman "ova," a house or tent. The flags kept in the Oraon doomcooreea appear to be an Oraon institution. Every village or group of villages, probably the head quarters of each "parha," has its peculiar flag, and we have actually had cases in courts praying for injunction against villages charged with having assumed flags that did not belong to them!

I will now proceed to review the customs of the Moondahs and Oraons together, taking care to note all points of divergence that are known to me.

After the birth of a child, the mother has to undergo purification, and on the same day that this ceremony takes place, which is simply a process of ablution, the child is named. Elderly females or matrons, friends and relations, assemble for this purpose, and a vessel containing water is placed in the midst, and, as the name first selected is pronounced, one of the women drops a grain of rice into the water. If the grain of rice sinks, that name is discarded, and the experiment is repeated with the second name on the list, and so on till, as the name is pronounced, the grain floats. (The Garrows of the eastern frontier have a similar method for divining the name of the spirit they ought to invoke on particular occasions.) If the name of some friend is chosen, it is considered as establishing a tie between the child and his namesake, resembling that which subsists between a Christian child and his godfather. The person whose name is selected is always called Saki or Sakhi, a word of Sanscrit origin meaning friend, so that in "nam Saki" we have in meaning and sound our word namesake. The following are some names of girls, Jambi, Jima, Jingi, Turki, Sulgi,* Pongla, Madhi, Makoo, Roomeea Saggi, Dinli, Natri, Akli, Bangi, Julli, and the Hindoo names of the

* A common name, and also the name of a goddess; and the name, I see, of one of the young ladies from the Andaman islands.

days of the week are very commonly given. The following are the names of boys—Rumsi, Birsā, Somra, Daharoo, Singra, Satri, Dubroo, Doolko, Didoo, Runka, Biggoo. But they have adopted many foreign names, and the names of British officers they have known and esteemed are thus preserved amongst the Hos of Singbhoom, and may be handed down from generation to generation. Thus “Major” and “Captain” have become common names in the Colehan, originally taken from Major Roughsedge, the first British officer they ever saw, and Captain Wilkinson (now Colonel Wilkinson), whom they regarded as their greatest benefactor. Doctor, Tickell, &c., are also common. Girls, when three or four years of age, receive their mark of caste: three lines tattooed on the forehead and two on each temple, four dots on the chin and one on the nose. It does not appear to be connected with any religious custom, nor is it applied with any ceremony; and as neither the Moondahs nor the Oraons have any particular term for it in their own language, it is probable that they adopted it from the Sudhs or Hindoos. Some Moondah girls of Chota-Nagpore have different marks. Those of Singbhoom have adopted the arrow, appropriately enough, as the national weapon of their lords and masters.

The Kheriahs and Juangas, though isolated from the Moondahs and Oraons, have the same triple and double marks on the forehead and temples. The Oraon boys are marked, when children, on the arms by rather a severe process of puncturation, which they consider it manly to endure. The only reason I have heard assigned for this custom is, that through it even the naked dead may have a distinguishing mark.

When a girl approaches maturity, it is incumbent on her to bind up her hair, and from that period of her life she is restricted to food prepared by her own people. As a child with her hair loose, she is permitted to partake of whatever is edible, no matter by whom prepared. Young men enjoy this liberty of appetite till they marry. They then, to use their own expression, put salt in their flesh, and must not partake of food prepared by aliens. The Oraons have a veneration for salt, and they are not absolutely prohibited from partaking of plain rice cooked by others, provided they are left to salt it themselves. The salt, it would appear, thus applied, removes the “taboo,” and makes *fas* what is otherwise *nefas*.

As a rule, marriages are not contracted till both the bride and bridegroom are of mature age. It is sometimes left to the parents to select wives for their sons; but the young people have ample opportunities for studying each other's characters, love-making, and following the bent of their own inclinations;

and it very often happens that plans concocted by the parents are frustrated by the children.

In Chota-Nagpore, amongst the agricultural classes, and in Singbhoom amongst all classes of Kols, the girls have all a price fixed upon them, and this the lover or his friends must arrange to pay, before the parents of the bride will give their consent. In Singbhoom, the price is so high, especially for young ladies of good family, that marriage is frequently put off till late in life; and girls valued not so much for their charms and accomplishments as for their pedigree, often grow grey as maidens in the house of their fathers. Singbhoom is perhaps the only place in India in which old maids are found; they have plenty of them there. But though urged to change this practice by all who take an interest in them, the old Mankees of Singbhoom are inflexible, not only in demanding a high price for their girls, but in insisting that it shall be paid, according to ancient custom, chiefly in cattle. A Mankee of the old school will not take less than forty head of cattle for his daughter; but the eyes of the rising generation are opened to the absurdity of the practice, and some of us may live to see it changed.

In consequence of this custom, the grown-up boys and girls are quite a separate institution in every Kol village; there is very little restraint on their intercourse, they form a very pleasant society of their own, from which the old people sensibly keep aloof. If a flirtation is known to have gone too far, the matter is generally settled by the young man being made to pay the price for the girl and marry her.

In Chota-Nagpore the daughter of a Mankee was, some years ago, valued at about 36 Rs.; but they are gradually adopting the custom of the Hindoos in regard to their marriages, and giving up the objectionable practice of putting a price on them. The price paid by the common people ranges from 10 to 12 rupees. These disagreeable preliminaries having been arranged, the bridegroom and a large party of his friends of both sexes enter with much singing and dancing and sham fighting in the village of the bride, where they meet the bride's party and are hospitably entertained.

