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## Boundary Dynamics of Sapha Hod Identity

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### Introduction

This paper examines a case of borrowing of Hindu rituals and symbols among the Sapha Hod Satar of southern Nepal. It demonstrates how borrowing Hindu rituals and symbols, especially those that pertain to religion and commensality, has affected the ethnicity of the Sapha Hod by enabling them to maintain two identities simultaneously. The Sapha Hod maintain both a group identity and an individual identity; they assert their traditional Satar ethnic identity while also claiming a distinct ritual identity that distinguishes them from other Satars.

This study concerns the Satar of Sunauli, a village situated about six miles east of the industrial town of Biratnagar in southern Nepal where they live together with caste people. The Satar share many cultural characteristics, such as dress, language, and a common male ancestry. Yet within their own ethnic group, they divide themselves into three ritual categories and maintain a great degree of social distance from each other.

These ritual categories consist of the Bidin Hod, Sapha Hod, and the Kristan Hod. The Bidin Hod believe that there are only two *jāt* on this earth--Hindu and Muslim--and all those who are not Hindu are either Muslim or like Muslims. Accordingly, they view the Christians and the Christian Satar as being "like Muslims." Since the Bidin Hod do not view themselves as Muslim, they define themselves as Hindu (Bidin Hod). In spite of calling themselves Hindu, the Bidin Hod do not view themselves as part of caste society and, therefore, do not practice any caste rituals. Instead, the Bidin Hod follow their traditional Satar rituals, and worship and make offerings to *bonga* (spirits, or deities). The second Satar category is that of the Sapha Hod, literally meaning "clean" or "pure" Satar. Similar to the Bidin Hod, the Sapha Hod define themselves as Hindu but do not consider themselves part of the caste society. But unlike the Bidin Hod, the Sapha Hod combine and practice the rituals of both the Satar and the upper caste people. The third category of the Satar consists of the Christian Satar who practice Christian rituals. The Christian Satar of Sunauli are Pentecostal. They do not agree with the Bidin Hod and Sapha Hod's classification of people into two *jāts*, Hindu and Muslim, believing instead that there are many *jāt*, Christian being one of them. Accordingly, they consider themselves separate from both Hindus and Muslims.

Among these Satar, almost all the Sapha Hod are educated and multilingual with a good command of Nepali, the national language of Nepal and the prestige language of Sunauli. Further, the Sapha Hod have contacts with caste people of Biratnagar and Kathmandu. And finally, they own ponds and wells, and have large land-holdings. They are landlords and the rest of the Satar are either landless or have very little land. As such, the Sapha Hod hire the Christian Satar and the Bidin Hod to work on their lands and in their households.

Since religious practices distinguish one category from another, I start my discussion with the religious beliefs and practices of the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod, and the unique way the Sapha Hod combine both the Satar and the caste rituals.

## Religious Beliefs and Practices

### Hindu Deities

The Sapha Hod believe in and worship many Hindu deities such as Rama, Shiva, and Mahavira. Performing *puja* to these deities is, however, not unique to the Sapha Hod. The Bidin Hod also participate in worshipping these deities, whom they call *Diku bonga* (deities of the caste people, especially Kali, Lakshmi, Durga, and Krishna), whenever the caste people perform public rituals for them.

The Sapha Hod move a step closer to the caste people in this context. They participate in the *puja* of some Hindu deities. It must be borne in mind that although the Sapha Hod worship Hindu deities, they consider some of these deities (like Rama, Shiva, and Mahavira) to be their own and some others as belonging to the caste people. They call these others *Diku bonga* and do not worship them. Further, they do not necessarily participate in the *pujas* of Hindu deities they honor as their own when such *pujas* are organized by their caste neighbors. Since the Sapha Hod think of these deities as their own, they worship them in their own way in their various festivals. As Hindus, the Sapha Hod espouse vegetarianism and, therefore, always offer sweets and fruits to these deities, but never any blood.

