Collective Memory and Reconstruction of Ho History

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Abstract: Reconstruction of the history of the Ho, or of *Adivasis* in general, of erstwhile Singhbhum in Jharkhand has drawn heavily on colonial records and neglected oral sources, a neglect attributable to a 'race-divisive historiography' so far. The net result was the putative understanding that the Ho represented a pre-historic society. To situate the Ho in history, this essay invokes folklore and recorded collective memory, primarily to understand oral society's strategy of codifying its past and to recapture the defining moment in indigenous collective life when they surrendered their itinerant life to found and people villages and socially formulate the norms of a collective life.

Introduction

Reconstruction of the history of Ho tribe,[1] and of *Adivasis* in general, of erstwhile Singhbhum in Jharkhand has so far drawn heavily on written records belonging to the colonial period and has failed to accord oral sources their deserved importance. This neglect may be attributed to ethnocentrism, which upheld literate knowledge and its knower as superior to the oral ones,[2] in writing history. In writing/rewriting indigenous histories, one may discern the play of, what Gayatri C. Spivak termed as 'race-divisive historiography'.[3] Its 'pattern of exclusion' was

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evidently operative in the very process of collation and preservation of information relating to the indigenous past.

First it failed to develop the 'decipherable traces' relating to indigenous pre-colonial past collected by early ethnographers.[4] Next, when it came to the construction of knowledge about the colonial past it suffered due to the strategy of condensing/effacing facts about the peripheries (indigenes in the present case) in the grand *Raj* episteme.[5] This blurred the pre-colonial Ho past beyond recognition[6] and focussed on politico-administrative details, rather than the evolution of their moral and material culture. Lastly, reconstructing history mainly with statist data reinforced the assumption that only the British deserved the status of a knower, their reports, correspondences and ethnographies alone documented the past faithfully and deterministically and the knowledge of the knower as preserved by the known had an indeterminate and secondary status. The net result was the putative understanding that the Ho belonged to a pre-historic society.

To refute this notion, this essay invokes collective memory,[7] in spite of the riders against the use of it,[8] to relate important conjectures from the pre-colonial Ho past, which oft-used statist sources fail to provide. This essay takes up two oral sources, folklore and recorded collective memory, primarily to understand how an oral society coded its past and what portions of the past it encapsulated. While this forms the first section, the second section recaptures the most defining moment in indigenous collective life when they surrendered their itinerant life to found as well as people villages and to socially formulate the norms of a collective life. This rurality constituted the nuances of their indigeneity to link which is essential to form an understanding of their colonial and post colonial self.

One clarification about the nature of orality is however in order. Though Ho social memory constituted the raw material flowing from Ho informants, we have only access to whatever had been officially recorded. At the transcription stage, the recorder's understanding of the message must have played a crucial role in creating necessary distance between the original message and recording. Also, under the questionnaire method the process of production was understandably not free enough to generate uninhibited information. So these oral sources also cannot fully claim to be oral. Even then to appropriate further information and to appreciate Ho sense of history, collective memory should merit our attention.

Folklore

The folklore in question is the Ho history of the creation of the world as narrated by village heads to S.R.Tickell, the first assistant political

agent of the Kolhan Government Estate shortly after the conquest of the Ho territory, locally known as Kolhan, by the British in 1837.[9] Ritually reproduced during the *Mage* festival,[10] the genesis myth perpetuates the social tradition down to the lived present. So it is perhaps the most representative and recurrent theme in Ho social memory. Conventionally its appropriation[11] may not merit the attention of historians for its atemporal and theocratic nature. The lack of chronology in myth is apparent in the thematic arrangement of narratives. It is also unstable because of its reconstructive formation. But on closer reading, we may discern both the *Adivasi* strategy of identifying the determining moments from their past and sense of history latent in recall.

The origin myth begins with the creation of the world when *Singbonga* or *Ote boram* created man. From this undated time, we enter the suggested historical time when particular peoples were named to signify a plural world. This is rendered into metaphor by sharing food in a common feast arranged by the creator. First this meant classification of indigenes as Ho, Bhumij, Bhuiyan and Santal to denote how the tribal world was peopled in Ho perception[12] as well as how Ho ethnicity fructified in the given present from the Munda genus.[13]

Interestingly this indigenous world was not equally but hierarchically ordered, manifest in the difference in the order and quality of food share. As the Ho are the recipient of the first share food, they mark their superiority among the indigenes and others around.