The bride and bridegroom are now well anointed with turmeric, and bathed, and then taken and wedded, not to each other, but to two trees! The bride to a mowa tree, the bridegroom to a mango. They are made to touch the tree with "*seendoor*," (red lead), and then to clasp it in their arms. On returning, they are placed standing face to face, the girl on a curry stone over a ploughshare supported on sheaves of corn or grass. The bridegroom stands ungallantly treading on his

bride's toes, and in this position touches her forehead with the red lead ; she touches his forehead in the same manner. The bridesmaids then, after some preliminary splashing and sprinkling, pour a jar of water over the head of each : this necessitates a change of raiment, and apparently concludes the ceremony, as the young couple going inside to change, do not appear again till the cock-crowing announces the dawn or its approach. At the first crow the bridesmaids, who with the young men have been merrily keeping it up all night with the song and dance, burst into the nuptial chamber and bring forth the blushing bride and her bashful lord ; and then they all go down to the river or to a tank to bathe, and parties of boys and girls form sides under the leadership of the bride and bridegroom, and pelt each other with clods of earth. The bridegroom next takes a water vessel and conceals it in the stream or water for the bride to find. She then conceals it from him, and when he has found it, she takes it up filled with water and places it on her head. She lifts her arm to support the pitcher, and the bridegroom, standing behind her with his bow strung, and the hand that grasps it lightly resting on her shoulder, discharges an arrow from the pretty loophole thus formed into the path before her. The girl walks on to where the arrow falls, and with head erect and still bearing the pitcher of water, she picks it up with her foot, takes it into her hand, and restores it to her husband with a graceful obeisance. She thus shows that she can adroitly perform her domestic duties and knows her duty to her lord and master, whilst he, on his part, in discharging an arrow to clear her path of an imaginary foe, indicates that he is prepared to perform his duty as her guide and protector through life.

In the Oraon marriages, many of these symbolical ceremonies are omitted, and the important one of exchanging the "*sin-door*" is differently performed. The bridegroom stands behind his bride with his toes on her heels, and stretches over her head to touch her forehead with the powder. She touches his forehead by reaching back over his shoulder. The cold bath completes the ceremony, they go to their own apartment to change their clothes, and do not emerge till morning.

The price paid for a girl in cows is called "*sukmur*" by the Kheriah tribe. They have no word for marriage in their own language, and the only ceremony used appears to be little more than a sort of public recognition of the cohabitation. They have learned to call this "*biha*," but they admitted to me that this public recognition was often dispensed with.

It takes place in this wise. After the settlement of the usual preliminaries, the bride is brought to the village of her intended

bridegroom by her own people and their friends, and they halt and bivouac in the village grove. The bridegroom and his friends join them in the grove, where they all regale themselves and dance, and during these nuptial dances the bride and bridegroom are each borne on the hips of one of their dancing friends; they are not allowed to put their feet to the ground. Thus wildly dancing, they proceed into the village, and the bride and bridegroom are taken to the latter's house and anointed with oil; they are then brought outside, and the ceremony of touching each other's forehead with the "*sindoor*" is performed, followed by the splashing and sousing, which becomes a general romp. Then the young couple are left to themselves till morning. The bridesmaids arouse them as the cock crows, and, after the public ablution of garments and their wearers, the party breaks up.

The gestures of the dancers on these occasions, and the songs, all bear more directly than delicately on what is evidently considered as the main object of the festivities.

In Singbhoom, marriages, notwithstanding the lateness at which they take place, are generally arranged by the parents, but their wishes are not unfrequently anticipated by love matches. In the various journeyings to and fro that are found necessary when a match is being arranged, omens are carefully observed, and the match is broken off if they are unfavourable. At the actual marriage there is much feasting and dancing, but little ceremony. The turning point of the affair is, when the bride and bridegroom mix and drink off some of the beer they have each been helped to; the boy pours some of the beer given to him into the girl's cup, she pours from her cup into the boy's cup, and they drink and thus become of the same "*keeli*" or clan, for the Hos, Moondahs, and Oraons are all divided into families under this name, and may not take to wife a girl of their own *keeli*.

This division of the primitive races into something having a semblance to caste, will be found in the north-eastern frontier as well as in this province. The Garrows, for instance, are divided into what are called "*maharis*," and a man may not marry a girl of his own mahari.

It is obvious that the custom does not spring from any such notions of caste as are found amongst the Hindoos, and that it is not one which these races have adopted from the Hindoos, because with a Hindoo, caste is destroyed by a marriage *out* of it. It is equally opposed to the custom of the Jews, whose daughters (at least if heiresses) were obliged to take husbands of their own tribe.*

* Numbers xxxvi, 6.

In Singbhoom the bride and bridegroom do not touch each other with "*sindoor*," as is the custom in Chota-Nagpore. The Oraons and Moondahs may have adopted the custom from the Hindoos, and the primitive practice of the race is probably as it is found amongst the more isolated Hos.