### The *Bonga*

Troisi (1978) describes the presence or absence of *bonga* worship as the feature that distinguishes the Sapha Hod from the Bidin Hod of Pangro, India.<sup>1</sup> According to him, the Bidin Hod (the Santal) believe in and propitiate the *bonga*, while the Sapha Hod do not. In Sunauli, however, this is not the case. The only Satar who do not share the belief in *bonga* are the Christian Satar, not the Sapha Hod. The Sapha Hod of Sunauli, like the Bidin Hod, see their world as inhabited by a large number of invisible beings whom they call *bonga*. *Bonga* may be spirits, gods, or one's ancestors.<sup>2</sup>

The Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod think of some *bonga* as malevolent and others as benevolent by nature. The malevolent *bonga* are driven away by making small or big offerings every time they are thought to have brought someone misfortune. All village spirits and deities are viewed by these Satar as benevolent *bonga*. Examples of benevolent *bonga* include Abge and Hapramko *bonga* who bestow social parentage and clan status on newly born babies, and Orak *Bonga* who protects infants and the other members of the household. Since the consequences of not worshipping these *bonga* are far-reaching and of great social significance, both the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod make offerings to these *bonga* in almost all their rituals.

Three other *bonga* who, according to the Sapha Hod and Bidin Hod Satar, are concerned with the welfare of their group, are Marang Buru, Majhi *Bonga* (spirit of the first headman in the village and/or the spirit of the headmanship in general), and two female deities, Jaher Era and Gosain Era. Among these, the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod always spoke fondly of Marang Buru as an affectionate and clever *bonga*. They repeatedly told their children the creation myth in which Marang Buru helps to promote the welfare of the Satar (Appendix II and III). The other three *bonga* (Majhi *Bonga*, Jaher Era, and Gosain Era) had shrines of their own in the neighboring villages, but not in Sunauli.

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<sup>1</sup>Gausdel (1960) records the names of 178 *Bonga* which are said to be active among the Santal of India. Troisi (1978) divides the *Bonga* of Pangro, India into ten categories.

<sup>2</sup>During both periods of my fieldwork, I failed to gather detailed information about the *bonga*. It was much later that I learned the reason behind this failure from one of my Bidin Hod informants. Since I was a female, as he told me, I was considered as a potential witch by both the Satar men and women. Once I realized this, I stopped asking my informants about *bonga*. The only knowledge that I obtained about them, which is presented in this paper, is from my one Sapha Hod male informant and Christian informants who once believed in and propitiated *bonga* when they were Bidin Hod. In addition, my observation of some private and public *puja* in some Sapha Hod households and a few birth and death rituals in the Bidin Hod households enhanced my knowledge about some of the benevolent *bonga*.

## Religious Syncretism

The Sapha Hod thus believe both in *bonga* and Hindu deities, combining various Hindu elements with their Satar beliefs and rituals. This fosters quite a few differences between the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod in their perceptions of the nature and status of their *bonga*. Since the Sapha Hod view some Hindu elements as their own, they think of the *bonga* in hierarchical terms. They consider the Hindu deities to be higher in rank than the *bonga*. The Bidin Hod, however, view only the *bonga* as their own. Further, they think of the various *bonga* as having equal status. According to their egalitarian point of view, though *bonga* possess different powers and are capable of doing different things, they are not distinguished from one another as higher or lower.

*Bonga* occupy only a secondary place in *pujas* organized by a Sapha Hod. In such *pujas*, primacy is given to the Hindu deities, and vegetarianism is emphasized as well as practiced.<sup>3</sup> It is especially because of the practice of vegetarianism that none of the *bonga* (all of whom require non-vegetarian food) have proper shrines of their own in Sunauli. The only shrine in Sunauli is the shrine of Vishnu Baba who founded the Sapha Hod tradition there. The absence of the shrines of the *bonga* and the presence of Vishnu Baba's shrine in Sunauli are symbolic of both the Sapha Hod's attitude towards the *bonga* and the power the Sapha Hod display in implementing their ideas.