The mythic world of the Ho included the castes also as they were the participants in the mythic feast and co-sharers from the same food-stock. This upheld Ho mentality of mutuality and coexistence. It also replayed the historic reality of the presence of the Brahmin, Rajput, Chatri, Ghasi and unnamed other castes in and around Ho territory. This represented the phase of the Ho past when they came into contact with the Rajput chiefs of Porahat, seemingly around the 13th century AD.[14] Brahmins were the stray elements, which had possibly entered Kolhan to minister to the needs of the above as well as chiefs of Seraikela, Kharsawan and Mayurbhanj and the Hindu residents of the region. Other than the Ghasis, the unnamed Hindus were the Tantis, Goalas, Kamars, Kumars etc. who were invited by the Ho to serve their socio-economy, a trend associated with the founding of Ho villages since the 17th century.[15] One may find in this a sharp difference from the Santal myth of a dialectic world between a Santal and a *Deko* perhaps to express resentment against their moral and material marginalization under growing Hindu expansion.[16]

The mutuality broached above did not however mean the surrender of Ho cultural identity to Hindu hegemony. History and contemporary life tell of an assertive community who fought against the Rajas of

Chotanagpur, Porahat and the chief of Bamanghatty in the past to defend their political identity.[17] Another source underlined the sharp Ho-*diku* (ethnic outsider) divide that motivated them to put a Brahmin, Rajput and Muslim to death on sight.[18] The material dependence of the Ho on the functional castes notwithstanding, they allowed the caste groups a position of subservience. This is reflected in their symbolic rejection of the caste system by allocating the Brahmins the third rank and other castes even lower positions in the hierarchy by making them respectively the third and later as well as giving lesser food sharers.[19] At the same time, they also showed their distance from Hinduism by criticizing *charak puja* and *sati* as evil. But these practices being incorporated in the Ho legend also show the reconstructive as well as present-centric character of memory.

The reconstructive nature is also evident from the inclusion of the British within their demographic world. Two facts are significant. First, this incorporation was conducted within three years of Ho surrender to the British. More interesting, however, was how defeat and subjection were symbolically narrated. The myth signified that the Ho willfully divided their own share with the British to signify that both belonged to the same stock. This ploy in a sense was a socially invented strategy to soften the pang of surrender. It may also be analyzed as the hegemonization of a section of the Mankis and Mundas, the narrators of the Ho legend of creation.

The Village Papers and the reconstruction of an alternate Ho past

History thus claimed to be enshrined in the myth may yet be treated as the product of a pariah source. To found it on firmer soil, the essay next explores and interprets collective memory[20] recorded during Tuckey Land Revenue Settlement (1913-18).[21] This relates not only facts about village making but also how intricate social balancing of village and regional politics was laid out. While surfing this source, one comes across social, or community-specific, archaeology where, instead of the remains of cities, palaces and statues, tanks or groves could serve as sources of history.[22] This knowledge is necessary to release *Adivasi* studies from the thralldom of grand historical narratives.[23] The following pages briefly take up some of these reserving details for future work.

Perhaps they were Hos or Bongas

The statist version of village history is a single one relating the succession of Mundas.[24] This want may be removed by oral sources, which offer us multiple village[25] and regional histories. British ethnography provides unsubstantiated facts about some major events relating to the pre-colonial

Ho past. One such was that the Saraks or lay Jains were among the early inhabitants of Kolhan and that they had a fight with the Ho, which they lost, leading to their exodus from the region.[26] This past can be configured with the help of social memory. It provides archaeological proof of a wide Sarak-influenced zone before the arrival of the Ho in support of the above ethnographic notion. While copper mining in the Dhalbhum region of Singhbhum was linked to these people, thereby identifying their settlements to be non-agrarian, in Kolhan they evidently represented a group of cultivators. The remnants of their settlement were first the large number of tanks, locally called Sarak-excavated *surmi-durmi* and *Bonga pokhris*, that could number as many as ten in a single village. Next were the mango groves they planted. However, memory is silent about the cause and time of their emigration. Instead Ho informants relate that their predecessors often entered villages, some of which had lapsed into jungle. This obviously suggested a long gap, requiring reclamation by late comers. To metaphorically suggest the temporal distance, earlier settlers were identified as an ancient race - an ancientness that invested in them the sacredness of *Bongas* as distinct from Hos or humans.[27] The deification of an adversary may dispute the ethnographic fact of a fight. But one may argue that the conversion of a large number of Sarak tanks into *khets* (cultivable plots) did not merely fulfill their need of arable lands but expressed their anger by decimating the historic symbol of an erstwhile enemy. Whatever is the reality, a large number of Kolhan villages thus initiated us into double histories, one of the Sarak and the other of the Ho, the latter extending into the present.