A very singular scene may sometimes be noticed in the markets of Singbhoom. A young man suddenly makes a pounce on a girl and carries her off bodily, his friends covering the retreat (like a group from the picture of the rape of the Sabines). This is generally a summary method of surmounting the obstacles that cruel parents may have placed in the lovers' path; but though it is sometimes done in anticipation of the favourable inclination of the girl herself, and in spite of her struggles and tears, no disinterested person interferes, and the girls, late companions of the abducted maiden, often applaud the exploit.

The Ho husband has to pay a high price for his wife, and it is certain that he highly appreciates her. Although he is not known to have for her any more endearing epithet than "my old woman," yet by no civilised race are wives treated with more consideration than by the untutored Ho. The whole of the domestic arrangements are under her exclusive management. She is consulted on all occasions, and I know one or two husbands whom I am almost inclined to regard as henpecked. The Kols seldom take a second wife during the lifetime of the first, but I know instances of their having done so. The wife always cooks for her husband, and when the dinner is ready, they sit down and eat it together like Christians; but the Oraons have followed the Hindoo custom of making the woman eat the leavings of her lord.

It is customary with all these tribes to pay particular attention to omens, when any of them set out to arrange the preliminaries of a marriage. The Hos, who are more under the influence of this superstition than their cognates or than the Oraons, have a long list of deterrent signs, which have been described by Tickell in his paper above quoted. I subjoin the most noticeable of those that are observed by the Oraons.

I. On leaving the house "to win a bride," they look out for omens. If a cow calls and the calf responds, it is good. If there is no response, the wooing is postponed or abandoned.

II. If they find a dead mouse on the road, they must stop and make a diagnosis. If ants and flies have possessed themselves of the carcass, it is good, they go on. If the insects appear to have shunned it (which is not very likely to happen), they go back.

III. It is not good to meet oxen or buffaloes with their horns

crossed, or to see a hawk strike a bird, or to come upon women washing clothes. It is good to see people burying a dead body, and to find on their road a cow giving milk to her calf.

iv. If they see a man cutting a tree, and the tree falls before they can get past it, it is very bad. If they pass before it falls, it is all right. A certain bird heard on the left gives a note of joy; if heard on the right, he is a harbinger of woe.

v. If, on approaching the village of the girl, they come on women with water-pots full, it is a happy omen. If they meet a party with empty water-pots, it is a bad one.

The Nagpore Kols, whether of the Moondah or Oraon tribe, and all the cognates of the Moondahs that I know of, are passionately fond of dancing, and with them dancing is as much an accomplishment as it is with the civilised nations of Europe. They have a great variety of dances, and in each different steps and figures are used, of great intricacy, but they are performed with a neatness and precision that can only be acquired by great practice. Little children are hardly on their legs before they begin to learn their dancing steps; and the result of this early training is that, however difficult the step, the limbs of the performers move as if they belonged to one body. They have musical voices and a great variety of simple melodies. It is a fact that, when we raised a corps of Kols, their early practice in keeping step and time greatly facilitated the operations of drill; and the missionaries have availed themselves of the musical talents and taste of the Kol converts to produce congregational singing that would be a credit to an English country church.

The dances are seen to the greatest advantage at the great periodical festivals called "jattras." They are at appointed places and seasons, and, when the day comes, all take a holiday and proceed to the spot in their best array. The girls on these occasions put on their best dress, generally a white "saree," with a broad red border. They tastefully arrange flowers in their hair and plumes of the long breast feathers of the paddy-bird. The young men wear Turkey red turbans, and add a snow white cloth to their usually scanty garb, and also adorn themselves with flowers and peacock's feathers. As parties from the different villages come near the trysting place, they may be observed finishing their toilettes in the open fields; when all is ready, the groups form, and their approach from different sides, with their banners and yak's tails waving, horns and symbols sounding, marshalled into alternate ranks of lads and lasses all keeping perfect step and dress, with the gay head-dresses of the girls and the numerous brass ornaments of the boys glittering in the sun, forms a very lively and pleasing pic-

ture. They enter the grove where the meeting is held in jaunty dashing style, wheeling and countermarching and forming lines, circles, and columns with grace and precision. The dance with these movements is called “khurriah,” and they are held in all months of the year, a series of them following each other at short intervals at different places all over the country, and the attendance, at some that I have seen, could not be under 5,000 people, all enjoying themselves.

When they enter the grove, the different groups join and dance the khurriah together, forming one vast dancing procession. Then each takes its own place and plants its flag and dances round it till near sunset, when all go dancing home. This is followed by a carouse in the village, after which the dance is often continued at the “*akrah*” all night.

At each of these “jattras,” a kind of fair is held, and fairings and refreshments are to be had in abundance. The young men can treat their partners with sweetmeats, and do so. As already observed, there is a place in every village called “*akrah*” set apart for dancing and ceremonies. This is a circular arena with a post in the centre, and around it are benches for the spectators or for the dancers when wearied, the whole being generally shaded by fine old tamarind, the most beautiful of village trees.

The season dances in the village open with the *kurrum* in July, at the commencement of the planting season. There is a movement in this dance called “*hojar*,” when the girls suddenly kneel and pat the ground in time to the music, as if caressing and coaxing it to be productive. On the day appointed for the ceremony, the boys and girls go in procession to the *kurrum* tree, cut and bring back to the village some branches, which are planted in the *akrah*. An old man with a liberal allowance of beer is placed to watch these, whilst the young people refresh themselves. They all, old and young, then assemble in the *akrah*, and one of the elders harangues them, and after giving them much good advice, concludes by directing them to commence the dance. The songs sung on this occasion are in Hindee, and contain allusions to the flooded state of the rivers and fields. They also sing an ode to the Satyomba rajah. The *kurrum* is kept by the Soodh or Hindoo population as well as by the Kols.