I agree with Troisi (1978) that the belief in *bonga* is very much rooted in Bidin Hod culture. The Bidin Hod's belief in their *bonga* became apparent to me during several informal interviews in which several of my Bidin Hod informants (male and female) told me that since they are *Hod* (Satar), they should have shrines of Majhi *Bonga*, Jaher Era, and Gosain Era in their village. They praise their neighboring Satar villages for having such shrines.

Although these comments illustrate how deeply rooted the faith in *bonga* is among the Bidin Hod, it is clear that the Sapha Hod have not abandoned their belief in *bonga*. The Sapha Hod maintain their belief mainly because for them, as for the Bidin Hod, to abandon belief in *bonga* would be to cease being a Satar.

## Hinduism and the Sapha Hod Way of Life

Although both the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod define themselves as Hindu, it is mainly the Sapha Hod who constantly try to act out their beliefs in Hinduism as practiced by their caste neighbors. These Sapha Hod accept Hinduism as a way of life and believe in *Dharma* (duty) and *Karma* (a concept related to the causal chain of action and rebirth). They express their beliefs in these concepts by performing various pious acts, such as sharing the water of their ponds and wells with their fellow villagers, and being hospitable and generous to them. They also organize and participate in religious activities, and go on pilgrimage in observance of their *dharma*.

The other area of ritual concern that plays a significant role in the boundary maintenance behavior of the Sapha Hod is their diet. Diet is a statement of one's ritual status and caste identity in Sunauli. The Satar and the caste people of Sunauli have adopted the diet of the higher caste people, especially of the Nepali Brahman, in varied forms.

Most of the caste people of Sunauli value vegetarianism but, except for one caste man, none are vegetarians. Since the Sapha Hod claim a higher ritual status within their ethnic group, they are supposed to keep a vegetarian kitchen, but they do not. Nevertheless, they distinguish themselves from

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<sup>3</sup>Unlike a Sapha Hod *puja*, *bonga* occupies the most important place in a Bidin Hod *puja*. Blood offerings constitute the core features of such *puja*. The Bidin Hod view the *bonga* as living amidst them, and possessing some human qualities of affection, greed and anger. As such, they believe that although the *bonga* protect the Satar, they (*bonga*) also guard them jealously and demand a share of the food consumed by their living kinsmen or other Satar. Since all the Bidin Hod of Sunauli are non-vegetarian, they do not want to aggravate their *bonga* by not sharing meat, fish, and rice-beer with them. Although these Bidin Hod do not offer them blood while worshipping them in public *puja* held in Sapha Hod households, they do make offerings of chicken or pigeons while worshipping *bonga* in their own households.

their Bidin Hod and Christian Satar neighbors by following the diet of the non-vegetarian Brahmin, refraining from eating chicken or pork, as do their caste friends.

### Rice beer: A Key Symbol

Among the Satar, the other diet restriction is related to the use of rice-beer. Rice-beer has many different rich meanings for the Satar, having economic, ritual, and ethnic connotations. Rice-beer constitutes a most important part of Satar rituals and diet, but the Satar vary in their use of its preparation, distribution and consumption. For example, the Christian Satar neither prepare nor drink rice-beer, whereas the Bidin Hod prepare it as well as drink it. The Sapha Hod, however, prepare it but do not drink it. They, together with their caste friends, condemn the Bidin Hod for drinking rice-beer and eating chicken and pork.

Rice-beer is considered an important part of all the Bidin Hod festivals and life-cycle rituals. The Bidin Hod offer it to their ancestral and other *bongas*, and they consider no ritual to be complete without rice-beer. They also offer this drink to their guests. In Sunauli, where most of the residents are kinsmen, they constantly support each other. The reciprocal distribution of rice-beer is symbolic of this supportive interpersonal network.

Rice-beer is also conceived of as a traditional and sacred symbol. According to the Bidin Hod version of the creation myth, the good and clever *Bonga Marang Buru* taught the first Satar couple to make rice-beer and to reproduce more people of their kind to continue their *jāt* (Appendix II). As such they thought it their prime duty to prepare rice-beer, offer it to Marang Buru as a token of his love and support for the Satar, and then consume it. For these Bidin Hod men and women, to cease making or drinking rice-beer would be to cease being a Satar.