A similar theme is noticeable in many other villages. British ethnography recorded the Bhuiyan as the earliest occupants of a large part of Singhbhum.[28] The Village Papers substantially enrich our experience by providing information about such historic proofs as mango groves and tanks of the Bhuiyan period.[29] But more distinctive evidence was that of the presence of *Pauri* goddess, a deity worshipped by the Bhuiyans.[30]

Here, the domains of village and regional histories intersected. Contained within this was the change in demography that supplanted the earlier political balance at village and regional levels. We learn that the Sarak were dislodged from power and virtually driven out from Kolhan.[31] Similarly the Bhuiyan climb down was staged. Social memory substantiated how this political change took place, resulting in Ho ascendancy in the Singhbhum geo-polity. The instance of Iligara may support this point. In and around this area, some villages had been founded by the Bhuiyan to be later replaced by the Ho. In Iligara itself, the latter of the Sinku *killi* (clan) traced their village genealogy upto eight or nine generations[32] dating the origin of their control to the end of the

17th century AD. It may be proposed that after the foundation of Porahat, their crucial link with the Bhuiyan escalated their control, over large areas of south Singhbhum. However, after the bifurcation of Porahat *raj* into the princely estates of Seraikela and Kharsawan, the power and control of the Bhuiyan dissipated over Kolhan villages as instanced by Iligara. This also had a second phase. During the Great Rebellion of 1857-59, the Bhuiyan made a communal exodus, allowing the British to allot those villages to others, largely the Ho.[33] So social memory amply bears out that the Bhuiyan circumscription and Ho expansion into south Singhbhum had two pasts, one that happened by the end of the 17th century and another mid 19th century AD.

Social memory releases information about another crucial but little known area of Singhbhum history. This is about the dominance of local chiefs of Porahat and Mayurbhanj and their rapprochement with the Bhuiyan and the Ho. About the former, we learn that besides the capital at Porahat, Jaintgarh in south 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* (station) at Bara Jamda, locally known as Garh Jamda, the *Rajabandh* and another large tank excavated by the chiefs, the naming of a village as Rajabassa to prove that rajas once resided there, the fort at Jaintgarh and the memory of Gobergaon as the *khorposh mouza*.[34] We have similar memorized information about Ho and Bhuiyan relations. For instance Bhuiyan support was enlisted through land grants by raja Kali Arjun Singh.[35] This raja's period appeared to be a political milestone in the history of Singhbhum. He enlisted Ho support through land grants and investitures.[36] Similarly Lalgarh was the power centre of the Mayurbhanj rajas and occasionally their residence also. Some of the Kumhar, Bhuiyan, Dhurwa, Gour and Tanti-dominated villages were within his area of control. After their power shrinked either the old inhabitants continued to maintain their control or the Ho stepped in, as in the case of Kharband.[37]

It is therefore amply clear from a reading of collective memory that Singhbhum, nay Kolhan, had a diverse past, indicating prevailing political tension and change in the area of influence. Often inter-ethnic in content, we however notice pervasive disowning of this past particularly by the Ho who often denied the existence of non-Ho settlements, a ploy to prove that they were the original clearers of villages. This leads us to the very process of village making.

Under the same tamarind tree rests my Sire

The villages founded by the Ho related an owned past because it provided the charter for their existing social positions,[38] particularly relating

to lands, their status as *Marang* (chief) *killi* and village headship. This also described a past when they were the determining agents of their collective life. Village making rotated around the early man or *Ham* who first selected and demarcated the village space within a forest tract.[39] With the help of people accompanying him he then cleared the forest area, prepared arable lands and allocated village spaces among people in recognition to their services in village making.[40] Though sources are not very clear about the order of the stages, it may be proposed that these were not simultaneous and continuous. Nor should village making be understood as a labour-intensive activity as indicated in a recent study.[41] Two instances will substantiate my point. First is that often the *Ham* selected and demarcated but could not undergo the subsequent processes. So it devolved on his successor to slowly complete the act.[42] Next are the gradual stages of house making. We can imagine and logically so that along with that of the founder's, his helpers' huts came up almost together when habitation began in a wide forested region. But after that the older village became the nucleus for further colonization. This was accompanied by house making, a process subsequent to the preparation of agricultural lands. This was behind the notion of *bechirag* (lightless) and *bechappar* (houseless) villages.[43]

Village identity expressed itself through the name it acquired. This ushers us into the historic first contact of the early settler with the chosen place and various collective or individual experiences, which they seemingly eternalized through village naming.[44] One such was the pioneering role of the early man, which often invested him with the status of a culture hero. So a large number of villages were named after him.[45] They sometimes gratefully remembered the village from which he had hailed and persons who had accompanied him at the time of village making.[46] Usually the gratitude was acknowledged by accepting him as the Munda of the village.[47] These facts indicate that even though the collective worldview of an *Adivasi* society generally did not prime individuals as we find in stratified societies, celebrating individual cultural roles was also customary. But we do not find generic culture figures to be kind of community heroes, nor do we find remembering to be always very precise and elaborate.

