INTRODUCTION
About 80 years ago Sir Herbert Risley proposed that one of the processes of caste-formation in India has been the gradual integration of the various tribal groups into the Hindu social system. It is indeed difficult, as pointed out by him, to trace the different stages of this operation. Moreover, these processes "proceed independently in different places and at different times" (Risley: 1915, 73). Briefly, these processes are:-

1. Progressive sections of a tribe, after accumulating sufficient wealth mainly in the form of landed property, declare themselves as a caste (preferably as Rajput) and invent fictitious genealogies with the help of the Brahmin priests.

2. It is found sometimes that a whole tribe or a part of it transforms into a sectarian caste by embracing the tenets of Hindu religion.

3. Or, it might happen that by adopting certain Hindu customs and also by inventing fictitious descent from a mythical founder (of the caste claimed), a whole tribe or a large part of it often forms a new caste.

4. It is also possible that a whole tribe or a large part of it gradually converts itself to Hinduism without abandoning its tribal designation (ibid: 73-75).

After Risley, quite an appreciable amount of interest developed among the anthropologists who have taken up the problem of tribal transformation in terms of specific instances of Hindu
Tribal acculturation. The works of Roy (1915), Furer-Haimendorf (1945), Majumdar (1937, 1950), Datta-Mazumder (1957) and Dube (1957) may be cited in the connection. But these detailed descriptive studies are mainly concerned with the acculturative impact of the different aspects of Hindu culture on different facets of tribal life and do not aim at bringing into focus the processes of gradual integration of the tribes into the caste-based Hindu social system. In other words, it appears that Risley's line of thinking has not been strictly pursued in most of the works mentioned above.

Bose in his illuminating article on "The Hindu Method Of Tribal Absorption", has introduced a new element in our thinking about the factors involved in the process of integration of tribes in terms of economic relationships between a tribal group and the multi-caste Hindu community (Bose: 1941). Bose emphasizes the fact that the tribes are integrated into the caste system primarily through the process of economic integration whereby a low mode of production gives up in favour of a higher mode. This process of integration gets stability due to the Hindu ideology of inter-cultural tolerance which allows the tribes to preserve their age-old customs only with minor adjustments. However, even in the situation of cultural pluralism, elements of cultural norms have flown primarily from the higher productive and power level of the Hindu society to the lower level of the tribals.

The study by Sinha on the acculturation of the Bhumij, a tribal group integrated into the framework of the Hindu social system, and the recent works of Martin Orans on the Santal are among the few intensive case studies on the above problem (Sinha: 1953, 1956, 1959, 1962, 1965, 1966 and Orans: 1965). Whereas Sinha has demonstrated in detail how the indigenous state formation and the resultant stratification have guided the process of Bhumij integration, Orans points out the contrary pulls of the economic rank path and the political rank path leading towards "emulation-solidarity conflict" which is found among the Santal in the industrial belt of Jamshedpur.
While dealing with the process of integration of the tribes into the Hindu caste system, we should also note that after independence, India is undergoing vast changes both in the economic and social fields. Owing to the growth of the road, railway and other communicational facilities and great popularity of the different media of mass communication, such as the radio, the distant and isolated areas have been connected with urban centres. As a result, the remote rural and isolated areas have come nearer to the towns and cities and the vast rural population has thus been exposed to the varied experiences of the world. With the rapid growth of the primary and the high schools in rural areas and owing to certain other educational facilities the veil of ignorance and darkness of illiteracy are being gradually disappearing. The rural population is thus being exposed to and acquainted with more and more modern urban value systems. In 1950, the President of India in accordance with the article Nos.341 and 342 of Indian Constitution made some provisions specifically for the economical, educational and social upliftment of these backward communities to bring them at par with the general mass of Indian population with a larger view to form a well-integrated nation (Banerjee: 1962). These constitutional measures are also partly responsible for changing the value system of the ruralities, both of the tribes and the castes, high or low. Their aspirations to secure a social status in the caste-hierarchy is being replaced by a new trend to accumulate more wealth, to educate their children, and raise their socio-economic class status. In this new emphasis towards class or occupational mobility, the upper castes have taken the full advantage of their own modern education and progressive 'westernized' outlook. The 'upper class' status is reserved almost exclusively for them (Srinivas: 1962 and Bose: 1965). The upper castes achieve this "by joining the administrative services, or by alliance with one or the other of the political parties as they rise in power. ................. those who are below, because of poverty, lack of education and social subordination, retain attachment to caste's ancient values and prefer to raise themselves in rank by 'sanskritization' instead of by 'secularization' or 'westernization' " (Bose: ibid). If judged, in the light of Bose, it is of interest to delineate to what extent the tribes are interested in getting into the main stream of national life through the path of caste identity and
'sanskritization', and to what extent they are getting primarily interested in upgrading their economic class. The social mobility movements among the tribes may now be passing from the phase of 'sanskritization' to a seeking of secular rank path (see Sinha (on Bhumij): 1959).