Some Satar men and women also talk about rice-beer as the best source of "energy", as the best "food" to forget the hardships of their lives. Satar women say that drinking rice-beer prepares them to enjoy sexual intercourse with their husbands, or if unmarried, to solicit other men.<sup>4</sup>

Rice-beer also symbolizes the social ties for the Bidin Hod of Sunauli. While both the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod agree that serving rice-beer symbolizes social ties, Sapha Hod men serve rice-beer to their guests but refuse to drink it with them because of its low ritual value. The daughters and wives of such Sapha Hod households are the only family members who are involved in extending social ties through offering and drinking rice-beer. They both treat their neighbors with rice-beer and, when visiting their neighbors, allow their hosts to reciprocate by accepting their offerings of rice beer.

For all Satar women of these ritual categories, rice-beer also symbolizes natal ties. The married women carry rice-beer and puffed rice to their natal homes when visiting their kin during *soharai* and *Baha*. This rice-beer is first offered to their clan *bonga* and then distributed among other members of their natal households. The offering symbolizes the continuity of their natal identity and their potential membership in the natal households.

Thus rice-beer appears as a single symbol among the Bidin Hod men and women and some of the Sapha Hod households that summarizes a complex system of ideas under one unitary form. It functions as a religious symbol and connotes themes of enjoyment, procreation, and a happy life. It also stands for expanding and strengthening interpersonal bonds and social ties. Furthermore, it provides "energy" to forget the hardships of life and lighten ill feelings against others. Because this symbol condenses different themes, it appears in many different ritual contexts, both formal and informal.

Turning now to the Sapha Hod men, I observed that they prepared a large quantity of beer for their guests during festivals. They distributed beer to their guests with great zeal and spirit, and encouraged and forced their guests to drink as much as they could, but all the while abstaining from drinking it themselves.

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<sup>4</sup>The theme of enjoyment through sexual activities is supposed to be handed down to the Satar, as the creation myth of the Bidin Hod relates, by Marang Buru who instructed the first Satar couple of the seven clans in sex (Appendix II). This theme is very explicit in the dances of *Soharai* and *Baha*, the two big festivals of the Satar.



Like the Bidin Hod, the Sapha Hod also worship *bonga* but, as I have mentioned earlier, *bonga* never occupy a primary place in Sapha Hod *puja*. Since Sapha Hod *pujas* always start with Hindu deities, rice-beer never became an integral part of Sapha Hod observances. This indicates that rice-beer does not play a ritually significant role in Sapha Hod culture. The sacredness of rice-beer, which is so much elaborated by the Bidin Hod, is entirely absent from the Sapha Hod version of the creation myth (Appendix III).<sup>5</sup> Now the question remains, why then do the Sapha Hod prepare and distribute rice-beer among their fellow villagers? The answer is to be found in the culturally defined ritual of hospitality which allows the Sapha Hod to interact and strengthen interpersonal bonds with the Bidin Hod without sharing the meaning of this particular symbol with them. The constant distribution of rice-beer, therefore, enables the Sapha Hod to maintain the boundaries of both their higher ritual and economic identities.

Rice-beer, thus, functions as a key symbol among the Satar. For the Bidin Hod, it has various cultural meanings. But for the Sapha Hod, rice-beer as a key symbol plays several culturally strategic roles. It is used in a particular act of hosting and feeding which is replayed in every public ritual, formal or informal, in one's every day life. For these reasons, rice-beer appears as that symbol for the Sapha Hod which helps them define three of their crucial life-strategies: a) through the ritual action of beer-making they fulfill the minimum requirement of their Satar culture and identity; b) by not drinking it they participate in caste culture; and c) by distributing it among their fellow villagers they maintain both their caste and class cultures, their ritual and economic identities.