We have the instances of villages being named after the trees with which the chosen site abounded or after a large tree on it at the time of the reclamation.[48] *Diris* (stone) or the peculiarity of a particular stone, like one looking like a *hal* or a nearby hill also inspired village naming.[49] This ecology-specific attitude expressed community's gratitude to nature and natural elements through village naming.

A significant occasion was also celebrated by village naming. It could be a particular place where the pioneers like Rengo and Gangi

had finished (*Mundi* in Ho) the journey for the place to be named as Gangimundi i.e. the place where Gangi Kui had finished her sojourn.[50] Similarly at the time of reclamation a *kokar* (owl) being cut along with a tree inspired the title Kokarkata.[51] What may be dismissed as trivial thus constituted historic moments to underline that it was in the veneration of such small things that subaltern life was constituted.

I end this section by enumerating how the village was defined officially and socially. Officially a village meant a well-defined space, with a definite number of inhabitants to be administered and resources to be appropriated. It was then the lowest administered unit within the *Raj* being linked through the district, divisional and provincial administration to the apex unit. To an *Adivasi* or a Ho, the idea of a village was multiple, perhaps more cultural than administrative. The material making of the village began the moment the early man delineated the boundary, commencing other processes elaborated earlier and then the Munda was selected. But the process of its coming of age had other cultural symbols that formalized the staged cutting of the umbilical chord from the mother village from which the pioneers had moved out. For a Ho, reserving a portion of the jungle called *Jahira* as the abode of their village deity *Desauli* was an integral process of village making. But often this process was delayed and the old *Jahira* continued to be the *Desauli* both of the mother and daughter villages till they decided on separation. Then they needed an independent *Deori* whose responsibility was to offer prayer during *Mage parab*.[52]Ancillary to this was the making of separate *sasans* for the burial of the dead. This not only completed the family-hetero break between the two but also blurred the link between the original *killi* centre, detailed below, and its satellite villages.[53] So in Ho social tradition a village was not simply a place of governance but one that located the *Jahira* (sacred grove)for their *Desauli* (village deity) but also the *sasans*(burial place) where their sire-sires rested and having a village *Deori* (priest) to mediate their sacerdotal affairs.

Misa teke Purtalo ale hugulena

Rendered into English the above statement meant 'We came together with the Purtis'. This is about a village founded by the Purti *killi* being assisted by Honhaga and Tius.[54] This provides clue to how a Ho village got peopled and demographic relations were forged in Ho rural life. Peopling of a village began when the original founder invited other members of his family or *killi* (*Haga* or brotherhood) or other *killis*. This becomes clear from the statement: Lopar Ho of Laiur Bodra killi was 'the manager of affairs i.e. he distributed the Jungle among his own people & among members of other killis.'[55] It is however not clear from available information when the *Ham* invited others. But it is certain that peopling

was a gradual process, which changed the demographic composition of the village. Though socially a village belonged to the founding *killi*, suggesting the original uni-*killi* nature, in majority cases Kolhan villages subsequently developed into multi-*killi* ones.[56] Out of these the first to settle had the recognition of being the *Marang* or *Khuntkatti* (founding) *killi* to which devolved the right to govern the secular and sacerdotal affairs of the village through the offices respectively of *Munda* and *Deori*.

Within this privileged *Khuntkatti* status we witness the enactment of an intricate homogenizing process. The early man or his successor allotted village spaces among the *hagas* (brotherhood) and *killis* on the basis of broad agreement, which enforced social sanction for lands owned by them. Besides this, demographic balance was further ensured by creation of *sais* or *tolas* under the leadership of an early clearer of the land therein, which was often celebrated by that *sai* being named by or after him.[57] The oldest of the *sais* seemed to be the elite part of the village often inhabited by the Munda, *Deori* and members of the founding *killi*.[58] It may be proposed that *sai ham* had a crucial role in the land distribution within his *sai*.