After harvest of the earlier crop of the planted rice, in November, the “*matha*” is danced by the boys and girls in the village. The girls, moving in a semicircle and clasping each other’s hands, dance with a very lively step and bowing motion of the body to the men who sing and play to them. The girls have another dance at this season called “*angua*,” because it is

danced in front of the house instead of the *akrah*; to this and to a feast held on the occasion the young men are not invited.

The “jadoor” dances commence on the completion of the great harvest of the rice crop, and continue till the commencement of the hot season. This is one of the most characteristic dances, from the peculiar way in which the arms are interwoven and clasped behind the back of the performers.

Then comes the “sarhool,” at the close of the month of Phalgun, or early in March. The sarhool is the flower of the saul tree, which now blossoms. The boys and girls make garlands of these flowers, weave them in their hair and decorate their houses with them. The dance on this occasion, called the “Bāihini,” is a very frisky one. The boys and girls dance to each other, clasping hands and pirouetting, so as to cause “*dos-à-dos*” concussions which appear to constitute the best part of the fun. Yet the subject of the song sung at the Sarhool feast is a sad one. A girl who had married out of the village is supposed to return to it in affliction, and to sit weeping at one side of the house, whilst her former associates are revelling at the other. The songs are in the Moondah language.

They have besides different dances for weddings, and a dance called “jumhir” which is suited to any occasion. The dances above briefly noticed are all more or less connected with some religious ceremony, but this is left to the elders. The young people seem to me to take little interest in that part of the festival, which is, in proportion to the dancing, in importance like the bread to Falstaff’s sack. They are always ready for a dance, and night after night in some villages the *akrah* drums collect the youths and maidens after the evening meal, and if you go quietly to the scene, as I have done, you may find that, whilst some are dancing, others are flirting in the most demonstrative manner, seated in detached couples on the benches or on the roots of the great trees, with arms round each others’ waists, looking lovingly into each others’ faces.

Next to dancing, that which most engrosses the mind of the Kol is the belief in and fear of witchcraft. All disease in men and in cattle is attributed to one or two causes, the wrath of some evil spirit who has to be appeased, or the spell of some witch or sorcerer who should be destroyed. The fear of punishment and, I may add for some of them, the respect they bear to the orders of their rulers, restrain their hands, and witch murders are now very rare, but a village is soon made too hot to hold one who is supposed to be a witch.

When a belief is entertained that sickness in a family, or mortality amongst cattle, or other misfortune, has been brought

about by sorcery, a sokha or witch-finder is employed to find out who has cast the spell. By the sokhas various methods of divination are employed. One of the most common is the test by the stone and "*poila*." The latter is a large wooden cup shaped like a half cocoanut, used as a measure for grain. It is placed under a flat stone, and becomes a pivot for the stone to turn on. A boy is then placed in a sitting position on the stone, supporting himself by his hands, and the names of all the people in the neighbourhood are slowly pronounced, and as each name is uttered, a few grains of rice are thrown at the boy; when they come to the name of the witch or wizard, the stone turns and the boy rolls off!

There is no necessary collusion between the sokha and the boy; the motion of the hand throwing the rice produces *coma*, and the sokha is, I suppose, sufficiently a mesmerist to bring about the required result when he pleases.

The Singbhoom Kols or Hos, left to themselves, not only considered it necessary to put to death a witch thus denounced, but if she had children or other blood relations, they must all perish, as all of the same blood were supposed to be tainted.

In 1857, when, in consequence of the mutinies, Singbhoom was temporarily without officers, the Ho tribes of the southern parts of the district, always the most turbulent, released from a restraint they had never been very patient under, set to work to search out the witches and sorcerers who, it was supposed, from the long spell of protection they had enjoyed, had increased and multiplied to a dangerous extent. In a report on this subject from the district officer, in 1860, it is stated that "the destruction of human life that ensued is too terrible to contemplate; whole families were put an end to. In some instances the destroyers, issuing forth in the dusk and commencing with the denounced wizard and his household, went from house to house, until before the morning dawn they had succeeded in extinguishing, as they supposed, the whole race." On the suppression of the disturbances, the return of the refractory Hos to order was as sudden and decisive as had been their relapse into barbarism. The survivors of the families who had suffered at once emerged with confidence from their hiding-places, and of the cases of witchcraft-murder, thus or otherwise brought to notice, the perpetrators were in almost every instance prosecuted to conviction.

It was melancholy to have to condemn men who themselves artlessly detailed every incident of the crime with which they were charged. The work of retribution was a sad task, but it was rigorously carried out, and we have not since then had a single case of witchcraft murder in the Colehan. That the be-

lief in the existence of witches and sorcerers is consequently extirpated, cannot be hoped. Nothing but their conversion from paganism could effect this. I am convinced that in most instances the prisoners, who in their examinations detailed the most marvellous effects of imputed sorcery, were sincere believers in all that they narrated.