## Conclusion

The syncretism of Hindu and Satar rituals and the use of certain caste symbols distinguishes the Sapha Hod from the rest of the Satar. Although the Sapha Hod verbally deny any status difference between themselves and the Bidin Hod, their everyday behavior and rituals indicate a status difference between them. This difference is symbolized primarily in the context of giving and receiving of food, the Sapha Hod being the givers and the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar the receivers. The relationship developed between them through such unilateral exchange of rice-beer is interpreted differently by each of these groups. These interpretations reveal plural perspectives on the system: the economic perspective of the lower groups which emphasizes the distinction between rich and poor, and the religious perspective of the higher group which stresses the importance of the contrast between pure and impure. The Sapha Hod, who are rich, view this relationship in ritual terms of *sapha/non-sapha*. They consider themselves *sapha*, and therefore do not accept food from other Satar. The Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar, who are also poor, conceive of this relationship in terms of *dhani/garib* (rich and poor) and *malik/nokar* (master/servant) and their lower class status discourages them from serving food to their Sapha Hod *malik*.

What is seen in Sunauli, then, is the emergence of the Sapha Hod as the most powerful ritual category among the Satar. This category includes both power and ritual purity. This relates to the issue of ritual status and power as is often discussed in the anthropological literature on the caste society of India (Dumont 1980). In the context of Sunauli, status and power are separable in people's mind, and can be used separately in some contexts. This is evident from the native terminologies which make distinctions between *dhani* and *garib*, *malik* and *nokar*, and *sapha* and non-*sapha*.

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<sup>5</sup>Further, according to this version, the Satar are not the descendants of Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi. Since these were brother and sister, their marriage was incestuous, and they gave birth to *Musalman* (Muslim). According to the Sapha Hod, all the Satar had to hide their ethnic identity and identify themselves as the children of Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi in order to survive. Such a situation, however, misled the Satar to think of themselves as the real descendants of Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi. It also encouraged them to entertain themselves with intoxicating beverages, like rice-beer, and justify their indulgence in premarital sexual activities.

In spite of these clear-cut boundaries of political/economic and ritual identities, status and power reinforce each other in Sunauli and must be viewed as interrelated.<sup>6</sup> The Sapha Hod's ritual status contributes in gaining power and their power, derived from their higher socio-economic status, influences their ritual status. The boundaries of these two identities, ritual and secular, become so fuzzy and are so well interwoven in the behavior of the Sapha Hod that the analyst has to go to a deeper level to find out when one identity is replaced by the other.

As a result, the formation of Sapha Hod ethnicity is complex. This complexity is further enhanced by the fact that the borrowed caste rituals are viewed by the Sapha Hod as their own, as having been handed down to them by their ancestors and, therefore, as belonging to the entire Satar group. Such incorporation of Hindu rituals includes the ritual hierarchy of the caste system within the Satar framework. In this hierarchical scheme, the Sapha Hod view both the Bidin Hod and The Christian Satar to be of lower ritual status than themselves.

The dominance of the Sapha Hod and the hierarchical scheme, emphasized by the Sapha Hod themselves, have influenced their entire community. The same Bidin Hod who do not agree with the Sapha Hod's claim to be ritually higher than themselves, do agree with the Sapha Hod in designating the Christian Satar as untouchable and ritually lower in status than both the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, although the Christian Satar do not share the view of the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod of themselves as being lower in ritual status, they also view themselves within a hierarchical scheme. They rank themselves with other caste groups, and consider the Mohali (Basket-makers) and the Chamar (Leather-worker) as lower in ritual rank than themselves.

Conflicts and tensions emerging from the Sapha Hod's claim to be ritually superior to the other Satar and the denial of this claim by the other Satar have had an impact on the ethnic identity of the Sapha Hod. Most of the caste people still think of the Sapha Hod as Satar, but respect them for their higher social status. The Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar recognize the Sapha Hod as wealthy and "*diku*-like" (caste-like) people. The Sapha Hod, however, identify themselves as Satar but having higher ritual status. They perceive themselves both as members of the Satar ethnic group and as members of the more exclusive Sapha Hod category. Their individual identities (economic, ritual, or political) vary according to context. Their group ethnicity is important in certain contexts, while in different contexts, certain "other" dimensions of their identity appear salient. The Sapha Hod's use of one identity versus another accounts for their situation-specific behavior. Identifications, thus, can and do change. A Sapha Hod can consider that he or she belongs to the Satar group in certain situations, whereas in other he or she may identify with another group, or display an entirely new identity.