Thus village was a social unit that infused among its inhabitants a sense of unity that was expressed in the concept of village community. But this was an ever-widening idea that progressively incorporated later residents of the village. This inclusiveness has had a ritual expression during *Mage parab* when the *Deori* remembered the names of the dead irrespective of *killi* and caste.[59] This was reinforced by the governance of the village by the Munda with the help of the *panchayat*, representing village elders from other *killis* and families. All these created a sense of solidarity among villagers to be represented as kind of a single unit during inter-village disputes over boundary and use of tank.[60]

Fusion however did not fully represent Ho past. Though not a general feature, in several villages we notice the tradition of social distinction between the founding and other *killis*, socially known as *huring* (junior) or *praja* as well as founding and other families from the same *killi*, considered being *huring haga* in several villages.[61] This had largely political overtone, in the ideal of the mundane and sacerdotal governance of the village by the founding family. During the initial land allotment the superior and larger part being apportioned to the *khuntkatti* family and other *killis* resulted in the qualitative and quantitative disproportion in land distribution among villagers.[62]Another fissiparous trend was the evolving caste like distinctions in several villages. First it was the difference in the social standing between *khuntkatti* and *praja* families.[63] Sometimes it also resulted in caste, like food and marriage restrictions in Ho society.[64] We have the example of a village where five poor families were ostracized for marrying in *praja* families.[65]

Fission of much greater magnitude was the splitting up of original *killis* into new ones and their further divisions into sub *killis*. It can be understood from the growth in the original number of twelve *killis*[66] when the groups of Munda tribe migrated from Chotanagpur plateau to fifty by 1895, later proliferating further. This reality broached by colonial and later sources does not however go beyond numerical abstraction of an important process in the evolution of Ho-ness. This lack may be remedied by information from collective memory.

About the creation of independent *killi* I have the instance of *Ichagutu killi*. It is reminisced 'This is a very rare killi. Nowhere in Kolhan Ichagutus are to be found save in Bhoya. In the rare cases in which they are found in the villages they belong to Bhoya originally from where they went out to other villages.' People related that the *killi* and the village were born together after the arrival of the original clearer of the village. They however did not remember the name or the *killi* to which he originally belonged. The pioneer built his house on a hillock abounding in *Dhawai* tree (called *Icha* in Ho) after which his descendants were known as Ichagutu or Bhoya.[67]

We do not have much evidence of how a *killi* split.[68] But social memory provides clues to why the fissure occurred. Korpa Hari and Senegal Sura of Purti *killi* dabbed themselves with wet flour made of rice (*holang*) at the time of sacrificing goats during the founding of Pandrasali village. So they acquired the sub-*killi* name of *Holang Purti*. Again when descendants of Senegal crossed a stream within the village area and built their hut on the bank opposite of the one on which Korpa's descendants lived, the former came to be called *Param Purti*. *Crossing* (*Param* in Ho) *the stream* like Ceaser's *Crossing the Rubicon*, thus became an historic moment in that village's past to be celebrated by the making of a sub-*killi*.[69] How occasions became memorable may further be instanced. This is about the splitting of the Haiburu *killi*. To quote, 'A certain ancestor named Mukund Ho burnt the corpse of his newly born baby instead of burying it as is (then) the custom among the Hos. Urub means to burn.'[70] But the question is - why should a particular event be historically selective? Here the reasons seem to be very clear. On the first occasion, the logic was the spatial and social separation, while in the next, it was the departure from custom.[71]

Social memory next takes us from the domain of village to *killi*-dominated regions. Ho ruralization of Singhbhum's wooded tracts has proliferated since the end of the 17th century AD. It first took the form of principal Ho *killis* founding their village centres. As their number grew, the excess population required colonization of new spaces in the free forest tracts. This caused a systematic movement to make satellite

villages in the immediate neighbourhood to frame the socially recognized *killi*-dominated grid of villages. To substantiate my point, I shall furnish the instance of Jamdiha or Kochra, the principal centre of Sinku killi from which they founded Kitahatu, Deojori, Iligara, Chitrabilli, Pawaipi, Kendpshi, etc.[72] Here the staged severing of ties, signifying coming of age of daughter villages, took place over the decades, which often blurred the memory of the link they once had.

Conclusion

Thus this essay draws on folklore and recorded orality to collate facts relating to Ho pre-colonial past as it has been inscribed in social memory. It also seeks to decode the traces, which, as Foucault so evocatively suggests, 'say in silence something other than what they actually say.'[73] Interpreting the content of the Ho creation myth thus underlines the specific strategy of inscribing what the community considered significant to be ritually reproduced as an articulation of its inter and trans ethnic identity. The essay then approaches a little known frontier of Ho history that studies their transformation into a settled village life, their differential link with the past, their mechanism of peopling of villages and effecting demographic balances. Information thus adduced from social memory underlines Ho sensibility as a village-centric and land-based community, information which holds the key to much of their movements in the pre- and post-colonial periods.

Notes

[1] The Ho constitute one of the four major indigenous groups of Jharkhand, others being Munda, Santal and Oraon. They live predominantly in West Singhbhum district of the state.