One of them, named Mora, saw his wife killed by a tiger, which he followed till it led him to the house of a man named Poosa, whom he knew. He told Poosa's relations what had occurred, declaring to them that Poosa had, in the form of a tiger, killed and eaten his wife. The relatives appealed to, did not for a moment discredit the charge. They said they were aware that Poosa did possess the imputed power of metamorphosis. They brought him out and, delivering him bound to his accuser, stood by whilst Mora deliberately put him to death.

In explanation of their having so acted, they deposed that Poosa had one night devoured an entire goat and roared like a tiger, whilst he was eating it; and on another occasion he informed his friends he had a longing to eat a particular bullock, and that very night that very bullock was killed and devoured by a tiger!

From their having lived so long together, it is not surprising that we should find the religious ceremonies of the Oraon and Moondah almost identical. The Oraons have adopted the religion of the Moondah, but they retain some features of their original faith, which indicate that it was in many essential points different from that to which they have conformed.

I have already observed that the pahan or village priest is in all probability an Oraon institution. The Rajmahali have a similar functionary called "demam," who foretells events, offers sacrifices, regulates feasts, and exorcises devils. In the Ho and Moondah villages, all priestly functions may be performed by the head of the family, or, if the occasion be one in which the village generally is concerned, by any elder of the requisite knowledge and experience. They worship the sun, "Sing-bonga," as the supreme being, the creator, the preserver; and a number of secondary gods, invisible; material idol worship they have none. The paganism of the Ho and Moondah in all essential features is shamanistic.

The Oraons, in addition to the Pahan, whose business it is to offer sacrifices for the benefit of the community, have recourse to a person called "Ojha" whom they consult regarding the proper spirit to be invoked and the nature of the sacrifice that is required of them, and whose functions appear to me to bear a strong resemblance to those of the medicine man of the

African tribes. The Oraons have wooden images or stones to represent the village and domestic spirits they worship. Thus a carved post in the centre of their dancing arena represents the tutelary deity of the village, "Daroo;" and they have objects of some kind to represent their domestic gods, *penates*.

They never build a house, or select a new site for a village or even a new threshing-floor, without consulting the ojha and omens. When a new house is ready for the reception of its owners, an ojha is called, and he takes earth from the hearth and charcoal, and, mixing them together, marks on the floor a magic circle. In the centre of this he places an egg, and on the egg a split twig of the Bel tree. The egg is then roasted and eaten by the people who are to occupy the house. This is followed by a great feast and dancing—a regular house-warming: on the top of the house an image of a fish is hung to avert the evil eye. These peculiarities in the paganism of the Oraon, and only practised by Moondahs who live in the same village with them, appear to me to savour thoroughly of feticism. Before affirming this positively, it would be advisable to examine more minutely the customs of the Rajmahal hill tribes; but the elephant gods, depicted by W. Sherwill as seen in their villages, are very fetish in appearance.*

The Moondahs, without applying to an ojha or medicine-man, consult auguries in choosing the site of a house, with prayer to Singbonga. A small quantity of rice is placed in holes made at the four corners of the selected site, where it is left all night, and if found undisturbed in the morning, the site is good. The same process is gone through in selecting a new site for a village. Prayer is offered to Singbonga twice,—first, that the test applied may truly indicate if the site be good or bad; secondly, for a blessing on the chosen site.

It is the fashion to call the religion of the Kols 'devil worship,' but this is not strictly correct; for although the minor deities may be mostly of a malevolent nature, and therefore devils who have to be propitiated, still Singbonga is worshipped as a beneficent god. This worship of the sun as the supreme deity is the foundation of the religion of the Oraons as well as of the Moondahs. By the former he is invoked as Dhurmi, the holy one. He is the creator and the preserver, and with reference to his purity, white animals are offered to him by his votaries. He is not regarded as the author of sickness or calamity; but he may be appealed to to avert it, and this appeal is often made, when the sacrifices to the minor deities have been unproductive.

* Vide Journal Asiatic Society, Bengal, No. vii, 1851, p. 553.
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But, besides these occasional sacrifices, all Moondahs who hold to the faith of their ancestors, are especially bound to make a certain number of offerings to Singbonga during their tenure of the position of head of the family. He may take his own time about them, but he will not be happy in his mind till he completes his complement and clears the account. I obtained this information from the Kheriahs, and on speaking about it to some ancient Pahans and Moondah elders, was told that it undoubtedly is the orthodox practice, but it has been neglected. The sacrifices are five in number: first, fowls; second, a pig; third, a white goat; fourth, a ram; fifth, a buffalo; and they must be offered in the open plain in front of an ant hill, or with an ant hill as an altar. Sacrifices to other gods are generally offered in the "Saerna,"* the sacred grove of Sal trees, the remnant of the primeval forest left for the spirits when the settlement was first made.

The names and attributes of the inferior deities are nearly the same amongst the Hos in Singbhoom, the Moondahs and Oraons in Chota-Nagpore, and amongst the Sonthals *passim*. Marang Booroo and Pongla his wife; Desaoilli, Jaer Boori, Eekin Bonga, Boora Bonga, Charee Desoilli and Dara are invoked in Chota-Nagpore.