Such a situation challenges those studies on the Santal/Satar (such as those of Kochar 1970, Somers 1976, and Troisi 1978) which identify the concept of ethnicity with the maintenance of cultural forms alone. The role of traditional cultural symbols in the maintenance of the boundaries of a social groups cannot be denied. But an individual's ethnic ties are not manifested in cultural forms alone, but rather, as Levy demonstrates in her study of the Hassidim, "in manipulation of symbols and approved social behavior that provide opportunities for a moving or floating identity" (1975).

The Sapha Hod's use of some crucial caste symbols in defining themselves also indicates that cultural forms are not necessarily perpetuated. In contact situations, they may be discarded, changed, or replaced by new cultural forms, or invented or borrowed from one or more ethnic groups. Such cultural forms are even internalized by the borrowing group, which may come to view them as their own.

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<sup>6</sup>A few Indianists have examined such interrelatedness of ritual and economic statuses in their studies dealing with the significance of secular models in the context of upward or downward mobility in the caste system of India (See Bailey 1968; Beals 1980; and Mandelbaum 1979).

<sup>7</sup>This is similar to Moffatt's study (1975, 1979) of the untouchables of Endavur, South India.

These incorporated forms may also help to maintain the ethnic identity of the group that borrowed them.<sup>8</sup>

Today, syncretism combining Satar and caste rituals has come to characterize the culture of the Sapha Hod of Sunauli. Primarily because of this, the Sapha Hod emerge as ethnic mediators. As ethnic mediators, they seem to belong to an intermediate category which keeps moving between egalitarian ethnic groups and the hierarchical caste groups. The identity sought by the Sapha Hod, therefore, ignores similarities that emerge from their traditional Satar cultural background. At the same time, it also ignores differences that exist between the Satar and the caste people.

It is important to keep in mind that despite combining the cultural forms of both the Satar and the caste people, the efforts of the Sapha Hod are not oriented toward merging into the caste system and losing their cultural identity. Their individual and group identities, although seeming to contradict each other, simply explain the two dimensions of Sapha Hod behavior - normative and contextual. The normative behavior is more ethnic, whereas the contextual one is non-ethnic - more caste and class related. But since the Sapha Hod combine the rituals of both the Satar and caste groups, they constantly move from one domain of behavior to the other. Such movement has allowed the Sapha Hod to maintain the boundaries of both their identities - individual and cultural - without getting out of their Satar social system. In addition, it has helped them to create a new ethnicity, developed in the guise of a new "tradition", that the Sapha Hod think of as belonging to the entire Satar group. And, therefore, their efforts are rather aimed at making other Satar "return" to this ethnic identity, restore, and perpetuate it.

## Appendix I

Once the great god Bhagwan (*Bonga Marang Buru*)<sup>9</sup> wished to teach shamanism to the Satar men to cure illnesses of various kinds. For several days, he taught them about curing and asked them to bring him offerings on the last day of their learning about cures. When these men came home and talked to their wives about it, their wives became jealous of them, and feared their husbands becoming more powerful than themselves. To prevent such a situation, all the wives got up at night, bathed, and went to Bhagwan (Marang Buru) in the disguise of men. They also had offerings for him. Bhagwan (Marang Buru), thinking that they were the actual men, gave them the lesson of that day. Unlike the previous lessons, which were related to curing, these lessons were related to making people sick or to witchcraft.

Later that day, when men, unaware of their wives' acts, went to Bhagwan (Marang Buru) with offerings, Bhagwan (Marang Buru) was surprised. Once he learned the facts, he taught these men the same things that he taught their wives. In addition, he also gave these men all the secret formula to overcome the killing power of the women.

And, from that day on, all Satar men became potential *ojha* (shamans) and all Satar women became potential *dakin* (witches).