[2] G.W.F.Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, cited in R. Guha, *History at the Limit of World-History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 8-9.

[3] G.C.Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason –Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Seagull, Calcutta, 1999,p.230. I have discussed the racial bias towards the indigenes in my 'Contesting Marginalization: Colonial Representation of the Indigenes in the Great Rebellion of 1857-58' presented at the *International Conference on Contesting Identities: Tribes, Indigenous Peoples and Adivasis in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, organized by Department of History, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, 26-27 November, 2005.

[4] Lt. S. R.Tickell, 'Memoir on the Ho desum' (improperly called Kolehan)', *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XI, part II, 1840, p.803.

[5] The technique followed was that the directive emanated from the centre, routing, what was called proper channel, through the province, division and district, ultimately to reach villages. While this process activated the units in

creating provincial, divisional, district and village level corpus, the return route marked a progressive effacement. Here the villages lost their details in the district reports and similarly lower units got progressively effaced by the higher ones ultimately to structure pan-Indian information, which during British rule hoisted up *Raj* episteme and during post-colonial period the mainstream. A.K.Sen, *Text and Beyond Text: Essays on the history of Singhbhum and Ho Tribe*, Introduction (unpublished); A.K.Sen, 'Writing Local History and the District Record Room', *Proceedings of Indian Historical Records Commission*, containing papers presented at the 58th Session, 2003, pp. 81-9.

[6] This way, as Foucault avers, historians allowed "the living, fragile, pulsating 'history' to slip through their fingers." M. Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1974, p.11.

[7] I avoid the discussion on the conceptual difference between collective and social memories because in this essay these have been taken to mean the kind of recognized social traditions even though the source is either individual or familial. J. K. Olick & J. Robbin, 'Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1998. 24, pp. 106-12; R. Johnson & G. Dawson, Popular Memory: theory, politics, method, in R. Johnson, G. Mclennan & D. Sutton (ed.), *Making Histories: Studies in History, Writing and Politics*, *Hutchinson*, London, 1982, p.207.

[8] One should however take into account such features of orality as achronologicality, instability, narrow spatial coverage, fragmentariness and cultural bias. J.Vansina, *Oral Tradition As History*, London, James Curry, 1985, pp, 94-102, 120; G.Prins, 'Oral History', in P. Burke (ed), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Polity Press, Oxford, 1991, pp. 114-15; W. A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scriptures in the history of Religion*, Cambridge university Press, 1987, pp. 14-17. About lack of chronology Vansina however adds that the genealogies may 'form a basis for local chronology'. *Oral Tradition*, p. 24. The list will grow with my input from Ho experience. One such was the unavailability of information due to amnesia when memory fumbled and faltered largely beyond two/three generations. Next was a break in the link in generational transmission due to father's premature death. Tuckey Settlement, Khuntkatti Papers (hereafter KP) of Jamjoi, pp.3-5, Vasta No (VN) 70. Another was distortion and faking of traditions due to existentialist reasons. Here I particularly refer forged genealogies to prove the ancientness of families.

[9] Tickell, 'Memoir', pp.797-99. There are other versions of creation myth two such being referred in a recent study R. Hebbar, 'Eternal and Ephemeral: The Significance of Myth and Ritual among the Ho', in P. Sen (ed.), *Changing Tribal Life: A Socio-Philosophical Perspective*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 40-49 and D.S.Purti, *Ho-disum Ho Honko Kitab 7 – Munu-Janagarko Ondoh Bankurikoh* (The Hos of the Ho Country: Myths and Old Stories), Xavier Ho Publications, Chaibasa, 1982, pp.2-12.

[10] The most important Ho festival celebrated in January- February not however on fixed dates. However, *Adivasi Ho Mahasabha*, a representative cultural organization, has lately fixed specific dates for Ho festivals.

[11] This section draws on author's 'Gleaning Historical Materials from a Myth: A Study of Kole History of the Creation of the World', a paper presented at the *Research Colloquium of the Department of Sociology*, Delhi School of Economics, on 29 October 2004. A revised version is published in Arupjyoti Saikia (ed.), Folklore and Environment, *Indian Folklife*, A Quarterly Newsletter from National Folklore Support Centre, Serial No. 28, January 2008, pp. 13-20.

[12] Tickell, 'Memoir', pp.797-99.

[13] Tickell noticed this in a developed form at the time of recording. Ibid., p. 803.

[14] M.Sahu, *The Kolhan under the British Rule*, Calcutta, 1985, p.10.

[15] One will form this impression from the perusal of Khuntkatti Papers preserved at the District Record Room Chaibasa (DRRC).