The Sonthals have Marang Booroo, also Maniko his brother and Jaer his sister. According to Tickell's account of the Singbhoom gods and their attributes, they too have Marang Booroo and Pongala, Desaoilli and Jaer Boori or Jaer Era, and others. In cases of sickness the Ho, after ascertaining by augury which of the gods should be propitiated, will go on offering sacrifices till the patient recovers, or his live stock is entirely exhausted.

Next to Singbonga, I am inclined to place the deity that is adored as "Marang Booroo." Booroo means mountain, but every mountain has its spirit, and the word is therefore used to mean god or spirit† also. Marang Booroo is the great spirit or great mountain. Not far from the village of Lodmah in Chota-Nagpore, one of the most conspicuous hills on the plateau is called Marang Booroo, and here the great spirit is supposed to dwell. It is worshipped by the Sonthals, the Bhoomij, the Hos, the Moondahs, and the Oraons. The two latter make pilgrimages to it. The Hos have some vague notion of its situation; the more distant members of the family canonise some hill more conveniently situated.

* Or 'Saran', 'Charan'.

† Thus they have for their altars groves and high places, like the idolatrous Jews.

The Marang Booroo is especially venerated as the lord of rain. Before the rains the women go to the top of the hill, under the leadership of the wives of the Pahans, with drums, which are on this occasion only played on by young ladies, and with offerings of milk and leaves of the Bel tree. On the top of the hill there is a flat mass of rock on which they deposit their offerings.

The wives of the Pahans now kneel down, and with hair loosened invoke the deity, beseeching him to give their crops seasonable rain. They shake their heads violently as they reiterate this prayer, till they work themselves into a phrensy, and the movement becomes involuntary. They go on thus wildly gesticulating, till a "little cloud like a man's hand" is seen. Then they arise, take up the drums, and dance the Kurrun on the rock, till Marang Booroo's response to their prayer is heard in the distant rumbling of thunder, and they go home rejoicing. They must go "fasting to the mount," and stay there till "there is a sound of abundance of rain," when they get them down to eat and drink. My informant tells me it always comes before evening. We must conclude that the old women are wonderfully clever at taking a "forecast," and do not commence the fast till they sniff the rain.

All the villagers living in the vicinity of the hill make offerings of goats, whenever they think it desirable to propitiate this spirit; but he is not invoked in cases of sickness, unless the ojha declares it necessary. Sometimes bullocks are offered.

The next in importance in Chota-Nagpore appears to be the spirit Dara, whom the Oraons and Moondahs living with them adore in the form of a carved post stuck up where the great *jatras* are held, or in the village dancing place. Dara appears to be a god of rather bacchanalian characteristics, worshipped amidst much revelling and wassail. A sacrifice to him of fowls is followed by a feast in his honour, at which all the elders drink themselves into a state of sottish drunkenness, whilst the young people dance and make love; and next day comes the *jatra* which all the country attend.

The penates are generally called "old folks." They are in fact the *manes* of the votaries' ancestors; votive offerings are made to them when their descendants go on a journey, and they are generally the first that are propitiated when there is sickness in the family. By the Singbhoom Kols, the *manes* of the ancestors of the principal lady of the house are also honoured. The offerings to them are made on the path by which she was brought home as a bride. Desaoilli and Jaeroilli are propitiated for harvests and for cattle, Chandoo Seekur, the same probably as the Chanala of the Hos, for children.

The Pahan has to solemnise regularly the following festivals. The Hurihur, at the commencement of the planting season. Every one then plants a branch of the Belowa in his field, and each contributes a fowl, a pitcher of beer, and a handful of rice to the feast. The sacrifice is offered to Desaoolli, Jaer Boori, and others, in the Saerna.

During the Sarhool—when the Sal tree blossoms—the sacrifice of a goat and fowls is offered in the Saerna by the Pahan to the *manes* of the founders of the village and to Dara. The introduction of the Sal blossom, in memory of the forest that was cleared when the village was formed, is very appropriate. At the khurria Poojah when the rice is harvested, the sacrifice is offered and the feast takes place on the Pahan's threshing floor.

Dalikattari: every second year a fowl, every third year a ram, every fourth year a buffalo. To provide what is required for this last, the Pahan holds the Dalikattaree land.

I have already alluded to the division of the Moondahs and their cognates into "Keelles" or clans. Many of the Oraon clans and some of the Moondah in Chota-Nagpore are called after animals, and they must not kill or eat what they are named after.

Thus the Moondah "Enidhi" and Oraon "Minjrar" or Eel tribe will not kill or eat that fish. The Hawk, Crow, Heron tribes will not kill or eat those birds. Livingstone, quoted in Latham,* tells us that the sub-tribes of the Bitshaunas (or Bechuanas) are similarly named after certain animals, and a tribe never eats the animal from which it is named, using the term, "*ila*," hate or dread, in reference to killing it.

The above curious coincidence tempts me to give a few more details regarding the Oraon clans.

The "Tirki"—have an objection to animals whose eyes are not yet open, and their own offspring are never shewn till they are wide awake.

The "Ekkr"—will not touch the head of a tortoise.

The "Katchoor"—object to water in which an elephant has been bathed."

The "Amdiar"—will not eat the foam of the river.

The "Kujrar"—will not eat the oil of the Kujri tree, or sit in its shade.

The "Tiga"—will not eat the monkey.

The Ho chiefs could give me no signification for the names in which their families rejoice. The following are the most aristocratic, the Boorooilli, the Porthi, Sincoi, Baipoi, Soondee, Bandri.