Prior to this study during 1957-60, the present author participated in a research programme to study the formation of indigenous tribal state among the Bhumij of Pargannah Barabhum* which was sponsored by the Anthropological Survey of India under the leadership of Dr. Surajit Sinha. We had to stay in the field for a prolonged period of about 22 months and had to survey the entire area of the Pargannah i.e. 634 square miles. While participating in the above-mentioned project, I surveyed myself approximately 140 villages of this Pargannah and gained considerable experience on the socio-cultural lay out of the Pargannah, particularly about the culture of the Bhumij, Santal, Mahato and the Kharia. It was in course of this survey that I met the Kora tribe and came to know about their ritual act named bandh-bhān or the marriage of the tanks. It appeared quite interesting to me that inspite of their very low social status and obvious origin from a tribal stock, a specific ritual role has been assigned to them by the upper Hindu castes in the area. I became interested in finding out how a tribal group became so far integrated into the regional Hindu caste system. The demographic and economic position of the Kora in that region was so different from those of the Bhumij among whom Dr. Sinha had worked earlier, that I was convinced that a thorough study of the media and nature of Kora-Hindu interaction was bound to enlarge and deepen our understanding of the process of caste formation through tribal absorption.

Very little is known about the ethnic affiliation of this small "tribal group" who are already in an advanced stage of integration with the Hindu society. Risley had specifically mentioned about the

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*In 1956, three-fourth portion of the Pargannah had been merged with the Purulia District of West Bengal and the rest with the Singhbhum District of Bihar.
Kora that they claimed to be orthodox Hindus calling themselves as Saktas or Vaisnavas (Risley: 1889, 506-507). Yet the process of social mobility leading to complete integration with the Hindu social system and attaining a stable status is still going on among the Kora.

The Kora as an ethnic group are provided with a more or less specified britti of earthwork. Now-a-days they get the ritual services of Brahmin priest, Vaisnava preceptor, barber, washerman, mid-wife etc., although of "degraded" (nichu) classes, in all their rites of passage. There are clear indications that the Hindu religious ideas have penetrated into their religion. The Kora also aspire for a corporate status in the regional caste-hierarchy. Of course, they have not succeeded in their move very much for gaining a stable status, and, in fact, they are still ranked with the other low castes (Banerjee: 1960).

The tribal communities of Pargannah Barabhum have been in a state of transformation for a long period and at the time of our observation most of them have come within the fold of the regional Hindu peasantry through centuries of active contact, and through a number of institutional arrangements, one of the most important of them being the traditional network of weekly markets. Even then, the nature and the extent of this change vary from tribe to tribe who are living in the same geo-ethnic setting. Let us compare the case of the Kora with those of other major ethnic groups of the area. The Kora migrated to this area from their traditional homeland in Chotanagpur plateau and were interspersed among the dominant Hindu and tribal population with whom they developed stable dependent economic ties. Because of the smallness of their numerical size, their absorption in the Hindu social system has been rather unobtrusive. But the cases of the Bhumij, the Mahato and the Santal are quite different. Backed by their greater numerical strength and concentration, and their comparatively larger land-holdings and greater economic security, they have already come within the threshold of Hinduism on their own initiative gained from a position of strength. These groups have also initiated a number of well-organized mobility movements from time to time to secure a stable high status within
the Hindu social system, abandoning their tribal designations in the process (Sinha: 1959; Dasgupta: 1962). It has not been difficult for the powerful land-holding groups such as the Bhumij and the Mahato to enlist the support of a section of the established Hindu castes in favour of their claim for caste status. Both in terms of number and land-holding the Kora could not meet the Hindu system from such a strong home base. But the Kharia and Pahira (food-gatherers and hunters occupying the foot-hill regions of Dalma) are the two less-Hinduized groups who even fall short of the Kora in the process of integration with the Hindu system. Both the Kharia and Pahira have very feeble contacts with the ways of life and the ethical codes of Hinduism (Banerjee: 1959; Dasgupta: 1959).