[16] P.O.Bodding (Tr.), *Traditions and Institutions of the Santals /Horkoren Mare Hapramko Raek Katha*, Bahumukhi Prakashan, New Delhi, Indian Reprint, 1994, pp. 3-22.

[17] E.T.Dalton, *Tribal History of Eastern India* (Original Title Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal), Cosmo Publication Delhi, 1973, p.180.

[18] E. Roughsedge to C. T. Metcalfe, Secretary to the Government, 9 May 1820, para.13, South West Frontier Political Despatch Register (SWFPDR), 20 April 1820 to 7 June 1821, Vol.XXVII.

[19] It is also interesting to note that some of the caste groups were recipients of rice and vegetables. This allotment expressed the prejudice of the people belonging to the hunting-foraging culture against castes representing the agrarian culture. Moreover, as the animal flesh was considered superior to vegetarian food, this part of the myth located the indigenes in a hunting and foraging stage. Ritual reproduction of this stage reinforces their forest link, which authenticates the recent assertion of jal, *jungle* and *jameen* as the markers of their identity.

[20] I should however admit that the Village Papers provided British instrumented administratively useful information through questionnaire and recording methodology. Though information was generated through the hegemonic process, we are able to know about the major events of Ho history.

[21] These papers are preserved at the (DRRC).

[22] Another such was the *sasandiri* or gravestone.

[23] Tethered within the latter the former has been used merely as an item to justify the comprehensiveness of the Grand Narrative. Being simply an other of the subject i.e. the Grand Tradition / mainstream, here *Adivasi* society loses the autonomy of existence. So facts relating to its past are extraneously determined and history structured in the conventional framework of the Grand Narrative.

[24] Craven Settlement Village Enquiry Papers. (DRRC).

[25] This is close to Cohn 'There is not one past of the village but many'. B. S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, p.89. However, while identifying layers in the historic past I deviate from him in showing the sense of exclusiveness that inspired *Adivasi* villagers to own or disown pasts depending upon whether the pasts related the Ho or non-Ho.

[26] Tickell, 'Memoir', pp. 696-7.

[27] KP, Bara Baljori, pp. 2-.3, VN 72;Ibid., Iligara (thana No. 557), pp.3-9, VN 51; Ibid., Ibid., Karanjia,pp.3-6, VN 50; Ibid., Silphuri, pp. 3-5, VN42; Ibid., Tangar, p. 6, VN 34.

[28] Tickell,'Memoir', p.696.

[29] KP, Goberdhan, pp. 3-5, VN 39.

[30] The remarkable fact is however that the Ho who largely replaced the earlier settlers continued to worship her either singly or along with their *Desauli* as the protector of their welfare. Ibid., Danguaposhi, pp. 3-6, VN 48; Ibid., Kudriba, pp. 3-4, VN 1. However this adaptation was existentialist. It was confessed 'We worship Pauri because if he (understood to be a male deity) be not worshipped we would not get good harvest and tigers would devour us.' Ibid., Kulaiburu, pp. 3-4, VN 1.

[31] This is again a shady area waiting to be resurrected. Tickell, 'Memoir', pp. 696-7.

[32] KP, Iligara, pp. 3-9, VN 51.

[33] KP, Thakura, pp. 3-5, VN. 72.

[34] It was testified to by a villager 'It was her (queen's) khorposh (maintenance) mouza for expenses of hair, oil etc.' KP, Chhanpada, pp.3-5, VN 45; Ibid., Bara Jamda, pp. 3-5, VN 72; Ibid., Rajabassa, pp. 3-6, VN 45; Ibid., Gobergaon, pp. 3-7, VN 45; Ibid., Darposhi, pp. 3-8, VN 46.

[35] Ibid., Darposhi, pp.3-8.

[36] We have the evidence from at least two villages in support. Jotea Ho of Sinku *killi*, originally belonging to Angardiha in Lalgarh *pir*, was the original clearer of Khairpal. His activism seemed to draw on his political link with the raja of Singhbhum as his *sirdar*, who then resided at Jaintgarh. The evidences still retained by his family were 'the sword and shield of Sirdar and the bugle which was to be blown when the Raja used to come to this side' as well as the *sirdari* lands given to Jotea's family by Kali Arjun Singh. KP, Khairpal, pp. 3-10, VN 44. Similarly Bhalandia was 'the seat of one of the Raja's sirdars who was a man of Pingua killi'. TS, Papers of cased u/s 83, Bhalandia, pp. 3-4, VN.42.