I do not know of any people who are more careful in regard

* Latham's "Ethnology", vol. ii, p. 160.

to the disposal of their dead than are the tribes of whom I am treating, especially the Singbhoom Kols and best classes of the Moondahs.

On the death of a Ho or Moondah, a very substantial coffin is constructed and placed on faggots of firewood. The body, carefully washed and anointed with oil and turmeric, is reverently laid in the coffin, and all the clothes and ornaments used by the deceased are placed with it, and also any money that he had about him when he died. Then the lid of the coffin is put on, and faggots piled above and around it, and the whole is burned. The cremation takes place in front of the deceased's house. Next morning, water is thrown on the ashes, and search made for the bones; all the larger fragments are carefully preserved, the remainder, with the ashes, are buried then and there. The selected bones are placed in a vessel and hung up in the house in a place where they may be continually viewed by the widow or mother. Thus they remain till the very extensive arrangements necessary for the final disposal are effected. A large monumental stone has to be selected, and it is sometimes so large that the men of several villages are employed to move it. It is brought to the family burial place, which with the Hos is close to their houses, and with the Oraons generally separated from the village by a stream. A deep round hole is dug beside the stone, and, when all is ready, a procession is formed, consisting of one old woman carrying the bones on a decorated bamboo tray, one or two men with deep-sounding wooden drums, and half-a-dozen young girls, those in the front rank carrying empty and partly-broken pitchers, and brass vessels. The procession moves with a solemn ghostly sliding step, in time to the deep-sounding drum. The old woman carries the tray on her head, but at regular intervals she slowly lowers it, and as she does so, the girls gently lower and mournfully reverse the pitchers and brass vessels, to shew that they are empty.

In this manner the remains are taken to the house of every friend and relative of the deceased, within a circle of a few miles, and to every house in the village; and, as it approaches, the inmates come out and mourn, as they call to mind all the good qualities of the deceased. The bones are thus conveyed to all his favourite haunts, to the fields he cultivated, to the grove he planted, to the threshing-floor where he worked, and to the *akrah* where he made merry. When this part of the ceremony is completed, the procession returns to the village, and moves in circles round the grave, gradually approaching its goal; at last it stops, and a quantity of rice and other food, cooked and uncooked, is now cast into the hole. The bones are then put into a new earthen vessel and deposited on the

rice, and the hole is filled in and covered with the large slab which effectually closes it against desecration.

The collection of these massive grave stones under the fine old tamarind trees is a remarkable feature in Kol villages, and almost an indelible one, for they are found in many places where Kols have not existed for centuries. Besides the grave stones, monumental stones are set up outside the village to the memory of men of note. They are fixed in an earthen plinth, on which, shaded by the pillar, the ghost is supposed to sit. The Kheriahs have collections of these monuments in the little enclosure round their houses, and offerings and libations are constantly made to them.

The funeral ceremonies above described are of a composite order, mingling, with the Hindoo custom of cremation, what was in all probability their original mode of burial; but a very profound reverence for the dead pervades them all. I think it is very probable that the Kols originally disposed of their dead differently. The coffin, though put together on the faggots that are to consume it, has projections as if to facilitate transport. Omit the burning and substitute burial, and we have the careful disposal and subsequent adoration of the dead that is practised by the Chinese; but the burning of the body and the long retention of the ashes in a portable form may have been adopted at a time when the tribe could not be certain of continued residence in one place.

Tickell has given at length the Ho legend of the origin of the human race. It is supremely absurd, and very few of the present generation know anything or care anything about it. I have always found such legends changeable and untrustworthy. With no written record to give them permanence, they are altered to suit either new conditions or the fancy of the reciter. Thus, though the Kols have known the English for little more than half a century, they assign to them a most honourable place in their genesis. The Assam Abors and Garrows do just the same.

I do not think that the present generation of Kols have any notion of a heaven or a hell that may not be traced to Brahminical or Christian teaching. The old idea is that the souls of the dead become "*bhoots*," spirits, but no thought of reward or punishment is connected with the change. When a Ho swears, the oath has no reference whatever to a future state. He prays, that if he speak not the truth he may be afflicted in this world with the loss of all—health, wealth, wife, children; that he may sow without reaping, and finally may be devoured by a tiger; but he swears not by any hope of happiness beyond the grave. He has in his primitive state no such hope, and I believe that most Indian aborigines, though they may have

some vague ideas of continuous existence, will be found equally devoid of original notions in regard to the judgment to come.

It may be said that the funeral ceremonies I have described indicate clearly a belief in resurrection, else why should food, clothes, and money, be burned with the body or buried with the ashes? The Kols have given me the same explanation of this that I once before received from the Chulikutta Mishmees in Upper Assam, who have no notion of any existence beyond the grave. They do not wish to benefit by the loss of their friend, which they would do if they were to appropriate any article belonging to him; they, therefore, give with him all his personalities, all property that he and he alone used and benefited by; but this does not apply to the stock of the farm and household property that all profit by, or even to new cloth, for that might have been procured for any member of the family. It often happens that a respectable "Ho" has goods of this nature, that he abstains from using even once, because, if once used, the article will be destroyed at his death.