This dissertation is the outcome of an intensive field research for about seven months during 1965-67 in three adjacent villages namely, Ragma, Sankhari and Karmabera of Pargannah Barabhum* in the southern part of the Purulia district of West Bengal. Although I concentrated mainly on Ragma for the collection of primary data and on Sankhari and Karmabera for the collection of quantitative and comparative data, this study relates to a much wider area. Having gone to some depth, it became quite apparent that through the services of the ritual specialists, artisan groups, and on account of affinal and kinship ties, and also in the matter of village-participation in caste panchayet, and in many other affairs, these individual villages are articulated with a wider social system. In fact, I had to visit not less than eighteen villages inhabited by the Kora belonging to five Police Stations, namely, the Barabazar, Bandoyan, Balarampur, Chandankiwar (West Bengal) and Patamda (Bihar) in collecting information on the social mobility movements of this tribe. Besides these, in order to trace out the real ethnic and linguistic affiliation of the Kora, which is a controversial matter, I had to move even outside this Pargannah. In this connection I visited four different places.

*The Kora count so much upon Barabhum in all their economic, social and political affairs, it is felt absolutely essential to study them in the context of Barabhum. Inspite of the political disintegration and subsequent merger of Barabhum with the Purulia district of West Bengal and Singhbhum district of Bihar in 1956, the original attachment of the Kora for Barabhum has been least affected. Moreover, we
The present study is concerned with a thorough examination of the fourth proposition of Risley (Supra: 1915, p.1). Here my observations have been focussed on the pattern of interaction of the Kora tribe of Pargannah Barabhum with the dominant social system of the Hindus and the process of their absorption into the larger system. In this matter, I have been guided by the general hypothesis that the pattern of social integration of this small community of South Manbhum has been substantially influenced by the nature of interaction on the levels of economy and power structure. In these respects, the concrete situation of the Kora in land-holding, numerical strength and the pattern of spatial distribution have played an important role. Besides following up the detailed implications of the above hypothesis, I was also interested in presenting the patterns of culture and social structure of a little-known tribal group. I am also interested in describing how they are reacting to the recent factors of planned economic development and political climate.

Finally, an attempt has also been made here to ascertain the position of the Kora in 'Caste-Tribe Continuum'. Here I have tried to utilize Sinha's (1965) conceptional framework in defining 'tribe' and 'caste-peasant' as ideal poles (see also Bailey: 1960). As one moves from the tribal to the caste-peasant pole, i.e. one moves from ethnic homogeneity and isolation towards a field of inter-ethnic heterogeneity and intra and inter-ethnic stratification. We may examine the concrete position of the Kora in this context.

shall find in our discussion in subsequent Chapters, how and to what extent the Raja of Barabhum helped the Kora in securing some sort of economic security within the local Hindu productive system in the form of occupational monopoly in earthworks. It has actually prompted me to make this special study in the geo-ethnic background of Barabhum Pargannah.
The baseline for this study on transformation has been constructed from:

1. the available historical accounts and
2. the contemporary observations of the rural villages of the region.

Lack of sufficient reliable historical records of this region, prior to the advent of the British rule in Barabhum around 1770, has made our task of historical re-construction difficult. From the earliest semi-historical references, it becomes quite apparent that Barabhum and its neighbouring kingdoms or tribal chieftaincies came into existence around 15th or 16th Century A.D. (Sinha: 1962).

From the time when the British came in contact with Barabhum, relevant historical materials could be gathered by us from the various administrative reports and we can make out a fairly chronological historical re-construction of the area from the available materials. The names of the following British Administrators and Scholars may be mentioned here whose reports are invaluable from historical point of view and are often referred to as important historical documents:

- Higginson : 1771
- Strachey : 1800
- West Dent : 1833
- V. Ball : 1860
- Dalton : 1872
- Risley : 1883, 1891 and 1915
- Nandjee : 1883
- Coupland : 1911.

Mention may also be made of:

1. Settlement Survey Records, 1908-13 and 1918
In support of the local history, sufficient background knowledge on the rural population of Barabhum has been gathered from our contemporary observations made during the exhaustive fieldwork in this area between 1957-60, as mentioned earlier. I have also utilized the comparative and contrastive materials on other ethnic groups in the Pargannah to bring the social life of the Kora into relief. In my intensive field study I have laid nearly equal emphasis on the concrete patterns of social interactions within the Kora society, and on the Kora in relation to other groups, and also on the total inventory of the Kora culture. In the latter respect I have found it useful to break down the total pattern of Kora culture into different traits or elements for the purpose of comparison.
**MAP-I. SHOWING KORA CONCENTRATION IN THE STATES OF WEST BENGAL & BIHAR.**

(According to 1961 census, the total Kora population of these States are 62,029 & 13,824 respectively.)