[37] KP, Lakhipur, pp. 3-4, VN 33; Ibid., Sarbil, pp. 5-6, VN 33; Ibid., Kumardungi, pp. 4-5, VN 33; Ibid., Aula, p.3, VN 36; TS, Papers of cased u/s 83, Kharband, p. 25, VN 33.

[38] Cohn, *An Anthropologist*, pp. 88-9.

[39] TS, Papers of Cases u/s 83, Loharda, Judgment, pp. 8-10, VN 1.

[40] KP, Darposhi, p.3, VN, 20: KP, Jaldhar, p.3, VN, 20.

[41] B.B. Chaudhuri, 'Tribal Society in Transition: Eastern India, 1787-1920' in M. Hasan and N.Gupta (ed.), *India's Colonial Encounter : Essays in Memory of Eric Stokes*, Manohar, Delhi, 1993, p.69.

[42] KP, Banamhatu, p.3, VN 20; Balijor, pp.3-6, VN 71.

[43] Ibid., Banamhatu; Barabardadih, p.3, VN 22.

[44] This suggests that their attitude was not always presentist rather past per se also played a crucial role in their collective life.

[45] KP, Jaldhar, p.3, VN, 20; KP, Sarda, pp. 3-6, VN 9; KP, Sidma pp. 3-5, VN24.

[46] KP, Udalkam, pp. 3-6, VN 68.

[47] KP, Darposhi, pp. 3. Except perhaps on such an occasion as Bamiya Ho, the first comer and the clearer of the jungles, who was denied the status of village founder for being a bachelor, which rendered him socially unimportant. KP, Banbasai, pp. 3-5, VN 68. But the process of village foundation not completed his ascension to the post might also be denied. TS, Papers of cased u/s 83, Kandegutu, pp. 8-9, VN 20.

[48] KP, Kadamdiha, p.3, VN 34 ; KP, Udalkam, pp.3-6, VN 68.

[49] KP, Dirigo, pp. 3-5, VN 36; KP, Debrabir, pp. 3-4, VN25

[50] KP, Gangimundi, pp. 3-6, VN 25

[51] KP, Kokarkata, pp. 3-7, VN 36. However, *kata* being a *diku* word, its use rather than the Ho '*ma*' either indicates the *diku* origin of the village or a Ho adapting a *diku* word.

[52] KP, Mungadighia, pp. 3-6, VN 48; KP, Barusai, pp. 3-8, VN 32.

[53] TS, Papers of cased u/s 83, Bararunju, pp. 10-11, VN 27.

[54] Ibid., Sonro, pp.7-16, VN 5.

[55] TS, Papers of cased u/s 83, Gutuhatu, Judgment, pp. 17, VN 1.

[56] We have the instance of Nakahasa with ten *killis*. KP, Nakahasa, pp. 3-4, VN 12.

[57] To substantiate, of the four *sais* of Malidu, Mundasai was founded by Pere Ham, possibly Munda also; Surasai founded by Nara and named so after his son sura; Rasikasai by Rasika and Santarasai so named as it was founded by the Santals. TS, Papers of cased u/s 83, Malidu, p. 23, VN 30.

[58] TS, Papers of cased u/s 83, Nimdih,, pp. 6-7, VN 61.

[59] Ibid., Binj, p.10, VN 5.

[60] Ibid., Dopai, Boundary Dispute, pp. 4-5, VN 3.

[61] TS, Papers of cased u/s 83, Bara Runju, pp.10-1, VN27; KP, Bara Chiru, pp.3-5, VN 12.

[62] A.K.Sen, 'The Process of Social Stratification in the Lineage Society of Kolhan in Singhbhum', *South Asia*: Journal of South Asian Studies, n.s., Vol. XXVII, no.1, April 2004, pp. 34-5.

[63] KP, Kursi, p.3, VN16; KP, Iligara (thana no.138), pp.3-4, VN 16.

[64] KP, Bamebasa, p.3, VN61; KP, Siringsia, p.6, VN58 ; KP, Murumburu, pp.3, VN67 ; KP, Sannanda, pp.3-8, VN 69 .

[65] KP, Gitilpi, p.3, VN 54.

[66] Dalton,*Tribal India*, p.189.

[67] KP, Bhoya, pp.3-5, VN(NA, may be 6/7).

[68] It may be presumed that growth in number and the quest of distinct identity might have been the reason.

[69] TS, Papers of cased u/s 83, Pandrasali, pp. 22-3, VN 8

[70] Ibid., Binj, p.20.

[71] It may be pointed out that this departure was in fact not trans-community because during earlier times the Ho practised cremation.

[72] KP, Jamdiha, pp.3-16, VN 50;KP, Iligara, pp.3-9.

[73] Foucault, *Archaeology*, p.7.

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