The Moondah-Oraon races are passionately fond of field sports, and are so successful that large and small game soon disappear from the vicinity of considerable settlements; and they fear not to make a new settlement, consisting only of a few huts, in the jungles most infested by wild beasts. Every year, at the commencement of the hot season, they form great hunting parties, which are well described in Tickell's memoir. They are also greatly addicted to cock-fighting. They have periodical meets at assigned places where hundreds of fighting cocks are collected. Cruel steel spurs are used, and the combat is always *à l'outrance*, the victims becoming the property of the owners of the victorious birds. This is, I think, the only stake. They are fond of fishing too, and some of them are very expert in spearing large fish.

The arms of the Kols are to this day what they were in the days of "*Rama*"—the bow and arrow and battle-axe. The bow is simply a piece of bamboo, and the string is of the same material. The war arrows have large broad blades doubly and trebly barbed, but they make them of all shapes; poison they do not use. They commence practice with the bow and arrow at the earliest age. In Singbhoom boys three and four years old and upwards, when herding cattle or otherwise engaged, have always their bow, and blunt and sharp arrows; the former for practice, the latter to bring down birds when they have a chance.

In the villages of Chota-Nagpore where the Oraon and Moondah are mixed up together, the difference of character between the two races is not much marked; but if we compare the Singbhoom Hos or Chota-Nagpore Mankees and the

Oraons, we see strong contrasts. The Oraon has the lively happy disposition of the Negro. He is fond of gaiety, decorating rather than clothing his person, and whether toiling or playing, is always cheerful.

The Ho or Moondah has more the dignity and reserve of the North American Indian, at least when he is sober. He appears to less advantage when he is drunk, and he is not unfrequently in that state. At all festivals and ceremonies, deep potations of the rice-beer called "*eeley*" are freely indulged in by both sexes. Inspired by this beverage, the young men and girls dance together all day and half the night; but the dances are perfectly correct, and whenever these meetings have led to improprieties, it is always attributed to a too free indulgence in *eeley*. As a rule, the men are reserved and highly decorous in their treatment of the women; and the girls, though totally free from the prudery that secludes altogether or averts the head of a Hindoo or Mahomedan maiden when seen by a man, have a modest demeanour, combined with frank open manners and womanly grace.

It is said by some that at the seasons of their great festivals amongst themselves, breaches of chastity are of frequent occurrence; but the mere freedom of intercourse allowed to the sexes is likely to be viewed with unmerited prejudice and misconstrued by their neighbours of different race who place such restrictions upon it, and I believe that this may give rise to false imputations of impropriety. It is, at all events, a fact that illegitimate births are rare. Out of her own tribe, a Ho girl is hardly ever known to go astray, though from the freedom allowed to her and, for a tropical climate, the ripe age at which she is likely to be sought in marriage, she must have to pass through many temptations.

The Hos are acutely sensitive under abusive language that at all reflects upon them, and may be and often are driven to commit suicide by an angry word. If a woman appears mortified by anything that has been said, it is unsafe to let her go away till she is soothed. The men are almost as sensitive as the women, and you cannot offend them more than by doubting their word. It has often seemed to me that the more a statement tells against themselves, the more certain they are to tell the exact truth about it. It frequently happens that a man is himself the first person to bring to notice that he has committed a crime; he tells all about it, and deliberately gives himself up to be dealt with according to law.

The Oraon is, I think, less truthful, he is more given to vagabondising, and wandering over the face of the earth in search of employment; he soon loses all the freshness of his character. He returns after an absence of years, unimproved

in appearance, more given to drink and self-indulgence, less genial and truthful than before, with a bag of money that is soon improvidently spent. Those who have never left their own country have far more pleasing manners and dispositions, than those who return to it after years spent in other parts of India or beyond the seas. The fact is, they are not an improvable people. They are best seen in their wild state.

There is no more pleasing trait amongst all these tribes than their kindly affectionate manner one towards another. I never saw girls quarrelling, and never heard them abuse each other. They are the most unspiteful of their sex, and the men never coarsely abuse and seldom speak harshly of the women. This is remarkable on this side of India, where you seldom pass through a bazaar without hearing women screeching indecent abuse at each other across the street, whilst the men look on. A Kol girl's vocabulary is as free from bad language of this kind as a Bengalee's is full of it.

The young Oraons of both sexes are intensely fond of decorating their persons with beads and brass ornaments. These they entirely discard on embracing Christianity, and the converts may be always recognised by the total absence of all such adornment. The converts do not join in the dances or festivals, and must not even be seen as spectators when they are going on. They appear indeed to lose all relish for their old amusements, and shrink with horror at the idea of resuming their discarded ornaments. And as Christianity is rapidly spreading amongst them, and in all probability will continue to spread more and more rapidly every year, it is quite possible that in the course of a few generations the most marked characteristics of the races I am describing, will have been effaced for ever. It is marvellous with what decision old prejudices are abandoned, old customs discarded, and even tastes changed, when they become Christians; and there is now a widespread feeling amongst the Kols themselves that this change will inevitably come upon them all.

The Moondah-Oraon are a rapidly increasing people. We may form some calculation as to the rate of increase by the statistics of the Mission. In 1864 the baptised converts numbered 5,923, and in that year there were 195 births to 80 deaths. In 1865 there were 7,828 baptised Christians, and the births during the year were 309 to 86 deaths. The number of professing Christians is probably double the number registered as baptised.