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<sup>8</sup>The creation of new symbols, different and changing meanings of the same symbol, the dynamic meanings of the same symbol, and the dynamic characteristics of symbols in expressing cultural norms, conflicts, and various needs and interests of individuals and groups have been demonstrated in the works of Fernandez 1965; Geertz 1979; Hobsbawm 1983; Leach 1979; Ortner 1979; Talai 1986; and Turner 1967.

<sup>9</sup>According to the Sapha Hod version of myth, Bhagwan taught witchcraft and shamanism to the Satar. The Bidin Hod version of this myth, however, gives credit to Marang Buru for this knowledge.



## Appendix II: Bidin Hod version of Creation Myth

Once Thakur created a duck and goose and sent them to earth. Both flew around the earth for several years. As there was only water and no dry place to sit, the couple went back to Thakur and complained about it. Thakur asked them to go back again. This time they saw some *jana* grass (which is used for making brooms by the Satar today) and sat down on that grass. But as there was still no dry ground, both went back again to Thakur. Thakur gave them some ground and asked them to throw it on the water. Then the earth was formed, and both the duck and goose started living there. A few years later, they had two human children: Pilchu Hadam (a male) and Pilchu Budhi (a female). The couple was surprised to find that human beings were their children, so went back to Thakur again. Upon the advice of Thakur, the duck and the goose raised their children and helped them get married.

Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi, thus, became the first *Hod* couple. They gave birth to seven sons and seven daughters. Thakur asked this couple to live separately in order to raise their children nicely with more room for them. Pilchu Hadam lived with his sons and Pilchu Budhi with her daughters in two places which were quite far from each other. They did not know that they were brothers and sisters. When their parents learned about their fondness and love for each other they were worried and called Thakur to help them. Thakur advised them to marry seven sons with their seven daughters, and asked the good and clever *Bonga Marang Buru* to help the first Satar couple. Marang Buru asked the Satar couple to get some *udy* rice and prepare *handi* (rice-beer) with it. After experiencing the intoxicating capacity of the rice-beer, Marang Buru asked Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi to give it to their sons and daughters. When they all got drunk, each couple ran into the jungle and had sexual intercourse. When they all came back home, they got married. From these seven couples seven *paris* (clans) originated, and all the *Hod*, from then on, were divided into these *paris*.

## Appendix III: Sapha Hod version of Creation Myth

Once Thakur created a duck and goose and sent them to the earth. Both flew around the earth for several years. As there was only water and no dry place to sit, the couple went back to Thakur and complained about it. Thakur asked them to go back again. This time they saw some *Jana* grass (which is used for making brooms by the Satar today) and sat down on that grass. But as there was still no dry ground, both went back again to Thakur. Thakur gave them some earth and asked them to throw it on the water. Then the earth was formed, and both the duck and goose started living there. A few years later, they had two human children: Pilchu Hadam (a male) and Pilchu Budhi (a female). The couple was surprised to find that human beings were their children, so went back to Thakur again. Upon the advice of Thakur, the duck and the goose raised their children with great affection and care. They named their son Pilchu Hadam and daughter Pilchu Budhi. When these children grew up, they became fond of each other and, one day, committed the most incestuous act ever known. They married each other and gave birth to many children. Since the couple were brother and sister, their children came to be known as *Musalman* (Muslim).

Thakur condemned the marriage of Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi and the children born from such a marriage. So, one day, he sat down and created seven *Hod* couples one by one for seven days. These couples founded the seven *paris* (clans). They had many children who all lived together, and later married in each other's *paris*. When their living place got very crowded and they had problems finding food to eat, the good and clever *Bonga Marang Buru* asked them to move from that place forever. The *Hod* said, "How could we? The children of Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi (meaning Muslims) are everywhere on this earth. They will not welcome us." Marang Buru thought of an idea and advised them to call themselves the children of Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi, so that they could have plenty of food to live on. The *Hod* listened to Marang Buru. Although they had to lie about their identity, they had enough to eat no matter where they went or lived.

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